

London School of Economics and Political Science

**Imagining “Home”:  
Korean Migrant Women’s Identities in the UK**

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## Declaration

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines how individual women's desires and social situations can trigger migration as well as the complex and multifaceted effects of geographical mobility on women's lives and the formation of their identities. As a growing number of people move across national boundaries and the range of contemporary migration channels have opened to new breadths, an understanding of current migration practice needs to consider one's specific status within a wide range of types. Through the case of Korean migrant women in the UK, this research challenges the simple assumption of migrants as people who move for only economic purposes as well as the victimisation and homogenisation of Asian migrant women.

Based on in-depth individual interviews and a targeted ethnography of Korean communities in the UK, this study explores the experiences of Korean migrant women. The research uses the conceptual framework of "home" and is grounded on the belief that "home" is paradoxically matched with movement rather than a fixed and stable place. The findings suggest that these women's home-making is related to various power relations such as gender relations in contemporary Korea, public attitudes to immigrants and ethnic minorities in the UK, and Korean settlement patterns in the UK.

This thesis reveals that the idea of the cosmopolitan/global citizen is promoted to women as a desirable lifestyle and can motivate their migration. Yet these women face certain disjunctions—between the fantasy and the reality of living in the UK; their own self-images and others' stereotypes of them; traditional assumptions about immigrants and their actual lives. Through managing these disjunctions and reshaping their relationships with their families, localities and nation, these women's migration often challenges the traditional binary gender division of masculine-public-outside-work vs. feminine-private-inside-home.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The 1920s was a turbulent decade for Korea.<sup>1</sup> The country underwent many enormous changes, including Western modernisation and Japanese colonisation. Along with these changes, a new type of Korean woman emerged: the so-called *modern girl*. These women, instantly recognisable by their cropped hair and high heels, stood out from the traditional costumes of most women. More than just their clothing, the women's lifestyles and values created a sensation. *Modern girls*, who were influenced by new kinds of education in Korea, Japan and other countries, challenged traditional, feudalistic gender relations by promoting free love, free marriage, and gender equality. Yet they were often regarded negatively by society; typically they were accused of having been corrupted by Western, bourgeois thought (O Moon ed. 2003<sup>2</sup>).

Na Hae Seok<sup>3</sup> (1896-1948), one such *modern girl*, was well known for her dramatic life. Initially spotlighted as a pioneering artist, she went to Paris to study. Here she was exposed to a different lifestyle, and also had a scandalous affair which ultimately ruined her reputation in Korea. Accused of being a dissolute woman, in the end she tragically died on the streets. In her final days she longed to return to Paris. She wrote:

I will go to Paris. Go to Paris to die.  
Paris killed me, but it also had me re-born as a woman.  
I hope to die in Paris.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, I use both "Korea" and "South Korea" to refer the Republic of Korea (South Korea), except when referring to Korea before political division. Korea was divided into two parts, North and South, and they were influenced, respectively, by communist states and the US after liberation from Japan in 1945. Therefore, the origin country of Korean migration after this time is South Korea or North Korea, while those before this time were from a single Korea. Post-1945 migrants in this thesis refer only to South Koreans.

<sup>2</sup> To avoid confusion, I have put the initial of authors' first names with their surnames in the case of Korean surnames.

<sup>3</sup> Korean names are written with the surname first, in keeping with Korean style.

<sup>4</sup> 정규웅 Jung Kyu-Woong, 2003, 나혜석평전 *Na Hae Seok Pyong Jŏn*, the biography of Na Hae-Seok, Seoul: JoongAng M&B.

In a complex situation of nationalism under colonialism, *modern girls* like Na Hae Seok yearned for modernisation (K Kim 2004). For these women, travelling to a foreign country symbolised escape from restrictive traditions as well as the opportunity to take advantage of modern education.

It is fascinating in retrospect that the values and motivations of these *modern girls* so closely parallels Korean women of the present day: nowadays, as in the 1920s, many Korean women desire to experience “world class” culture, education, and work, seeing these as paths towards a better future. Then, as now, going abroad is a part of many Korean women's quests for identity.

Of course, current Korean women's migration is also distinct from that of the *modern girls*, because of political and social changes in Korea. Patterns of female migration have experienced particularly significant changes since the 1980s due to 민주화운동 *Minjuwha undong* (People's Democracy Movement) against dictatorship. The spread of consciousness for gender equality is one of these changes. Although modern Koreans have escaped from dictatorship and destitution, they still face the stresses of intense competition in school and on the job market as well as the broader challenges of neo-liberal globalisation. Under the push to become competitive global citizens, experience in a foreign country is also highly coveted. This study traces the experience of the present generation of Korean women and their negotiations with the social norms surrounding their migration to the UK.

## **1. 1. Research Objectives and Questions**

This study aims to examine (1) how an individual woman's desires and social situation trigger migration, and (2) the influence of geographical mobility on women's lives and identity formation. In a broad sense, this study explores some common themes associated with people's geographical mobility, such as travelling, settling, and identity formation. I will deal with these issues within the framework of *home*, which is paradoxically matched with *movement*. Basically, this study sees migration as the search for a proper home. Women's migration can be understood within a framework of “metaphors of home” because migration can be “both escape (forced or otherwise) from the original homeland and a search for a better life and

some kind of new home if not a new homeland” (Anthias 2000, p. 15). “Home” is, here, a contested concept. There have been calls for a reconsideration of the concept of home as a stable physical centre or peaceful refuge (Rapport & Dawson 1998); some have sought to reconceptualise home in its interdependent relationship with migration and identity (Wiles 2008). Following these calls, I will trace how migrants create a home away from home, with special attention to their negotiations of gender and ethnicity.

As feminist debates surrounding the issues of gender, ethnicity and post-colonialism have revealed, the female self is a product of an individual’s location in geographical space and historical time as well as within hierarchised power relationships (See Ang-Lygate 1996). A Korean migrant woman’s subjectivity and her repositioning of herself through migration should be understood through the lens of the various power relationships influencing her experiences both overtly and covertly—such as gender relations in contemporary Korea and public attitudes toward immigrants and ethnic minorities in the UK.

Moreover, we must take a nuanced view of the form of migration practiced by Korean migrant women—that is, their specific status within a wide range of migrant types. In the present “age of migration” (Castles & Miller 1993), a growing number of people are moving across national boundaries for various reasons, and increasing geographical mobility has influenced individuals’ identity as well as various aspects of society. Human mobility has been one of the key factors to influence the ways in which people negotiate and organise the forms of displacement, dwelling and belonging (Knowles 2003). However, mobility is not the same for everyone in the “power-geometry”—the hierarchy across power relations and places (Massey 1993). There is a big gap between those who travel at will and those who move without any other choice; there is an equal degree of polarisation between the privileged who benefit from vanishing physical barriers and those who do not (Bauman 1998). Korean migrants in the UK, whose positions are rarely at any of these extremes, are yet not merely a case of half-benefited and half-disadvantaged. Rather, they show a set of complex disjunctions—between the imagination and the reality of living in the UK, their self-images and others’ stereotypes of them, and traditional assumptions about immigrants and their actual lives.

The present research explores the following questions:

1. The motivations for women's migration within their social context:

- What economic, social or political factors make a Korean woman want to leave her country of origin?
- What are the attractions of the destination country and how are such expectations created?

Questioning the dominant belief that Asian women migrants are simply the victims of global labour divisions and subordination under patriarchy (see Kofman & Raghuram 2004; 2006),<sup>5</sup> this research seeks to explain women's migration in terms of their desires and strategies for improving their lives. Assuming that gender relations and structural characteristics of the country of origin influence women's migration (Grieco & Boyd 1998), I examine Korean women's migration in the context of gender consciousness influenced by Confucianism and women's reactions to this traditional norm. Further, I connect the socio-economic status of Korean women to the notion of cosmopolitanism.<sup>6</sup> That is, this study approaches the contemporary enthusiasm in Korea for going abroad as a phenomenon connected to gender issues. I will illuminate the meaning of the idea of the cosmopolitan/global citizen for Korean women, how this is promoted to them as a desirable lifestyle, and how this contributes to their migration.

Although this study challenges notions of the victimisation and homogeneity of Asian migrant women and strives to understand women's migration outside labour markets, this does not mean that Korean migrant women are only the advantaged

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<sup>5</sup> In the broad context, this is not free from prejudice toward non-Western/white women, not only in male-dominated academic discourse, but also in white/Western feminism. Because they ignored Black/Third world women or consider them as a whole as victims under a patriarchal culture, White/Western feminist works were criticised by early Black feminist theorists (Amos & Parmar 1984; Carby 1982; Mohanty 1988 among others). On the other hand, they are also guilty of a liberal pluralism, which desires to embrace all kinds of differences among women so that they actually conceal the differences and inequalities (Ang 2001).

<sup>6</sup> This thesis uses the term "cosmopolitanism/cosmopolitan" focusing on certain values and behaviours to emphasise a capacity to have cultural multiplicity. However, the term is used by scholars in different ways in the recent proliferation of cosmopolitanism theories. Vertovec and Cohen outlined six perspectives on cosmopolitanism: (a) a socio-cultural condition; (b) a kind of philosophy or world-view; (c) a political project toward building transnational institutions; (d) a political project for recognizing multiple identities; (e) an attitudinal or dispositional orientation; and (f) a mode of practice or competence (Vertovec & Cohen 2002, p. 9).

few, or that these women's migration is not related to the current global economy. Rather, this study understands Korean women's desire to migrate as arising out of uneven globalisation, in the belief that migration is the "people" side of globalisation (Knowles 2003). As seen in the phenomenon of global media and consumerism, for example, construction of these women's desires, although they must be viewed as a subjective aspect, is never entirely disconnected from the material process of globalisation (Sklair 2002). This study will question whether it is in fact possible for these women to fulfil their desire for a cosmopolitan, Western lifestyle, and, if not, what factors are barriers to such fulfilment.

2. The ways in which women's gender/ethnic identity is transformed by migration:

- How do women perceive their positions and organise their lives in the new setting of the host society?
- How do migrants form their collective identity, and what are these women's attitudes towards their own ethnic communities?
- How do their migration experiences transform their views of, and status within, their country of origin?

The process of a woman's repositioning herself with regard to various social relations via migration involves negotiations through various stages and settings and includes the creation of a distance from her familiar setting in Korea that provides a critical new perspective of one's own place as well as that of others. This new perspective and repositioning serve to challenge the essentialised relationship between place and one's identity (Williams 2005). The present study examines women's shifting relationships between the self and the family, local communities, and nation as influenced by migration, and therefore, how women's migration serves to challenge the traditional, binary gender division of masculine-public-outside-work vs. feminine-private-inside-home (see McDowell 1999).

This research draws upon and tries to combine previous studies on transnational movements (diaspora, transnationalism and long-distance nationalism) and the gender-nation relationship. If women play a role not only as biological but also ideological reproducers of ethnic collectivities by being their cultural symbols (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1992; Yuval-Davis 1997), how does this role influence women's lives outside the nation's territory? What is the relationship between

nationhood and womanhood when women leave their country of origin? My research explores this question by looking at Korean women's attitudes toward, and negotiations with, Korean cultural values. The research also examines how these women re-create Korean women-ness in a new place, beyond the Orientalist image of Asian women. Therefore, the research examines how these migrant women manage their lives in both Korean and British societies by using their transnational experiences.

## **1. 2. The Context of Korean Migration**

### **Brief History of Korean Emigration**

Given that migration is a historical process that cannot be understood outside of its context of social and economic change in a specific time (Massey 1990, p. 3), it is essential to look at the context of Korean women's migration. The research positions contemporary forms of Korean women's migration in the longer history of Korean emigration. The world's overseas Korean population was more than 6,076,000<sup>7</sup> in 2005, about 11 percent of the South Korean population. The main traditional destinations for Korean migrants are China, the US, Japan, and CIS. Although Korean migrants in each area have their own history and way of adaptation (I Yoon 2004), the Korean population of these four areas comprises 89 percent of the entire overseas Korean population and has a longer history of settlement than Koreans in other areas. Accordingly, the research on Korean migration has focused on these areas.

To follow I Yoon's (2004) categorisation, Korean migration history is divided into four periods. The first period, in which sizable Korean migration began, was between 1860 and 1910. Poverty-stricken farmers and workers started to move to Russia and China, and these people generally engaged in farming in the destination areas. In the same context of poverty caused by famine, the migration to

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<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2005, the Statistics of Overseas Korean Population, [http://www.mofat.go.kr/mofat/mk\\_a006/mk\\_b037/1189818\\_1414.html](http://www.mofat.go.kr/mofat/mk_a006/mk_b037/1189818_1414.html)

the US also began in this period. The first collective labour migration to Hawaii in 1903 was promoted by the advertisement of the Union of Sugar Cane Planters in Hawaii seeking Korean labour with the assistance of the US Christian missionaries (I Yoon 2004; G Kim 2005; Abelman & Lie 1995).

The second period is from 1910 to 1945, when Korea was a colony of Japan. The main destination areas of migration during this time were Manchuria and Japan. Under Japan's policy of developing Manchuria in the 1930s, there was a collective migration of approximately 250,000 people to this area (I Yoon 2004). At the same time, the economic boom in Japan attracted Korean manual workers (S Jung 1998). In addition, the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and the Asia-Pacific War in 1941 produced massive population movements. The number of Koreans in Japan reached 2,300,000 in 1945 (I Yoon 2004). The Japanese wartime government forced migration for war-related labour but limited voluntary migration into Japan. The Korean migrants to Manchuria included guerrilla activists for national independence from Japan. Although more than half of the people who moved to Japan during the war eventually returned to Korea, the majority of migrants to Manchuria did not come back (G Kim 2005, pp. 147-149). Meanwhile, there was the first wave of Korean female emigration to the US, so-called "picture brides," in this period. About a decade after the first labour migration to Hawaii (the majority of these migrants were single males), more than 951 women moved to the US for arranged marriages to Korean men with only a photograph of their intended groom.<sup>8</sup>

The third period, from 1945 to 1962, was affected by the Korean War (1950-1953). War orphans were sent to the US and Canada (I Yoon 2004). Also, Korean women who had married US military men (approximately 6,000 between 1950 and 1964) and the children of military men moved to the US.<sup>9</sup> US military personnel had been stationed in South Korea since 1945, and their domination over South Korea extended even after the Korean War finished. A number of Korean women became the spouses of these American soldiers and moved to the US to marry and live with

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<sup>8</sup> The Federation of Korean Associations  
([http://www.koreanfedus.org/main/bbs/board.php?bo\\_table=history](http://www.koreanfedus.org/main/bbs/board.php?bo_table=history))

<sup>9</sup> The large number of military brides' migration to the US did not only happen in this period. According to J Yuh (2005), military brides were still the majority of Korean migrants to the US in the 1970s and 1980s, due to the continued stationing of the US troops in South Korea. Since 1950, more than 100,000 Korean military brides have migrated to the US (J Yuh 2005).

these men. These women faced the prejudice of Korean people as well as the difficulties of the new culture. To Americans, these women were foreigners whom American men had inexplicably married, and to Koreans in the US, they were women who married only to escape poverty and had been left outside respectable Korean womanhood. Even though they were numerically the largest group of Koreans in the US during the 1945-1980 period, they could not be accepted as were other Korean migrants. Thus, what these military wives want is not only to keep their identity as Korean, but also to have the respect from other Koreans as people sharing the same ethnic identity with them (J Yuh 2005; Abelman & Lie 1995). These military wives take part in Korean women's migration history, along with picture brides who moved to Hawaii, as mentioned above, and nurses, who moved to Germany in the 1960s, as I will discuss later. At this time, thousands of students went to study in the US, hoping that it would improve their status in Korea. Some of these people remained in the US and initiated the chain-migration of their relatives in the next stage (I Yoon 2004).

The last period is from 1962 to the present. In 1962, the South Korean government promulgated the first overseas emigration law to encourage overseas Koreans to send remittances home. Thousands of workers moved to South America and the Middle East. In addition, reforms in immigration policy in the US and Canada in the mid 1960s encouraged migration to these countries (I Yoon 2004). There was another women's collective migration in this period. The Korean government sent women, all of whom were nurses, to Germany in order to solve the problem of foreign exchange holdings. These women were described as being overworked in a strange place to support not only their own families but also the Korean economy.<sup>10</sup> After the US Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished the national origins quota, the number of Korean migrants to the US dramatically increased. The main reason for their migration was to escape barriers to social mobility in South Korea (Abelman & Lie 1995). The number of migrants began to

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<sup>10</sup> The number of these nurses in the period from 1965-1977 was 18,766, and most of these were young women in their 20s and early 30s. In 1977, against dismissal and forced repatriation from Germany, they organised, demonstrated and demanded to the right to stay and keep their jobs in Germany. This action resulted in the improvement of the condition of Korean labour migrants in Germany. (Korean Network, 23 Jan. 2006, <http://www.hani.co.kr/section-005100100>; 우먼타임즈 *The Woman Times*, 17 Nov. 2004, <http://www.womantimes.com>)

decline beginning in 1986. S Jung (1998) argues that this is because of the migration control of receiving countries and reduced need to migrate in light of the economic growth of South Korea.

Here, there is an apparent difference between “old migrants” who moved in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and “new migrants” who migrated after the 1960s (I Yoon 2004). In the first case, farmers and workers moved in order to escape poverty and oppression at home. In contrast, new migration since the 1960s was motivated by the high standard of living and education in the destination countries. Not intending to return to Korea, these migrants come from a middle-class, educated, and urban background. The former migrants did not move far from Korea, but the latter migrated to more distant areas such as America and Europe (S Jung 1998; I Yoon 2004).

### **“New Migrants” and Current Emigration Boom**

Whereas the majority of “old migrants” left Korea to escape poverty and finally settled for the long term in the destination area, the reasons for and type of current migration have been more diverse. Apart from migration for permanent settlement, short-term, planned movement has increased. Leaving Korea has become more common since the 1990s. The 1989 reform of travelling policy (just after 1988 Seoul Olympics) made it easier for Koreans to go abroad. The number of departures (for all purposes) soared from 836,000 in 1981 to 7,386,000 in 2003.<sup>11</sup> As a Korean newspaper’s sarcastic headline “We Move Out to Spend Money, Foreigners Come in to Earn Money”<sup>12</sup> noted, the main reasons for travel abroad are study, training and tourism, not employment. Among people who leave Korea for more than 90 days at a time, about 70 percent are students or their wives/mothers and preschool-age children. In contrast to this increase in the number of people who go abroad for study or for sightseeing, most of the new arrivals from abroad are job-seekers.<sup>13</sup> The rising number of immigrant workers, mainly from Southeast Asia and Russia, called

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<sup>11</sup> Korean Ministry of Justice, *Yearbook on Departures & Arrivals* (each year), retrieved 31/8/05, from <http://kosis.nso.go.kr/Magazine/KP/KS0119.xls>

<sup>12</sup> 국민일보 *The Kukmin Ilbo*, 20 Oct. 2004

<sup>13</sup> 국민일보 *The Kukmin Ilbo*, 20 Oct. 2004

attention to human rights violations and racism in Korea. The shift from being a sending country to a receiving country of labour migration changed the ethnic makeup of Korean society and prompted a reconsideration of the myth of “one blood, one nation.”

Although the number of permanent Korean migrants decreased after the mid 1980s, it began to rise again after the 1997-1998 economic crisis. In December 1997, the South Korean government requested financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and this economic crisis caused mass dismissals and serious problems of unemployment and sub-employment. This insecure situation triggered a new wave of migration. The noticeable feature of post-crisis migration is that the majority of migrants were highly educated, middle-class professionals (I Yoon 2004; S Jung 1998).

The issue of migration has attracted considerable attention from the public and the media. When migration packages (to arrange emigration procedure) were introduced on a TV home shopping channel, all 4,000 sold out after they were advertised only twice.<sup>14</sup> According to a magazine survey, 43 percent of middle-class respondents who were living in metropolitan cities expressed an interest in migration, even though migration is often criticised as a sign of Korean elites abdicating their social responsibility.<sup>15</sup> The main reasons these respondents wanted to leave Korea were their dissatisfaction with their children’s education system, the high cost of private tutoring, intense social competition, the corruption of politicians, environmental pollution, and low job security (I Yoon 2004; S Jung 1998)<sup>16</sup>.

In addition to permanent migrants, tens of thousands of Koreans study abroad. The number of Korean students enrolled in US colleges and universities reached 53,358 in 2004-2005. Only India and China sent more students to the US.<sup>17</sup> Apart from formal degree courses, language training, usually in English, has been popular among Korean university students. As the age at which students leave Korea falls, 조기유학 *choki yuhak* (study abroad at a young age) has become another keyword for migration syndrome.

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<sup>14</sup> 파이낸셜 뉴스 *The Financial News*, 7 Dec. 2003

<sup>15</sup> 시사저널 *The Sisa Journal* (600), April, 2001

<sup>16</sup> See also the cover story of 시사저널 *The Sisa Journal* (No. 600), Apr. 2001

<sup>17</sup> <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?p=69691>

The recent boom in the number of teenagers studying abroad has produced a new type of family, 기러기 가족 *kirŏgi kachok*.<sup>18</sup> In this arrangement, the father remains in Korea to earn money and the mother takes the children abroad so that she can take care of them while they attend school. This is a contrast to previous Korean labour migration in which one member goes to work abroad and sends remittances to the family at home. The media and the Korean public tend to resent the number of people who are learning English and leaving the country. At the same time, they are concerned with family issues. Interestingly, the approaches to labour migration to the Middle East in the 1970s and *Kirŏgi Kachok* in the 2000s share a sympathy for “a father, who sacrifices himself for his family,” a sentiment that is rooted in the idea of the patriarchal family, which makes the role of women invisible. *Kirŏgi Kachok* for teenagers’ study abroad reflects the relationship between education and migration in Korea. Education is one of the most popular reasons for migration. Korean migration for education has two contradictory purposes: to study in a free and less competitive environment and to become competitive in the job market by learning English. This can be found in the fact that many of these students continue to have private lessons even after migration and their goal is to attend Ivy League universities.

In both academics and media, the gendered aspect of current Korean emigration has attracted little attention, and women are mostly regarded as mothers in *Kirŏgi Kachok*, who are only interested in supporting their children, or young mothers going on “maternity trips,” in which they travel in order to give birth to their child in the US or some other country that will confer citizenship upon these babies.<sup>19</sup> These women’s migration has been understood only according to their position in the family. In addition, the way in which gender affects independent migration among younger women has not, so far, been noticed, much less studied. In the changed context of Korean emigration and the recent boom of going abroad, such gendered attitudes toward migration, which are built on traditional understandings of

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<sup>18</sup> This literally means a wild-goose family (separated by an ocean).

<sup>19</sup> The boom of 원정출산 *Wonchŏng-chulsan* (maternity trips) means that overseas childbirths are on the rise, primarily to obtain foreign citizenships for military exemption. According to a leading travel agency, an estimated 3,000 maternity trips were made in 2001, 5,000 in 2002, 7,000 in 2003, and nearly 10,000 in 2004 (*The Korea Herald*, 12 May 2005). When it was revealed that a presidential candidate’s granddaughter was born in the US in this way, maternity trips caused serious public controversy and were criticized as another sign of privileged people’s selfishness. This movement to give birth is not limited to a few upper-class people, but has spread to young, middle-class parents, with many agencies organizing this kind of trip.

gender roles, do not seem to work in explaining Korean women's migration motivation and experiences, and they need to be reconsidered for the implications of these women's migration in the issues of gender, nation and citizenship.

### **1. 3. Research Design**

This research is designed to capture migrant women's subjectivity and agency, showing gendered and racialised individuals' interface with the social world (Knowles 2003). The study is based on the everyday lives of migrant women and will avoid the simplistic and monolithic understanding of such minorities as "ethnic minority" and "women". Through biographical narrative and an ethnographic approach, it will seek to grasp the dynamics of migrant women's lives, instead of describing them as victims under multiple marginalities. The study focuses on the case of Korean women's migration to the UK because their cases show the latest trends of "new migration" of Koreans as well as women's independent migration, given that the majority of these migrations are voluntary and are not chain-migrations due to the relatively short migration history. Also, these cases can show the characteristics of migrants' communities in contemporary British society, which can be identified as "super-diversity" (Vertovec 2007).

#### **1. 3. 1. Research Subject and Data Production**

##### **Korean migrants in the UK**

There are approximately 40,000 Koreans in the UK. The main reasons for their migration are study and training; only a small proportion of these migrants are permanent. Of the 40,000 Koreans in the UK, 51% are students enrolled in a

language course or regular degree course.<sup>20</sup> Another 14.5% are employed and 10% own and operate a business.<sup>21</sup> Fifty-seven percent of Koreans reside in London. Nearly half of all Koreans in the UK are women, but among Koreans who have UK citizenship, there are almost twice as many women as men (See Table 1).<sup>22</sup>

**Table 1: Korean Population in the UK**

			Total			By Area					
						London			Outside London		
			Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Number of Koreans			20,485	20,325	40,810	11,841	11,549	23,390	8,644	8,776	17,420
By Status	UK Citizen		470	820	1,290	262	370	632	208	450	658
	Denizen		2,405	2,855	5,260	1,702	1,683	3,385	706	1,172	1,875
	Sojourner	Student	10,450	9,250	19,700	6,260	6,261	12,881	3,830	2,989	6,819
		Others	7,160	7,400	14,560	3,257	3,235	6,492	3,903	4,165	8,068

Source: Internal Resource of Korean Embassy in the UK, 2006.

Educational migrants, who comprise the largest proportion of Korean migrants in the UK, have a flexible and uncertain status. Their visa status and permissible length of stay vary depending on their intended careers. Financially, educational migrants are on the one hand limited (because they do not have full-time job) but on the other, possess some financial resources (to cover travel costs, tuition fees and living costs). Because there are few asylum seekers or refugees (and those that do exist are hard to see), it might be assumed that neither poverty nor political persecution plays much of a role in migration for most Koreans in the UK. However, there is often an economic incentive to migrate, and many migrants engage in income-generating activities. The majority of Korean migrants in the UK appear to

<sup>20</sup> According to the statistics in 2004, students taking language courses outnumbered those in regular degree courses. *The Korean Weekly*, 24 Nov. 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Internal resource of Korean Embassy in the UK, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> The reason why twice as many women have UK citizenship is assumed that Korean women's inter-ethnic marriage and obtaining UK citizenship outnumbered Korean men's inter-ethnic marriage.

be voluntary migrants, yet there are underlying social/cultural forces at work, such as the need to develop employment prospects or English language skills (to be discussed in Chapter 3).

This feature of the majority of Korean migrants in the UK comprises a migration form which is increasing but which has attracted little attention. This is because the general attitude within the academy and the media has adopted a problem-oriented approach focusing on issues of incorporation or exclusion in the receiving country (Anthias 2000). However, certain categories can be used to describe the typical Korean migrant experience. First of all, following Conradson and Latham (2005), they could be called “middling migrants”. Exploring the case of young, university-educated New Zealanders staying in London for work and travel, Conradson and Latham characterise “middling” forms of transnational mobility as follows:

What is notable about these migrants is their ‘middling-ness’. Although they are well-educated, many have jobs that are relatively insecure and short-term, and rarely do they earn enough to place them in the upper stratum of British society. They certainly do not fit with any sensible definition of eliteness. (2005, p.230)

However, Wiles (2008), while also using the term “middling migrants”, shows that differences can exist within this category. Korean migrants have a commonality with these New Zealanders as middling migrants in terms of their high level of education and planned, temporary migration. However, in spite of this similarity, Korean migrants’ experiences are distinguished from these who are native English speakers and mostly white. Unlike these New Zealanders, Korean migrants often encounter racism and may have trouble getting promotions or keeping their jobs during their stay in the UK.<sup>23</sup>

Also, given that their purpose in migrating is to upgrade their circumstances, Korean migrants have a commonality with “lifestyle migrants”. As Knowles uses this term, it refers to people “who moved from one rich country to another in pursuit

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<sup>23</sup> It is evident that New Zealanders in Wiles’ study (2008) are able to keep their professional jobs in Britain even though their education and qualification are often considered by employers to be inferior to that of British workers. In addition, racial discrimination is not typically a factor of their experience in the UK. By contrast, some of the interviewees in my study for example, have part-time work of nanny (Su-Min), kitchen staff in a restaurant (Mee-Hwa), and hall server in a coffee shop (Hee-Sun). Su-Min and Mee-Hwa have BA degrees and work experience, and Hee-Sun has completed a Masters degree.

of better jobs, higher incomes, higher disposable incomes, leisure opportunities, sun, beaches or open country” (2003, p. 151), such as British migrants who move to Portugal, Spain or Greece after retirement. Again, however, although Korean migrants are typically pursuing a better lifestyle in the UK, there are crucial differences—differences which arise from racial/ethnic issues in their lives in the host countries (to be discussed in Chapter 4).

## Individual Interviews

The study is designed to explore women’s personal voices, subjectivities and political agency on the basis of an analysis of their migration. I used in-depth interviews, including narratives of life stories as the primary method of data collection, as this method has a great potential as an approach to feminist research. It demands a high level of rapport between interviewer and interviewee, a high degree of reciprocity on the part of the interviewer, and the perspective of the researched (Bryman 2004, pp. 336-337), and requires reflexive monitoring of the act of reading and interpretation—a key requirement for feminist research (Lieblich et al. 1998). Also, the narrative method seems especially well-suited to studying identity and subjectivity (Riessman 1993, p. 5).

Regarding the recruitment of interviewees, in the early stages of the field work, I used my own personal network; later, a snowball sampling effect was utilized. An additional seven interviewees were found by posting advertisements on three websites targeted at Korean migrants.<sup>24</sup> Although, of course, those who responded to these advertisements might be considered more voluntary, there was no special difference in circumstances or profiles between these people and the others who were contacted through my personal network. I had three criteria for participation: first, my interviewees had to have lived in the UK for at least three months, which meant that they were officially categorised as “long-term departures” (by the Korean government) and not as “tourists” (by Britain). Second, all

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<sup>24</sup> The freeboard in *UK Love*, the biggest online community for Koreans in the UK (café.daum.net); the freeboard in *Living in London*, an online community for Koreans in the UK based on the biggest networking site in Korea (livinginlondon.cyworld.com); the themed forum of foreign lives in *Miclub*, a portal site for women in Korea (www.miclub.com).

interviewees were Korean-born women. Third, the interviewees had to be between the ages of 20 and 35. This generation grew up under Korea's democratization movement of the 1980s and has been influenced by feminism. In addition, these interviewees migrated after travel policies were liberalised.

Although my study does not aim to generalise Korean migrants in the UK and these women I interviewed do not represent all Korean migrant women, there is a certain amount of representativeness of the interviewees. They are not cases far outside the majority of the Korean population in the UK in terms of occupation, visa status, and purpose of migration (see Table 1: The Korean Population in the UK). Although the interviewees were primarily selected by availability of access, I tried to choose the samples with consideration of their marital status and occupation for the later stage of the fieldwork, in order to cover different statuses within the Korean population in the UK.

The number of women finally recruited and interviewed is 21. They were all between the ages of 21 and 35 and had been living in the UK, mostly around London, from 7 months to 11 years. All of these participants were from Seoul or other cities in Korea. Most of them had graduated from universities (or were in the interruption period of undergraduate coursework). Because of the student visas that many of the interviewees obtained, they were allowed to work part-time; some of the women had work experiences in the UK. Among those who had student visas, Min-Ju identified herself as a part-time office worker, not as a student, and Mee-Ran was working as a full-time hairdresser and did not return to college. Many of them (15 out of 21 interviewees in total) came to the UK as language school students when they first arrived; this number includes those who were working or studying in a regular degree course at the time of the interviews. Four interviewees were working at a British company/institution, and all of these four had higher-education in the UK. Regarding marital status, eight interviewees were married and the rest were single. Three out of eight married interviewees had children. Among the married, five women had dependent visas and their husbands were students or professionals. Hae-Rim was the only interviewee who had denizenship; she had obtained it after ten years' stay in the UK. The profiles of the interviewees are in Appendix 1.

Between September 2005 and January 2007, I conducted a series of informal, unstructured, conversational interviews (three interviews per person were planned, although some interviewees had only two). Multiple interviews are more likely to

elicit more precise and sufficient information because a researcher has the opportunity to ask additional questions and acquire corrective feedback on previously obtained information. As time passes, the researcher is also able to see how the thoughts of respondents are situated in particular circumstances (Reinharz 1992).

I used both narrative and thematic interview questions. While I always asked about certain specific themes, such as sense of home and connection to Korea, most topics were naturally raised in the course of talking about the women's personal histories in Korea and everyday lives in the UK. I tried to keep the narrative in chronological order by listening to the stories about their lives before migration in the first interview and to the women's present lives and future plans in the second and third interviews. Rather than just asking them to tell me about life, I added relevant questions and kept the conversation fluent. The questions were flexible and depended on the interviewee's situation and answers (see Appendix 3 for the list of questions), but always touched on the following issues:

- 1) Basic information (age, occupation, and length of stay);
- 2) Life story before migration (family, school life, work, cultural settings and social/political interests);
- 3) The reasons for and process of migration; and
- 4) Life story after migration (education/work, networks, connecting to Korea, daily life and leisure, love and marriage, and vision of the future).

Each interview took between 40 minutes and two hours, and each woman was interviewed for a total of three to five hours. The place of interviews was usually the respondent's home, the researcher's home, or a quiet cafeteria. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. All of the interviews were conducted in the Korean language, so the transcriptions are written in Korean. When quoting an interviewee, I translated her words into standard English to be understandable, primarily because of the difference in sentence structure between Korean and English.<sup>25</sup> This condition of

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<sup>25</sup> For example, a verb goes to the end of a sentence in Korean. The different word order makes literal translation difficult.

translation became an issue at the stage of interpretation and writing; this is related to a matter of reflectivity and researcher-researched relations, as I will explain later.

## **Participant Observation**

Another method used in this study is participant observation. I chose the locale of New Malden for participant observation because of its importance in Korean communities in the UK. New Malden and the surrounding suburbs of Surbiton, Kingston and Merton, all located in south London, are home to approximately 15,000 Koreans, the largest Korean community in the UK and a cultural hub. Koreans comprise 10 percent of the population of the Kingston borough.<sup>26</sup> Because of some Korean-language signs, several Korean-owned shops and food stores, and services such as immigration consultants, real estate agents and translation services catering to Koreans, Korean people call the area “New Mal –Dong” to mimic a name for an administrative unit in Korea (See Appendix 4 for a map of New Malden).<sup>27</sup>

I conducted participant observation in three beauty salons owned by Korean migrants in New Malden. Beauty salons are excellent places to hear casual conversation amongst Korean migrants. Since a beauty salon is a place of physical and emotional labour in which staff must understand and respond to customers’ feelings (M Kang 2003; Black 2004), customers and hair-dressers talk about a great many topics. In addition, a beauty-salon is a good place to ascertain particular ways of thinking about feminine ideals (Black & Sharma 2001). It is a place in which race, gender, beauty and industry intersect (Harvey 2005; Craig 2006). Moreover, these conversations are often rich and fascinating, conveying not only the lives of the individual clients and hair-dressers but also their experiences and knowledge of other Koreans’ stories.

Amongst the twelve or so Korean-owned beauty salons in the New Malden area, I chose the three salons which have the highest proportion of Korean customers.

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<sup>26</sup> *The Korean Weekly*, 17 Feb. 2002. The statistics of the Korean population in this area vary between institutions. 2001 Census Profile of Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames states “5.1% of the Borough’s population come from the ethnic groups classed as Other Asian and Other Chinese. The assumption is that these groups comprise mainly the Korean population.”

([http://www.kingston.gov.uk/rbk\\_census\\_map\\_atlas\\_1.pdf](http://www.kingston.gov.uk/rbk_census_map_atlas_1.pdf))

<sup>27</sup> Think London (the official Foreign Direct Investment agency for London)  
(<http://www.thinklondon.com/knowledge/koreanlanguage.pdf>)

All three salons are owned by Korean women and all the members of staff are Korean. After I had received permission to perform the observation and received the shop owners' signatures on the informed consent forms, I visited each of the beauty-salons for approximately three hours, once a week. After each visit, I wrote down an account of the conversations between owner, hairdressers, customers, and myself. Because these salons were small but busy, I decided to go to each salon ten times only. In the case of H salon, however, it was easy to overhear what the customers and the owner were saying, so I ultimately held 21 observation sessions with the permission of the owner. The beauty salons in which I conducted participant observation are listed below.

1) P beauty salon (observed from March to May 2006): Approximately 70% of its customers are Korean. Two hair-stylists (a male in his mid 30s and a female in her early 30s) and an assistant (absent during the observation period) work alongside the owner (in her mid 30s, with two children and a husband), who is not a hair-dresser. The owner occasionally introduced the researcher to customers and asked them to cooperate with the research.

2) H beauty salon (observed from March to August 2006): More than 80% of customers are Korean. The owner (in her early 40s with two children, a husband and a mother) works by herself. The salon opened about 3 years ago. Customers come to this salon by others' recommendations and many of them are regulars.

3) B beauty salon (observed from August to October 2006): This is a franchise of a well-known Korean beauty salon. The business was established in 1996. The owner is not usually in the salon, with the manager running it from day to day. Two hair-stylists (a male and a female) and one part-time female assistant worked at the salon. More than 70% of customers are Korean.

In addition to the beauty-salons, I also regularly attended a Korean church in New Malden for one year (from January 2005 to January 2006). I chose a Christian church because of its significant role in networking amongst Korean migrants.<sup>28</sup> Forty Korean churches were registered in the Korean Churches Association in November of 2004; the actual number of Korean churches in the UK may be much larger than this, given that there appears to be many churches which did not join in

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<sup>28</sup> A parallel case is found in new Chinese migrants' case. These migrants also have strong sense of community in local Chinese churches and consider the churches as networking points (Alexander et al. 2004).

the association.<sup>29</sup> As a practical matter, the reasons for attending a church were to conduct fieldwork and have access to interviewees, to elicit more information and extend my network, and to collect data by becoming involved in Korean migrant society.

At the church I attended, referred to here as C church, approximately 200 people regularly attend Sunday worship; additionally, there are several smaller cell-communities set up to promote better relationships among the members. Like many other Korean churches in the UK, this one rents space in a British church. The worship services and other meetings are in the Korean language. I conducted a participant observation at the singles' Bible study group. Observing this group was helpful for catching a glimpse of the everyday lives of women who have close relationships with the established Korean migrants' community. Because Korean migrants see New Malden as a place in which Koreans who are relatively settled reside, the single women's group in C church seemed well-positioned to show women's attitudes and activities within a dense Korean society. The members of the group are Yoon-Ja, Ok-Ju, Su-Mee, and Jin-Ju (See Appendix 2 for the Profiles of the members and Chapter 6 for the detailed story of launching this group). After they allowed me to use their stories for the research, I recorded my observation of and conversation with these women on my field note after each meeting.

## **Other Resources and Analysis**

I also conducted institutional interviews with:

- 1) The public relations officer of the Korean Residents Society (17 Nov. 2006);
- 2) The manager of the Women's Department at the Korean Residents Society (16 Oct. 2007);
- 3) The head editor of *the Korea Post* (1 Jun. 2007); and
- 4) The head teacher of the South London Korean School (12 Jan. 2007).

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<sup>29</sup> There are one Korean Buddhist temple, one Catholic cathedral, and one Anglican church that are found in Korean migrant related websites and newspapers, although other religious worship places possibly run in the UK.

These institutional interviews provided information on Korean communities in the UK to complement my interviews with individual migrant women. In particular, I was able to catch some of the differences between institutional activities and personal relations in terms of networking practices and expressions of cultural identity.

In addition, I observed several Korean online communities, websites, community newspapers, and cultural events in order to follow current issues among Koreans and examine the features of Korean communities in the UK. At present, there are six weekly Korean-language newspapers in the UK: 한인신문 *Hanin-Shinmoon*, 영국 생활 *The UK Life*, 코리안 위클리 *The Korean Weekly*, 코리안 포스트 *The Korean Post*, 한인 헤럴드 *The Hanin Herald*, and 유로 저널 *The Euro Journal*. Although I do not directly cite posts from the Korean migrants' Internet communities, I used those resources in the interviews and participant-observations as prompts for questions and topics of conversation.<sup>30</sup>

My data analysis was conducted in an “iterative” way, which means the data analysis process included “a repetitive interplay between the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman 2004, p. 399). Analysis of previously collected data shaped the next collection of data, and this procedure was also conducted crossing different forms of data. I thematised the content of each transcribed interview as well as my field notes from participant observation. In this manner I was able to link the data from a given individual interview to other data across interview transcriptions and field notes. Some themes that emerged from the data were reflected in further field work via the addition of questions so that all resources—interviews, targeted ethnography, and other observations of online communities and newsletters—influence and complement each other. I used the software NVIVO to manage the process of keeping, coding and analysing the data.

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<sup>30</sup> The reason I did not directly cite individuals' posts in the forums of their websites is related to complex research ethics and practical issues, which are difficult to sort out, including, for example, the consent for the research in a membership-based Internet community, who has rights to permit the use of individual members' posts?

### **1. 3. 2. Methodological Concerns**

#### **Biographical Approach**

As previously discussed, I used each woman's narrative based on her individual life story, combined with thematic questionnaires in an interview. Accordingly, my first consideration in methodology is related to how the biographical approach can be justified, and how it operates within the framework of research on migration and feminist studies. Memory and narrative are important to understanding migrant experiences because they provide cultural sensitivity and specificity which give voice to an individual's location in specific time and space (Chamberlain & Leydesdorff 2004). The methodological meanings of biographical narrative—encompassing such different but overlapping concepts as personal narrative, autobiography, oral history, life history, autoethnography, self-stories etc.—have been studied within the social sciences in the belief that narrative can represent reality (White 1981; Ellis & Bochner 2000; Roberts 2002).

The value of narrative as a scientific methodology/method comes from the possibility that individuals can generate meaning by telling their own experiences, because “one's life story work involves recollecting, remembering, re-discovering, along with the active processes of memorializing and constructing history” (Plummer 2001, p. 233). A sociological theory, Rustin (2000) argues, can be drawn from individual cases if an individual's life trajectory implies social representation. In a narrative, the past is reconstructed from the teller's view in the present. A teller interprets and re-forms events that he or she experienced by telling a story, so that a new pattern is created. Accordingly, individuals can be creators of meaning (Vandsemb 1995; Miles & Crush 1993; Roberts 2002). Here, “narratives can illuminate both the logic of individual action and the effects of structural constraints within which life courses evolve” (Vandsemb 1995, p. 414). That is, the meaning created by an individual shows not only that individual's unique personality, but also the social context in which that individual is located. Therefore, biography as a narrative of personal life story can be considered as follows:

“Biographies” are regarded, in terms of theories of their social construction, as a relevant realm of modern societies for the organisation of processes of continuation and transformation, and their relation to social contexts, as well as to the experiential world of individuals. (Breckner 2000, p. 95)

In this regard, some researchers have made a case for the significance of the biographical approach to migration research. Given that a biography is told by an individual situated within a given social context, and can be seen as a synthesis of individual action and structural forces, a migrant’s biography can evince the structural factors of his or her migration. Detailed descriptions of individual narratives can lead to a better understanding of the mechanisms related to migration (Vandsemb 1995). Moreover, the usefulness of the biographical approach to migration resides in the fact that it takes a long time for migrants to give meaning to their migration (Alexander et al. 2004). Migrants observe, assess and change their views, both of themselves and of their host society. This process of constructing the self, others, and place generally transpires over a long period. Biographies can help us to understand how migration experiences acquire meanings for migrants and how these experiences change in the course of time (Breckner 2000).

Another reason why the biographical approach is significant for migration is that within a migrant's life, there are often multiple motivations to migrate. Rather than just in the moment of decision making by an external trigger event, “the ‘seeds of migration’ lie in the individual’s life course” (Findlay & Li 1997, p. 35). The decision to migrate is situated within the potential migrant’s entire life story. Migrants almost always have more than one reason for wishing to migrate; although these reasons vary in importance, they all factor into the ultimate decision. Accordingly, the motives for migration can perhaps be best understood through a migrant’s biography (Boyle et al. 1998).

Meanwhile, biographical narrative has significant implications for feminist research. The feminist biographical method seeks to reveal the socio-political and historical features that are embedded in women’s life stories (Popadiuk 2004). Women’s life histories offer sources for the content of women’s lives and can lead to an intensive understanding of women’s consciousness (Geiger 1986). The strong relationship between biographical methodology and feminist theory can be found in the two central questions in any biography: *Whose story?* and *What point of view?*

In terms of the question of “whose story?”, feminist research has made women the subjects of a type of storytelling that has often in history been monopolised by men. Smith (1994) draws some of the special meanings of biography for feminists and minority groups from a problem raised frequently within the genre itself—namely, who is important and who decides on the criteria of importance (1994, pp. 288–299). This question poses a challenge to the predominant assumption that biographies are stories of people who deserve to be written about—who traditionally are almost exclusively men. As an example, this author notes, the first definition of “biography” in *the Oxford English Dictionary* excludes women: “the history of the lives of individual men” (Smith 1994, p. 287). In short, writing the biographies of women and minorities means asserting the importance of their lives.

Raising the question “who says?”, Stanley (1992, p. 7) maintains that the ideas and interpretations contained within a biography are inevitably the products of a particular person, located in a specific cultural, social and political milieu. That is, a narrator is socially located by gender, class and race, and necessarily has a partial understanding of society and events. Thus, women’s personal narratives (i.e. the form of presentation and interpretation of women’s experiences) are important primary documents for feminist research (The Personal Narrative Group 1989, p. 4). Given that the wellspring of all feminist theory is the desire on the part of individual women to examine the role of gender in their lives and in society, a woman’s biographical narrative can be a grounding of feminist theory through the comprehension of women as acting historical subjects who interact with patriarchal structures (Barry 1989).

Representing women’s experiences is more than simply recording women’s life histories. It also is a matter of analysing subject positioning within a given social context (Scott 1992).

It ought to be possible for historians to, in Gayatri Spivak’s terms, “make visible the assignment of subject-positions,” not in the sense of capturing the reality of the objects seen, but of trying to understand the operations of the complex and changing discursive processes by which identities are ascribed, resisted, or embraced and which processes themselves are unremarked, indeed achieve their effect because they aren’t noticed (Scott, 1992: 33).

In listening to and representing women’s experiences without essentialisation or distortion, it is required not to only look at the location of the speaker and content of

the speech, but also to look at “where the speech goes and what it does there.” We need to “analyse the probable or actual effects of the words on the discursive and material context” (Alcoff 1995, p. 113).

### **Retelling Asian Women’s Stories: Reflexivity and the Representation of Others**

The central methodological issues in the present research are derived from two matters: the problem of representing ethnic minority women’s lives and the power relations between the researcher and the researched. First of all, the question of how to represent non-Western/non-white women’s voices can be a significant methodological problem. As Mohanty’s (1992) critique of universal sisterhood indicates, it cannot be assumed that women of all cultures are a single group with the same interests and perspectives. Women’s experiences as well as their abilities to struggle vary because that power creates different kinds of oppression.

Universal sisterhood, defined as the transcendence of the ‘male’ world, thus ends up being a middle-class, psychologized notion which effectively erases material and ideological power differences within and among groups of women, especially between First and Third World women (and, paradoxically, removes us all as actors from history and politics). (Mohanty 1992, p. 83)

Women in the minority position in the Third World, as Spivak (1988) points out in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, are often unable to make their voices heard and cannot be properly understood within a discourse driven by Western male intellectuals. Given that representation implies specific interests, the representation of these women from Western male perspectives often reflects imperialist interests.

To address this problem of speaking for or about others, some alternative approaches have been suggested: “mutual dialogue” (Lugones & Spelman 1983), “moral point of view” (Benhabib 1992), and “mutual recognition” (hooks 1994). Emphasising the importance of hearing the voices of minority women, Lugones and Spelman (1983) insist that dialogues based on friendship among women who occupy different positions is important and can be achieved via efforts to understand their respective environments. Benhabib (1992, p. 8) calls for a “moral point of view in light of the reversibility of perspectives” and proposes “a moral conversation in which the capacity to reverse perspectives, that is, the willingness to reason from the

others' point of view, and the sensitivity to hear their voice is paramount." For hooks (1994), exploitation is caused by objectification of an "Other," and "recognition of the Other" requires negotiation which precludes development of exploitative relations. She suggests "mutual recognition": subject-to-subject encounter, as opposed to subject-to-object (hooks 1994, p. 241). However, despite the significance of mutual dialogue based on an effort to understand others, the move to another point of view and the inclusion of the others' experiences can be effected only by the privileged (Alcoff 1995). In fact, this could justify the privileged groups' sympathy or pity, and an over-desire to understand all minorities, as seen in the white feminist argument to embrace differences among all women (Ang 2001).

This issue is not limited to relationships between Western/white researchers and non-Western/non-white informants, but extends also to researchers of non-Western origin. Ong (1995) points out how Western scholars benefit from other women's stories: "Stories about Chinese women disseminated in the West have recently enjoyed an extraordinary reception. Perhaps, for Western readers, the satisfaction of these stories derives from their depiction of Chinese women fleeing an unrelentingly oppressive society into full emancipation in the West." (p. 350) From her own experiences studying Chinese women in America, Ong (1995) says that there is a "sense of shared marginalization in Chinese culture and history and in Western society that creates an ethnographic situation different from that of an ethnographer from a privileged Western country who descends into a village in some Third World country" (p. 355). For her, this relationship between the researcher and the researched, in which the two share a political goal of challenging both their home cultures and the Western construction of Third World women, can work as an alternative to political betrayal by Western feminists who exploit informants' stories in order to expand their academic authority into transnational contexts. However, I do not consider this kind of relationship as a guaranteed way to avoid betrayal of the egalitarian ideal of feminism. As Chow (1993) points out, there is a possibility that some intellectuals take advantage of their non-Western origin and identify their position with the Third World in order to assume a kind of moral advantage. Thus, despite its positive side, it seems clear that the researcher-researched relationship needs careful, reflective consideration even in the case that both sides share non-Western origins.

In the politics of representing others, the position of the privileged researcher has been raised as an important concern (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002, Ch.6). Reflexive consideration on power relations that is shown in multiple forms and is inevitable in the research (Ali 2006) is one of the key issues in feminist research. However, it should be remembered that feminist concern about power relations between the researcher and the researched is an acknowledgement of power and differences between women, not a strike against power hierarchy. In other words, reflexivity that identifies power relations within the research process is required for good scholarly practice (Skeggs 1994; Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002, Ch.6).

In my case, reflexivity is rooted in my position as Korean. I have a great deal in common with the women I interviewed: ethnicity, gender, generation, and status as a migrant (which are even fit to the standard of sampling, which I mentioned earlier). My position makes it relatively easy for us to empathise with each other. Indeed, most of the participants said that the reason they allowed me to interview them was because they wanted to help me—they felt sympathy for me because of the perceived difficulty of studying in a foreign country. Even more importantly, my own life and experiences as a student in London were incorporated into the research. That is, my personal experience as a Korean female student studying in the UK gave me a particular perspective on the research subject, and my experience could become part of the subject to be studied (Ellis & Bochner 2000). Moreover, as Oakley puts it, “women interviewing women is a two-way process” (1981, p. 20); a researcher’s position is not just that of a describer or translator, but also as a companion, helping to complete a narrative alongside the participants. In doing so, it could be possible to blur the boundaries between the researcher and the researched.

Although a great deal of commonality (which makes the research seem to be from an “insider’s” position) characterised the relationship between the researcher and the researched in this study, there was complex positioning including subtle differences between my interviewees and me. Even when a researcher has the same nationality/ethnicity as the participants, they can still be divided by class, religion, and political point of view (Alexander 2003). As Song and Parker (1995) point out, complex and multi-faceted experiences between the researcher and the researched can occur throughout the interview process. Such experiences have not been properly captured in the simplistic dual categories of black/white or insider/outsider in the literature on the politics and ethics of social research. Commonalities and differences

between the researcher and the researched shaped, in my case, the different ways of conversation in the different topics. While our conversation on some issues that both of us knew, such as social/cultural atmosphere and happenings in Korea, tended toward *sharing*, the mood of talking about experiences came from different statuses, marriage in particular, was more like *introducing* (delivering from an interviewee to the interviewer).

Regarding power relations between the researcher and the researched, sharing ethnicity and gender does not guarantee the absolute trust of participants or an equal relationship with them. Interestingly, in my own experience in field work I often feel that the researcher is in a less powerful position than the informant. This is because of my non-professional position. In gaining access, getting information, and arranging schedules, I felt relatively limited and powerless, because for my informants, I was just a doctoral student who desperately needed to get her doctoral project done.

The opportunity to reconsider the power relations between participants and myself manifested itself in the interpretation process—in the stages of analysis and writing. Even though these relationships take different forms and even though some researchers are less powerful than the researched, all researchers can exercise power by turning the lives of the researched into authoritative academic texts (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002). In the process of interpreting what the participants said or did, a researcher conceptualises the participants, using power to judge how their experiences are connected to theories. This means that the researcher locates concepts outside the experiences that are discussed (Smith 1989; Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002, Ch.6). Skeggs writes that “interspersing the young women’s spoken comments into my academic writing, they were made to sound authentic and simple,” helping the author to gain “an entry ticket into academia” (Skeggs 1994, p. 86). I certainly recognised a similar process in my own writing. My power in writing the participants’ life stories is widened in the process of translation from Korean into English. Because some modification of what an interviewee said is unavoidable in the process of translating her words into English, there is much room for the researcher attempting to make that language comprehensible to (academic) readers, even though I aimed to best deliver the interviewees’ original meaning with nuance.

The issue of translation, in fact, has epistemological and ethical implications rather than merely practical and technical challenges (cf. Temple 2005). As my case

shows, the case of the dual translator/researcher role by “racial matching” of the researcher and the researched still needs reflexive consideration of representation issues. Again, this contests the assumption that “insider” status is unproblematic (Temple & Young 2004). Furthermore, doing research (or writing a thesis) in a foreign language (especially English), as in my case, involves a more complex level of concerns with representation, power relation and reflexivity due to the special relationships among the researcher, the researched, and the potential readers. Throughout the research process, my personal references to Korean migrant women frequently, and inevitably, roamed between “we” and “they”: the former showing my feeling of empathy and involvement, the latter showing my position as a researcher to deliver my findings to the readers, who are possibly non-Korean native speakers.

### ***Suda*: My Interview Style**

My style of talking to the participants about routine life and personal stories can be summed up by something Mee-Ran said jokingly after our interview: “I think this is a kind of thing with some drinking. Why don’t you do so?” That is, she felt that the mood of the interviews was more like informal conversation about life rather than an endeavour of formal academic research. Throughout the interviews, I employed an indigenous way of speaking known as “수다 *suda*” with attention to its feminist implication. The general definition of *suda* is “useless and excessive talking.”<sup>31</sup> It is comparable to the English words and phrases “chitchat,” “gossip,” “chatter,” and “hen session” that are used to disparage a way of talking that is associated with women. I believe that this very informal and easy way of speaking helped to realise the feminist principles in the research because it fostered friendly, intimate exchanges and because it typically deals with speakers’ everyday lives.

Although its positive meaning and usefulness as a socio-psychological function have been recently discussed in Korea, the term still bears a negative connotation. The denigration of *suda* is related to its connotation with women’s talking (S Oh 2005). I tried to bring the feminist implication in this way of talking into the research. By using *suda*, this research seeks out women’s private experiences

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<sup>31</sup> Korean Dictionary, the National Institution of Korean Language ([www.korean.go.kr](http://www.korean.go.kr)).

that are often dismissed as trivial in social contexts, such as political and economic affairs and ideologies. Here, in contrast, women's experiences are used as empirical and theoretical resources (Harding 1987). In fact, conversation on leisure time was related to the issue of isolation, and talking about shopping and eating naturally revealed their attitudes towards Korean-dominant places (New Malden and Korean restaurants, for example) in the course of the interviews.

Through doing *suda* together, many of the interviewees actively involved themselves in the research project and assessed the interviews as reflecting on their lives. Many of my interviewees said that they enjoyed the opportunity to reflect upon their experiences in the UK and the significance of their migration in their lives. Others expressed excitement at participation in a research project. Some interviewees offered me suggestions and assessment for the interview and the study. Through trying mutual understanding and involvement, I became a companion of the interviewees' narrating, and the interviewees became companions of my researching.

Meanwhile, in using *suda*, this research shows how women's stories of home are shaped against the dominant discourses that impinge on them. This communication style has an important role in women's oral culture. *Suda* is not only a major way for women to share information, but also a cultural practice that challenges the patriarchy (E Chang 1995). Through this self-presentation/self-representation, women can express the emotional pain that is caused by their oppressive environment. Korean women express their anger, sympathise with each other, and relieve stress by this informal way of speaking. In my research, the participants shared with me their dissatisfaction with a patriarchal and unequal society; and some of them described themselves as survivors and winners in a discriminatory environment, by using words such as "active," "adventurous" and "optimistic".

#### **1. 4. Thesis Organisation**

Chapter 2 will explore in detail the theoretical frameworks for research on Korean migrant women, offering a review of previous studies on current movements of people and the shifting identities that they foster. I will discuss the theoretical

implications of transnationalism, diaspora and long-distance nationalism to examine contemporary migrants' ongoing attachment to Korea and the re-construction of their identity in their new settings. In addition, I will discuss gendered desire, which is formed by a migrant's social background, as an explanation of women's migration. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the contested idea of "home" and its meaning for migrants and women.

The following chapters will trace the process of these migrant women's reflecting upon home, leaving home, making a new one, and reconsidering their position and the meaning of home, although these stages do not necessarily happen sequentially but usually happen simultaneously. Chapter 3 focuses on the reasons why Korean women migrate to the UK. By analysing their biographical narratives of their lives before migration and their decisions to move to the UK, I will discuss the main factors leading them to migrate. Moreover, I will examine the ways in which these women remember and understand the Korean society.

Chapter 4 will explore the strange experience of becoming an ethnic minority, and will discuss the impact of such an experience on the identity reconstruction and life strategies of these women, re-drawing their familiar map of race and ethnicity. I will look at several ways in which Korean migrant women experience discrimination and isolation while living in the UK—East Asians' invisibility in Britain, language problems, and prominent Orientalist images of Eastern women. In addition to their new understanding of racism through their experiences as an ethnic minority, the chapter will show how these women plan and strategise in order to achieve their goal, even as they recognise the gaps between their expectations and reality.

Chapter 5 and 6 will illuminate how Korean migrants make a new home in the UK, both individually and collectively. In Chapter 5, I will look at Korean collective home-making in the UK, concentrating on New Malden and other Korean networks. I will examine the differences between institutional and personal frameworks in expressing Korean-ness, and the dynamics within Korean communities in the UK. I will explore the influence of members' temporality, middle-class/high-education backgrounds on the culture of Korean communities.

Chapter 6 will then go on to examine gender issues within this process of home-making through looking at women's attitudes and strategies in relation to Korean migrant society. After looking at what Korean women think about Korean

migrant society, I discuss their strategies for negotiating Korean networks, such as “making distance”, “selective networking”, and “participating in an alternative community”.

In Chapter 7, I will examine what these women think of “home”. I will address the sense of home with attention to the matter of settlement, and informed by theories of home on the move. Through analysing what these women think they have missed and are trying to restore to their lives in the UK, I will explore what are for these migrant women the essential elements for constructing a home. This chapter will thus investigate the special features of the meaning of home and the transnational ties of Korean migrant women, and the ways in which these meanings and ties are different from those of other migrants.

In Chapter 8, I will turn to the issue of women and nation. Linking to notions of what it means to be a good citizen and to public attitudes within Korea towards overseas Koreans, I will examine how these young women try to become proper members of the nation in the contemporary Korean context.

Finally, Chapter 9 will summarise the thesis. To answer the research questions, this conclusion will review the characteristics of Korean migrant women’s seeking and making a home abroad in order to live their ideal lives. The chapter will also present the contributions of this research, its potential for future research and what remains to be studied.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study explores Korean women's migration trajectories through the framework of "home". The relevance of the concept of home in studying women's migration lies primarily in its paradoxical relationship with mobility and the contradictory characteristics of the involved dynamics. A further usefulness of this concept is that home encompasses diverse theoretical issues such as migration, gender, and nation/ethnicity. In fact, my research is informed by and draws upon a range of sociological literatures related to transnationalism, diaspora, and gender-nation relationships.

In this chapter, I will first discuss various theoretical concerns related to women's migration before concluding with an exploration of the concept of home. The first two sections deal with two concerns in studies of migration: the emergence of transnationalism and the gendering of migration. In the first section, after reviewing the transition from the framework of assimilation to that of transnationalism in the field of migration research, I will look at the implications of transnationality in migrants' lives, with special attention to the complexity of diaspora consciousness and long-distance nationalism. Then, I will discuss issues surrounding mobility, such as bipolarised movements. In the second section, I will discuss how these features of transnational migration are associated with gender, looking at the conclusions of several gender-aware researchers on migration and the apparent meanings of migration for women. Finally, I will discuss important factors in the conceptualisation of home—as a site of identity construction, a place of conflicts and tensions, as home on the move, and the special meanings of home for migrant women.

## **2. 1. Migration and Transnationality**

### **From Assimilation to Transnationalism**

With the increasing movement of people for purposes of migration and tourism, geographical mobility has become one of the keys to understanding lifestyle, identity and belonging in contemporary society (Knowles 2003). Increased levels of mobility and varied reasons for population movement have made it difficult to define “who is a migrant.” Migration, in the general sense, is “the relatively permanent movement of persons” (Faist 2000, p. 18) and traditional migration researchers, mainly concerned with more permanent migration, have dealt with issues of settlement and assimilation (Willis & Yeoh 2000).

However, the change in population movements requires reconsideration of this concept. In fact, the proportion of business people, tourists and students who travel abroad for definite periods of time has increased (Boyle et al. 1998, p. 28); short-term labour migration, for example, that of unskilled seasonal workers, guest-workers, and highly skilled professionals, has become more common (Willis & Yeoh 2000). As migrant channels have become wider and more transient, the distinctions among migration types have been eroded. The classical classifications such as economic migration, family reunion, and refugees cannot apply to all migrants. In particular, the distinction between temporary and permanent migration is no longer clear (Koser & Lutz 1997; Iredale 2001; Castles 2000).<sup>32</sup> The section starts with a discussion of this change in migration and the shift in approaches to migration.

On the basis of the belief that migration creates an ethnic minority group and a social distance between populations of migrant origin and their hosts (Castles & Miller 1993, Ch. 2), many migration studies have theorised the way in which migrant groups of people settle and integrate into their new residence. Theories of migrant incorporation have identified several models of migrant settlement and adaptation

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<sup>32</sup> The UK, the site of this study, is a clear case to show this diverse and shifting composition of migration. Since the early 1990s, immigration into Britain led to this society being characterised as “super-diversity” and “diversification of diversity”. This diversity is not only in migrants’ country of origin, language, and religions, but also in migration channels –workers, students, spouses and family members, asylum-seekers and refugees, and irregular, illegal or undocumented migrants. (Vertovec 2007)

such as acculturation, marginalisation, and assimilation. Acculturation is, according to Banks' definition (1999, p. 61), "the process that occurs when the characteristics of a group are changed because of interaction with another cultural or ethnic group". Berry (1987) categorises this process of ethnic minority acculturation into four types: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalisation. Integration means that ethnic minority migrants maintain their ethnic culture while participating in the mainstream at the same time. Assimilation indicates that migrants are absorbed into the host society while losing a sense of their culture and identity of origin. Separation suggests that migrants keep their own identity, usually living in an ethnic enclave, and do not join the host society. Lastly, marginalisation is the case where migrants do not adapt to the mainstream but also lose their culture of origin.

Assimilation theory describes the way in which ethnic minority groups take their language, traditions, values and behaviours and change their sense of belonging (Park & Burgess 1969; Gordon 1964). Assimilation is "a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common culture life" (Park & Burgess 1969, p. 735). Gordon (1964) adapts Park's theory to a multidimensional and temporal model to address migrants' progress towards the final stage of assimilation. Both Gordon and Park believe that it is inevitable for migrants to abandon their ethnic identity before being absorbed into the host society.

However, assimilation theory has been challenged by researchers such as Portes (1996), Rumbaut (1994), and Zhou (1997) who look at the diverse ways that migrants adapt to life in the US. These "segmented assimilation" theorists argue that migrants and their descendants show several ways of incorporation instead of "straight-line assimilation", upon which assimilation theory has insisted. Recently, assimilation theorists such as Alba (1997; 2005), Brettell and Hollifield (2000), and Hirschman (1983) have challenged the belief in the inevitable assimilation of migrants in classic assimilation theory. They do not assume that "assimilation is a universal outcome, occurring in a straight-line trajectory from the time of arrival to entry into the middle class," but rather argue that "no single casual mechanism explains immigrants' adaptation to their host society" (Alba & Nee 2003, pp. 38–39). Moreover, Brubaker (2001) argues that the concept of assimilation has been transformed, and that the understanding of assimilation has shifted from complete

absorption to similarity. Along with assimilation theory, “melting pot”, the metaphor of cultural assimilation in the US society has also been challenged. That is, contrary to the assumption within the concept of melting pot – to see assimilation as egalitarian and inclusive, some minority groups have been excluded (Healey 2004, p. 26).

In spite of the evolution of theories of incorporation through the decades, these theories have been limited to the migrants’ relationship to their host society. In recent studies on migration, however, greater attention has been paid to the fact that migrants maintain a relationship with their country of origin while living in their host country, instead of assuming that migrants simply leave behind their home country and assimilate into the new setting. Transnationalism, “the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement” (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992, p. 1) has emerged as an analytic framework in migration research in the last decade. The emergent concern with transnationalism means that what researchers observe extends from the migrants’ assimilation in the host country to their activities in both their host and home countries (Mahler 1998).

Transnationalism is used to describe contemporary migrants whose lifestyle and networks are formed across national borders (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992; Portes 1997; Portes et al. 1999; Vertovec 1999; 2001; Faist 2000; Levitt & Glick-Schiller).<sup>33</sup> A transnationalist perspective makes it possible to consider “home and migration in terms of a plurality of experiences, histories and constituencies and of the workings of institutional structures” (Ahmed et al. 2003, pp. 1-2). Glick-Schiller et al. (1992) consider two points as very important reasons for today’s transnationalism: first, economic and political insecurities caused by racism in the US and Europe, and second, the required loyalty of migrants to their home country for nation-building projects, in addition to the development of transportation and communication technologies. That is, transnational activities are initiated because

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<sup>33</sup> Especially in migration studies, transitional social relations based on this definition of transnationalism have actively investigated. My study also adapts this terminology. However, it needs to note that the use of the term in broader meaning, beyond migration: Transnationalism is used to refer to all practices, networks, and systems that establishes links across national boundaries. The studies using this terminology pay attention to the interactive influence of global and national dynamics on people’s life-world (Mau et al. 2008).

migrants have found that full incorporation into the receiving countries is difficult, and the sending countries consider their overseas populations as a resource.

What should be explored (and my study can contribute to this area) is diverse forms of transnationalism/diaspora among different groups and within a group. If the studies on transnational migration in the last decade have shown the existence of transnational ties and focused the relevance of transnationalism on understanding migrants lives, further studies should go beyond these issues. What kind of benefits do migrants expect from their transnational ties? Does the traditional notion of remittance still work? Transnational activities depending on a group's specific condition should be considered.

## **Diaspora**

Along with transnationalism, diaspora discourse reflects the current attention to people's relations with their areas of origin and their countries of residence. As the concept of diaspora was broadly used to refer to experiences, communities, and new identities caused by displacement and increasing attention to transnational lives, the two terms of diaspora and transnationalism (or transnational community) are often used synonymously. These terms are used interchangeably, due to their commonality in terms of deterritorialisation and challenging binary frames of thinking identity, while diaspora differs from transnationalism at some points. A diaspora is usually used to indicate a condition caused by forced displacement such as slavery and colonialism, whereas transnationalism refers to a lifestyle and activities related to increased contemporary forms of migration (Brettell 2006). Studies of diasporas, accordingly, focus on collective memory, engagement with country of origin and diasporic consciousness across generations. Also, the use of term diaspora focuses on its creation of a collective home away from home rather than leaving home country and travelling another region (Adachi 2006, pp. 2-3).

Since Safran (1991) suggested the criteria of diaspora<sup>34</sup>, the concept has been modified and expanded. The concept, which was originally a reference to the Jewish people, has been modified to include the communities of other dispersed people that have transnational networks (cf. Clifford 1994). Notably, Cohen (1997) used the example of six different categories of diasporas—victim diasporas, labour diasporas, imperial diasporas, trade diasporas, "homeland" diasporas, and cultural diasporas—and acknowledged that one diaspora group can fall into different categories. Furthermore, there has been a recent shift in diaspora debates. Current academic approaches to the notion of diaspora go beyond the actual social form, referring to specific groups.

As Brubaker (2005) notes, the term has been extended and the use of the term has noticeably changed. In fact, even the most broadly accepted criterion of diaspora, “dispersion”, “homeland orientation”, and “boundary maintenance”, have weakened. For this reason, he argues that a diaspora should be treated as “a category of practice, project, claim and stance, rather than as a bounded group” (Brubaker 2005, p. 13). In a similar manner, Wahlbeck (2002) argues that the concept of diaspora should be used to describe the distinctive culture and lifestyle of the communities that have moved from their area of origin. According to Vertovec (1997), apart from the use of diaspora as a social form, some approaches conceive of diaspora as a type of consciousness, an awareness of being “here and there”, focusing a dual or paradoxical nature. Another approach understands diaspora as a mode of cultural production, emphasising the fluidity of constructed styles and identities that are syncretic, creolised or translated. For example, Brah’s notion of “diasporic identities”, which are “at once local and global” and “networks of transnational identifications encompassing ‘imagined’ and ‘encountered’ communities” (1996, p 196) and

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<sup>34</sup> Safran’s six criteria of diaspora are: “Expatriate minority communities whose members share several of the following characteristics: 1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original ‘center’ to two or more ‘peripheral’, or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return – when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship” (Safran 1991, pp. 83–4).

“homing desire”, which is distinguished from desire for a specific homeland (1996, p. 180) is used to reconsider stable identities of bounded place. Therefore, the sociological meaning of diaspora is that it is helpful to rethink the relationship between area and belonging. As Gilroy (2000) states:

As an alternative to the metaphysics of “race,” nation, and bounded culture coded into the body, diaspora is a concept that problematizes the cultural and historical mechanics of belonging. It disrupts the fundamental power of territory to determine identity by breaking the simple sequence of explanatory links between place, location, and consciousness. (2000, p. 123)

In the strict definition of diaspora, Korean migrants in the UK do not constitute a diaspora, but literature on diasporas is useful for this study, given the expending and shifting uses of the concept, as discussed above. In researching Korean migrants, I draw on theories of diasporas as consciousness and cultural production, rather than as a specific population that fits the strict traditional criteria. The features of diasporas and transnationalism have a certain utility for interpreting and theorising the individual and collective formation of identity and culture in Korean communities in the UK, where the migrants are linked to Korea through business, the Internet, and kinship (as I will show in especially chapter 5 and 6 for Korean communities and individual ties to Korea, and also throughout the whole thesis). This is because both diaspora and transnationalism are used to depict the changes in social organisations and identity construction caused by globalisation and to show “how heightened social, economic, and political interconnectedness across national borders and cultures enables individuals to sustain multiple identities and loyalties, create new cultural products using elements from a variety of settings, and exercise multiple political and civic memberships” (Levitt & Waters 2002, p. 6).

### **Emancipatory Transnational Practice?**

Many scholars, who are interested in transnational living, have paid attention to hybridity, heterogeneity, and multiplicity in lifestyles and identity formation in transnational spaces. Rouse (1991) demonstrates the emergence of fractured subjects based on “bifocality” as an alternative cartography of social space, and Portes (1997, p. 812) states that people living in transnational spaces live “dual lives”. Brubaker

(2005) points out the “boundary-erosion” in diasporic communities. That is, the consciousness and identity of diasporic people are often dual or paradoxical, by virtue of their attachment to the homeland and participation in the society of their present residence at the same time (Agnew 2005). Moreover, some scholars have highlighted the emancipatory possibility of resistance. They insist that the crossing of borders and the forming of multi-identities liberate people from the power of capital and state. In Bhabha’s account (1990, p. 300) these characteristics of transnational experience form “counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries”, and this can “disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which ‘imagined communities’ are given essentialist identities”.

However, this raises questions about the celebratory tone of discussions of transnationalism and diasporas. Before praising a transnational/diasporic place as liberated, it should be remembered that experiences in a transnational/diasporic space are not only empowering and emancipatory but may also be uncomfortable and alienating (Anthias 1998; Ang 1996; Clifford 1994; Gilroy 1993). Guarnizo and Smith (1998) question the view of transnational activities and hybrid identities as counter-hegemonic, arguing that they are not always resistant:

[T]he liminal sites of transnational practices and discourses can be used for the purposes of capital accumulation quite as effectively as for the purpose of contesting hegemonic narratives of race, ethnicity, class, and nation. The dialectic of domination and resistance needs a more nuanced analysis than the celebratory vision allow. (Guarnizo & Smith 1998, p. 6)

Although transnational practices and identities are not fixed within national boundaries, this does not mean that they are necessarily “boundless” or “placeless” (Guarnizo & Smith 1998; Smith 2005; Yeoh et al. 2003; Ahmed et al. 2003). Rather, “the transnationalist discourse insists on the continuing significance of borders, state policies, and national identities even as they are often transgressed by transnational communication circuits and social practices” (Smith 2005, p. 3). That is, “transnational identities, while fluid and flexible, are at the same time grounded in particular places at particular times” (Lai et al. 2003, p. 3). In this sense, the transnational lives of people are still under the influence of their home country. A related concern is that the continuing influence of nations has the “tendency to reinforce absolutist notions of ‘origin’ and ‘true belonging’” (Anthias 1998). The

continued control of states is regarded as “long-distance nationalist” (Anderson 1992), where a “nation-state stretches beyond its geographical boundaries” (Basch et al. 1994).

“Long-distance nationalism” is defined as “a claim to membership in a political community that stretches beyond the territorial borders of a homeland” (Glick-Schiller & Fouron 2001, p. 4). According to Basch et al.’s (1994) observation, states consider their diaspora population as their citizens, so that a new form of nationalism develops, with some countries promoting the use of emigrants for nation-building projects. Homeland governments consider this dispersed population as a resource, and appeal for them to support government projects (Foner 1997). In addition to the needs of nations, Glick-Schiller and Fouron (2001) find another direction for long-distance nationalism —the standpoint of subalterns sharing their subordination and disempowerment in relation to global capitalists. From Haitian migrants’ whose long-distance nationalism is motivated by Haitian history, and by racism in the US, they contend that “long-distance nationalism reflects the tensions generated by the global reach of corporations and banks, continued political division of the world into separate and very unequal states, and longings of disempowered people to lead lives of dignity and self-respect” (Glick-Schiller & Fouron 2001, pp. 4–5). To sum up, constant relationship with and attachment to the country of origin include a government’s need to tie overseas population to its governmental dimension and migrants’ wish to improve their condition in both their host and origin countries.

Here, I suggest extending the discussion of long-distance nationalism and transnationalism to the matter of insider and outsider. In the context of a deterritorialised nation, who can belong to the nation as a proper member? In the wake of the economic crisis in Korea, the government tried to enact a law giving overseas Koreans the same status as Koreans at home in order to promote their business and investments in Korea. However, the law excludes Koreans (and Korean descendents) living in China and CIS, who are relatively poorer than migrants in countries like the US and Canada. Apart from this governmental and formal dimension, Korean people have various attitudes to overseas Koreans from praising them as proud Koreans to just ignoring some migrants. Successful stories of Korean/Korean descendents living outside Korea, praised by media, influence this attitude (see Chapter 8 for detailed discussion). It should be examined what makes

people feel togetherness and whom can be accepted as associates, if the geographical boundary is not the absolute condition to determine insider or outsider any longer.

## **2. 2. Gender and Migration**

### **Gendering Migration**

Since the 1980s, some pioneering articles and edited volumes (Phizacklea ed. 1983; Pedraza 1991; Chant ed. 1992; Buijs ed. 1993; Hondangneu-Sotelo 1999; Kofman et al. 2000; Willis & Yeoh eds. 2000) have criticised gender-blinded works on migration, and especially the idea that mobility is for men. They have also disputed the assumption that merely adding “sex” as a variable or sub-population in analyses is sufficient to understand migrant women. By focusing on migrant women and studying migration within the gender framework, more recent researchers have tried to overcome the limitations of previous migration research, and have revealed the hidden history of migration. These efforts are in response to “the feminisation of migration” (Castles & Miller 1993) in which women are moving across regions and playing a larger role than ever in migration throughout the world.

The logic of the feminisation of migration has usually been explained within labour migration as “the basic processes in the current phase of the capitalist world economy” (Sassen 1998, p. 130). The gendered dimension of the international division of labour, rooted in transnational capital and placing women in a subordinate position in the global economy, can help to explain women’s migration. As women are considered more docile, less organised, and more dispensable as labourers, they are more likely to work in unstable jobs as capital movement seeks cheaper and more flexible labour. In the interests of transnational capital, many women have entered sectors which typically consist of lower-income jobs, often in the shadow economy, such as sex-work, domestic labour, export-oriented production, and microfinance (Pyle & Ward 2003; Sassen 2000, 2001). By analysing the international division of labour, studies have dealt with contemporary female migration in terms of domestic and service labour (Hochschild 2000; Agustin 2003; Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000) and, more recently, in terms of skilled labour (Kofman &

Raghuram 2004; 2006). These studies offer a convincing response to how gender works in migration from a global perspective, and this approach also has the advantage of challenging previous studies which examine female migration within household strategy and individual decision making, depending on push and pull factors.

However, this approach focusing on global labour systems have rarely recognised migrant women's multiple subject positions, which may simultaneously be occupied by a woman, for instance, women can be victimised labourers but at the same time, can be global consumers pursuing their consumption desires (Silvey 2006). Moreover, this raises the question of how to explain and theorise female migration outside the labour market. In order to answer this, particularly in the case of female Korean migration to the UK, the *gendered desire for a different way of living* is one as important reason for migration. Several studies have treated migration as an important escape route from what women consider to be oppressive patriarchal social structures. Women's migration is caused not only by economic hardship but also by the desire to escape a repressive environment, and enter one in which they might have a greater capacity for decision-making (Phizacklea 1997; Willis & Yeoh 2000; Wright 1995).

Despite new consideration of women's desire to migrate, it is dangerous to suppose that migration is simply an escape from a patriarchal society, and we cannot assume that a host society is always a more equal society. Migrant women themselves do not expect such a gender paradise. Thus, I suggest that in order to consider gendered desire as a key factor of migration, at least two questions should be asked. How is a migrant's expectation for personal freedom in the provisional destination constructed before migration? Do they consider the possibility of facing another kind of patriarchal society after migration?

Meanwhile, as an effective way of working gender into migration research, the "gendered geography of power" (Passar & Mahler 2003) is useful in examining how gender works before and after migration. The "gendered geography of power", informed by Passar and Mahler (2003), is

[A] framework for analyzing people's gendered social agency – corporal and cognitive – given their own initiative as well as their positioning within multiple hierarchies of power operative within and across many terrains. (2003, p. 818)

A “gendered geography of power” is considered from three angles: “geographic scales”, or the way gender operates in a specific spatial and social dimension; “social locations”, which refer to a person’s position in power hierarchies; and the “gendered social imaginary” that migrant women and men have in their lives (Passar & Mahler 2003). The strength of this framework is in its call for more careful consideration of the background of migration and the details of a migrant’s position in society, rather than ascribing women’s migration to a single reason. In fact, researching gender and migration is more than simply revealing the differences between men and women by comparing the two. Rather, it is a search for the gendered factors that influence the decision to leave the native country and settle down in another country. In other words, a gender-aware migration study deals with gender as not just a variable and considers migration as a gendered process.

In the gendered geography of power, gender issues surrounding migration depend on the specific situation of the society in which the migrants are. To adapt this framework, Korean female migration can be understood within the “geographical scale” that traditional gender role and pressure to become a global citizen coexist, these women’s “social location” as a daughter, a female worker, or student whose role shaped by gender ideology and economic resource, and “gendered social imaginary” to achieve alternative life styles.

### **Gendered Desire for Migration**

The meaning of migrating to a new place can be related to the desire for, first, learning more about the world, and second, an ideal life. First of all, travelling away from home is considered to provide opportunities to produce knowledge about oneself and about the world (Molz 2004, p. 236). New experiences offer a more comprehensive view of the world. The migrant’s eyes can be opened through migration, and this is one of its obvious advantages. This means not only knowing something that one did not know before, but also rediscovering or overthrowing what one knew before. In doing so, the migrant can reconstruct values and knowledge. Here, the extended knowledge and broader view of the world, especially for voluntary migrants, could become a kind of cultural capital. For example, in Korea,

people who have lived abroad are often considered to be more open-minded and cosmopolitan.

In addition, women's transnational practices can be one strategy to achieve their ideal lifestyle and self. Moore's (1994) concept of "fantasies of identity" provides a starting point to examine the women's transnational strategies. Fantasies of identity are "ideas about the kind of person one would like to be and the sort of person one would like to be seen as by others" (1994, p. 66), and this makes individuals challenge or achieve different positions. Because people are exposed to a variety of images and models for their ideal lives in the globally interconnected world, "migration, as movement into another culture and society and as the idiom of a new life in a new country, emphasises migrant women's 'fantasies of identities', which, however, are never autonomous from women's previous social and economic locations" (Salih 2003, p. 12). This is related to emotional satisfaction on an individual level, and relates to real, material social and economic benefits (Moore 1994). On the basis of empirical research conducted with Moroccan migrant women in Italy, Salih (2003) proves that migrant women construct self and "home" using social and symbolic resources from both countries, and these transnational practices are "attempts to construct a social personhood by enacting strategies of optimisation of economic, social and symbolic resources" (2003, p. 9).

A desirable life, which is wished through going abroad, especially for Korean women in the context of globalisation, can be bound to cosmopolitan image. Some groups of people move across national boundaries and take part in activities that are not circumscribed by these boundaries. Along with Hannerz's (1990) concept of "cosmopolitans", "normative travellers" (Lash & Urry 1994), "mobile elites" (Bauman 1998), and "gentrifiers as transnational elite" (Rofe 2003) refer to the kind of people who actively participate in other cultures. In contrast to forced migrants, these privileged people enjoy the benefits of moving great distances. According to Hannerz,

A more genuine cosmopolitanism is first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other. It is an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity. To become acquainted with more cultures is to turn into an *aficionado*, to view them as art works. At the same time, however, cosmopolitanism can be a matter of competence, and competence of both a generalized and a more specialized kind. (Hannerz 1990, p. 239)

As exemplified in Hannerz's (1990) distinction of cosmopolitans from tourists and labour migrants, it is not difficult to notice the exclusivity of this concept of cosmopolitans.

The manner in which the cosmopolitan lifestyle and identity are represented and even recommended is problematic. It can be claimed that the representations of cosmopolitanism reproduce "the Western colonial image of the rational, autonomous individual, whose repressed other remains tied to land, labour, and home" (Brennan 1997, cited in Thomson & Tambyah 1999, p. 220). The root of the recommendation of cosmopolitan, according to Thomson and Tambyah (1999), can be traced in the legacy of colonial domination. Travel was considered as an essential for young men, who have responsibilities of empire, to have a worldly outlook and cultural attainment. This idea of travel, which is associated with cultural enrichment and self-development, once has built in European elites' class consciousness, and it remains in contemporary discourse on cosmopolitan, especially in the relationship with globalisation. This actually takes an ideological function to sustain the hierarchy of North-South/First-Third/Western-non Western (Thomson & Tambyah 1999). Tomlinson (1999) points out that the opportunities to become a cosmopolitan are not open to all people, and the desire to become part of such an elite in the global community is linked to the ideology of "cosmopolitans privileged over locals" (Tomlinson 1999, pp. 187–194). Westwood and Phizacklea (2000, p. 3) also find that "the celebration of globalisation and migrancy is a narrative embedded in a specific white metropolitan world and is a very partial way". In the representation of cosmopolitan, ironically, home –which has traditionally meant a safe and comfortable place– becomes a dull and vacuous place, whereas travel away from home is an adventurous action (Thomson & Tambyah 1999). These critical considerations of the problems surrounding mobility are useful in understanding the gap between people's desire for becoming cosmopolitans and the reality that they cannot do so, even for the majority of Korean migrants in the UK, who are neither forced migrants nor global elites.

In fact, extending knowledge and making a new way of life are achieved not merely through movement across national borders. For migrant women, this achievement involves tedious struggles with oppressive circumstances. Basically, this complexity and difficulty can be found in migrant women's position as an ethnic

minority in the host society. As Castles and Miller (1993, Ch. 2) put it, ethnic minorities are constructed through the cultural and historical consciousness of the members of that group, and through their exclusion by the majority group who see ethnic minorities as a threat to their national identity and the social order. This often shows through stereotypes of ethnic minorities, often presented as gendered images. For instance, as some researches on East and South Asians (Bhachu 1993; Parker 1995; M Song 1995; Kibria 1998; Pyke & Johnson 2003) have found, Asian women's images are constructed as fixed images of the others from a Western point of view. Asian women are stereotyped as passive subjects of a male-dominated society. As I will discuss in Chapter 4, many researchers have observed that Asian women's images are sexually commoditised, filled with reflections of male fantasies: "passive, weak, quiet, excessively submissive, slavishly dutiful, sexually exotic, and available to white men" (Pyke & Johnson 2003, p. 36). The construction of "Asian/minority/Eastern European/Muslim/Third World women" based on the "powerless/passive/static model" ignores Asian women's powers in generating their cultural systems and their roles as cultural entrepreneurs, and this makes it difficult to address internal variations in their femininity and sexuality (Pyke & Johnson 2003; Bhachu 1993).

The gap between migrant women's expectation of new way of life and the reality can be also found in the ties to their country of origin. Migrants continue to bond with their home society in through remittances, telephone calls, visits, and Internet activities like online communities and blogging. Aside from these direct connections, they also practice their home culture in the migrant community. A migrant group in the country of residence functions through sharing information and survival tips, protecting themselves from discrimination and cultural reification through rituals. However, there are also negative aspects. Considering diaspora as a gendered experience, Clifford (1997) asks whether diaspora experiences reinforce or loosen gender subordination, and points out how they do both. The connections with the home country perpetuate the patriarchal culture, while new cultural settings can allow alternative gender relations. In this regard, he maintains "community" as a site of both support and oppression, citing Gupta's (1988) description of the predicament of South Asian women.

Young women are...beginning to question aspects of Asian culture, but there is not a sufficiently developed network of Black women's support groups (although much valuable work has been done in this area) to enable them to operate without the support of community and family. This is a contradiction which many women are caught: between the supportive and the oppressive aspects of the Asian community...Patriarchal oppression was a reality of our lives before we came to Britain, and the fact that the family and community acted as sites of resistance to racist oppression has delayed and distorted our coming together as women to fight this patriarchal oppression. (Gupta 1988, pp. 27–29, cited in Clifford 1997, p. 260)

These struggles related to home country —both the sending country and their own ethnic communities in the host country— can be found in migrant women's everyday experiences. On the extended line of this, migrant women's relationship with home society can be explored in the frame of nation-gender relationship.

## **Gender and Nation**

Unlike the controlling idea of nation that assumes a homogenous society in which everybody equally participates and is treated the same, the nation has a highly gendered form of symbols reflecting a male-dominated, hierarchical structure. Feminist studies' challenges of the nation-women relationship have focused on revealing that nationalism consists of gendered discourse; women are crucial to the construction and reproduction of nationalist ideologies (Brah 1993; Mayer 2000; Yuval-Davis 1997a; Parker et al. 1992). In the line of binary gender difference, by contrast from men who are described as national actors such as leaders and soldiers, women are assumed as self-sacrificing mother for the male citizen. In the myths of motherhood, women become an icon of national territory and values, but they are treated as people who need the protection of males or should be carers for children, the future citizens (Boehmer 2005).

Compromising their actual as well as symbolic role, Anthias and Yuval-Davis identify five ways in which women have participated in ethnic and national processes

- (a) as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities;
- (b) as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups;
- (c) as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture;

- (d) as signifiers of ethnic/national differences – as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories;
- (e) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1989, p. 7)

The relations between gender and ethnic divisions are founded in a range of structures, from the household to the nation. For instance, shaping an ethnic boundary by defining membership of an ethnic group often depends on embodying certain gender attributes (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1983). From this perspective, gender is associated with ethnicity in a special way:

Women are often constructed as the cultural symbols of their collectivity, of its boundaries; as carriers of the collectivity's "honour" and as its intergenerational reproducers of culture. Specific codes and regulations are usually developed, defining who/what is a "proper man" and a "proper woman", which are central to the identities of collectivity members. (Yuval-Davis 1997a, p. 67)

Given that nationalism describes its object by using the vocabulary of the kinship of home (e.g. mother country) in order to denote the nation as naturally and inevitably tied to people, women are used as the symbol of group identity (Kandiyoti 1994). Kandiyoti (1994) also points out that women are regarded as the keepers of the culture, and since they are presumably less assimilated, it is believed that migrant women reproduce their culture through their native language, the persistence of culinary and other domestic habits, and the rearing of children.

The relationship between women and race/ethnicity or nation can be complicated, as shown in the conflicts between Western and indigenous cultures. The role of women and female sexuality is, as Narayan (1997) puts it, an important political battlefield between these cultures. For nationalists in the colonised world, the traditional feature of a woman is an authentic culture in opposition to Western power, while Western colonial powers portray that as primitive (Narayan 1997). Kandiyoti (1994) illustrates the complexities in the integration of women into nationalist projects in post-colonial societies as follows:

On the one hand, nationalist movements invite women to participate more fully in collective life by interpellating them as "national" actors: mothers, educators, workers and even fighters. On the other hand, they reaffirm the boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine conduct and exert pressure on women to

articulate their gender interests within the terms of reference set by nationalist discourse. (Kandiyoti 1994, p. 380)

Through ideological battles among Western cultural imperialists, enlightenment reformists, and anti-modernist nationalists, women are portrayed as “the victims of their societies’ backwardness, symbols of the nation’s newly found vigour and modernity or the privileged repository of uncontaminated national values” (Kandiyoti 1994, p. 388).

As Enloe (1989, p. 54) points out, nationalism, in collusion with masculinity, is used to control women’s sexual behaviour.

[it is] because they see women as the community’s and nation’s most valuable possessions; the principal vehicles for transmitting the whole nation’s values from one generation to the next; bearers of the community’s future generations – crudely, nationalist wombs; the members of the community most vulnerable to defilement and exploitation by oppressive alien rulers; and most susceptible to assimilation and cooption by insidious outsiders.

How, then, does the logic of masculine nationalism’s influence on women operate in migrant context? In order to examine this, this discussion about nation-gender relations should be connected to long-distance nationalism that I looked at earlier. The way in which women’s relation with nations is transferred (or remains constant) through their geographical mobility should be illuminated. Also, the relation should be examined from women’s point of view. That is, beyond the way nationalism controls women, it should be addressed how migrant women negotiate and change their relation with their nation and how they have a sense of belonging.<sup>35</sup> I will deal with Korean women’s re-establishment of their relationship with nation through going abroad especially in Chapter 8.

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<sup>35</sup> The issue of nation-migrant women relationship can be also understood as women’s citizenship, given that “citizenship is an important way in which the relationship between the individual and then nation-state has been theorised” (Waylen 1996, p.14). In particular, the benefit of examining the citizenship issue to understand migrant women can be found in the features of citizenship. People have different rights and memberships depending on status, such as gender, class, and ethnicity (Yuval-Davis 1997b; Vogel 1991; Lister 1997); citizenship is constructed with multiple layers of local, ethnic, national, state, cross- or trans-state, and supra-state factors in specific historical contexts (Yuval-Davis 1999).

### 2. 3. “Home”

This study looks at Korean migrant women’s lives through the framework of “home-making” in relation to geographical movement. In a traditional sense, home is “the stable physical centre of one’s universe—a safe and still place to leave and return to (whatever house, village, region, or nation), and a principal focus of one’s concern and control” (Rapport & Dawson 1998, pp. 6–7). However, this traditional conceptualisation does not adequately capture the contemporary meaning of home (Rapport & Dawson 1998). Instead of adopting such a fixed and stable concept, a broader and more dynamic understanding of home is needed.

Above all, home is a site related to individual and collective identity and belonging. Although home is linked to a specific place, the concept of home is not only about a physical place of residence, but also a symbolic space of belonging and identity, with both lived and structured meaning. The concept of home integrates desires, fantasies, representations, and the culture of individuals and groups, beyond the construct of a dwelling place (Rapport & Dawson 1998). Rather than a dwelling or house, home can be a set of practices, i.e. “the untold story of a life being lived” (Berger 1984, p. 64). The meaning of home can therefore be described as follows:

[N]ot only territorial attachment, but also adherence to transportable cultural ideas and values. Often a great sense of belonging to a specific place is accompanied by the wish to reproduce and/or reinvent “traditions” and “cultures” associated with “home”. It is not only national, cultural and social belongings, but also a sense of self, of one’s “identity” which corresponds to various conceptualizations of home. (Al-Ali & Koser 2002, p. 7)

Moreover, as Rapport and Dawson (1998) suggest, home should be considered in its connection to movement. The relationship between home and movement can be found in the way that people use social spaces. As many scholars of global culture point out (Albrow 1997; Appadurai 1990; Beck 2000; Bauman 1998; Robertson 1992), significant social changes—particularly the relationship between lifestyle and locality—have recently been driven by geographical mobility and communication technology. While the social practices of everyday life were in the past set in a single geographic space, social spaces today expand to more than one geographical space. Now, people’s daily lives and economic activities must be located in a broader space, and social interaction extends beyond merely local

boundaries. Both lifestyle and the sense of belonging that were once intimately connected to a geographical locality are being transformed (Conradson & Latham 2005). That is, “pluri-locally spanned transnational social spaces” (Pries 2000, p. 3) have evolved with multi-polar geographic orientations. Given that home is a concept related to identity, our conceptualisation of it needs to keep pace with the point of view that identity is not essentialist and fixed, but strategic and positional—a concept that is changing as well as involving its root (Hall 1996).

In this context, home, as a site where one feels a sense of belonging, is becoming mobile: one can move among multiple homes, or be at home in movement—that is, feel a sense of belonging within the very process of change or the creolisation of home culture (Rapport & Dawson 1998). The mobility of a population, moreover, poses questions about belonging to a place, and shows that “there are always movements—of populations, of struggles, of ideas—that unsettle and resettle relations within, between, and beyond its borders” (Ilcan 2002, p. 3). From this point of view, home is “where people come from and where they travel to” (Armbruster 2002). Together with this feature of home as a site of identity construction, as Clifford puts it (1997, p. 2), identity is formed in “dwelling in travel” rather than through a fixed home or dwelling.

Another challenge to the concept of home is that home is not always the comfortable and peaceful ideal, but rather can itself be a site of shifting dynamics. Feminist critics have long questioned the concept of home as a shelter or haven. As Olwig (1998) maintains, home is not only a site where one searches for identity, but also an important site to reflect on the relations of inclusion and exclusion. Home is an arena where the structures of power are embedded and different interests contest one another. The stability that is implied in the white, Euro-American version of home, which is as a fixed place and as emotionally safe point for individual and collective memories, has been denied to marginalised groups (Straight & Behar 2005). Home includes potential conflicts based on each person/group’s position, so that even in the same dwelling, the sense of home which individuals hold varies with their social position (Olwig 1998). That is, home is differently experienced and remembered depending on class, gender, sex, and race (Ahmed 2007; Fortier 2003; Mohanty 2003; Brah 1996).

From this perspective, home is also a site of resistance (hooks 1990). Through her study of black women’s experiences, hooks argues that home is not a

restful and politically neutral space, but a space in which to produce critical thought and a crucial site in the black liberation struggle.

Indeed the very meaning of “home” changes with experiences of decolonization, of radicalization. At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. (hooks 1990, p. 148)

Here, it seems especially worthwhile to think about the relationship between home and women. Indeed, a whole and stable identity which is associated with the idea of home has not been free from feminist criticism (Young 1997). The critical attitude within feminist studies points out that the idea of home often carries with it the weight of patriarchal ideology. That is, women are supposed to be selfless nurturers, fulfilling domestic tasks inside the house. However, Young (1997) argues that there is also a positive value in the idea of home: women’s domestic work includes meaning-making activities, and this could ultimately encourage a sense of agency, in turn causing women to understand and arrange things attached to themselves as meaningful. Young insists that the liberating value of home can be found in its function of preserving the oppressed people’s culture. Again, hooks’ experience of home as a site of resistance to an exploiting environment is a clear example of a re-implication of home.

Regarding moving away from home, McDowell (1999) points out that women’s leaving home and travelling challenge the traditionally close relationship between home and women, which has implied femininity and domesticity identified as home. However, this possibility is itself contested by some cases of Asian woman migrants who work as domestic carers. This is due to two facts: first, such women’s migration is justified in terms of their role as “dutiful daughter/good mother”, which is supposedly manifested by their support of their families; second, these women are obligated by their role as “ethnomarkers”, keeping up the traditional values of the host countries (Huang et al. 2000). Indeed, women’s leaving home is a complex issue, which has the possibility both to reinforce and to challenge the traditional home-women relationship. Women’s social and economic resources also contribute to this picture: as evidenced by Korean women in the UK, the migration of women who have educational and financial resources to the extent that they are relatively

free of familial obligations tend to challenge notions of duty and tradition, even as their counterpart Asian women domestic workers uphold these values—as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, regarding migration decisions, and Chapter 7, regarding ideas of being a daughter away from the family.

Meanwhile, the notion of home can have special meanings for migrants whose home is on the move. First of all, the question of home is “a profoundly political one” for many migrants (Mohanty 2003, p. 126), due to certain distinctions and exclusions within the idea of home. Recalling her own experiences as an Indian in the US, Mohanty (2003) treats the meaning of home as a political subject: as a foreign student expected to go back home, she was treated by people in the US as one who did not belong in US society. The question “when are you going home?” is, therefore, exclusive and subtly racist. This position of minority or *other* in the US, at the same time, a member of a majority and an *absent elite* in India, shows a great complexity in ideas of home/nation/community. Her green card aroused the envy of her relatives, but caused suspicions among her leftist and feminist colleagues in India.

Brah (1996) conceptualises home for those in diaspora. For her, home is on the one hand a “mythical place of desire in the diasporic imagination” that creates a longing to feel at home, and, on the other, “the lived experience of a locality” that involves specific feelings in a specific environment (Brah 1996, p. 192). That is, for diasporic people, although they do not necessarily yearn to return to their country of origin, home is the object of their longing, and these people have a desire to *feel at home* in their current residence.

Migrants’ home-making is done in strategic ways. For example, Castles and Davidson (2000, pp. 130–132) describe the way in which migrants make a new home as “home-building” and as “place-making”. Home-building is “the building of a feeling of being at home” based on four feelings: “security, familiarity, community and a sense of possibility” (Hage 1997 p. 102, cited in Castles & Davidson 2000 p. 131). By using material goods and cultural symbols from their homeland, migrants try to feel at home—yet this is not simple nostalgia. Rather, as the fourth feeling—a sense of possibility—shows, they build a new sense of home as an outpost from which to explore opportunities in the society in which they are newly settled. Meanwhile, the idea of place-making indicates a special dimension of home-building. Ethnic groups reshape their neighbourhood by setting up businesses and

employing members of their ethnic group. In this way, they make visible changes to urban spaces—for example ethnic markets and signs on shops—and transform their own communities to protect themselves from discrimination (Castles & Davidson, 2000).

In a similar way, Fortier (2000) explores migrants' home-making through "memory work" such as rituals, festivals, and ceremonies, using the case study of Italian churches in London. These kinds of community events are an expression of the presence of the migrants themselves, and these cultural practices of "remembering" actually shape the physical places and buildings to reflect their cultural identity (Fortier 2000).

Through activities and rituals related to the home society, migrants preserve the culture that they had before migration. However, this is more than just "maintaining" culture; it is also "changing" it. "What we are" is not "what we were", as Gilroy puts it, since "identity must be demonstrated in relation to the alternative possibility of differentiation, because the diaspora logic enforces a sense of temporality and spatiality" (1994, p. 26). In this regard, "being a Korean woman" does not mean simply accepting a traditional cultural norm or fixed image, but is the result of challenging and negotiating them. Korean migrants choose to both maintain and change their home culture. These cultures are the product of the migrants' rejection of the negative aspects and the selection of the positive aspects of "Koreanness". Their extension of their knowledge of the world and their attempts to live in a new way mandate some challenges to, and negotiations with, the prejudices and pressures of being proper Korean women in the networks created in transnational space.

## **Conclusion**

The study utilises the concept of "home" to understand Korean migrant women's experiences. This is primarily because the shifting ideas of home, which have been examined in previous literature contesting the traditional meaning of home as a fixed physical place giving a shelter, include settling and travelling and inner-dynamics. Home in a contemporary social context is related to individual and collective identity

and belonging, is connected to movement, and can have dynamics in various power relations.

Rather than simply asking where their home is (or which is their home), the thesis focuses on Korean migrant women's re-thinking of home and practices of home-making. Theoretical issues surrounding *home and migrants* and *home and women* give particularly important consideration to exploring the meaning of home for migrant women's lives. Regarding migrants' homes, transnationality is a key issue in understanding contemporary migration, extending an approach from an assimilation process in only the host society to cross-borders experiences and strategies of migrants' everyday lives. As regards women's homes, women's motivation and experiences of migration can reveal the gender politics in various social relations in which she is located (from the family to the nation). Migrant women's transnational activities, therefore, can show their agency to deal with these gendered social relations.

The following chapter will illuminate the first step of the process of identity re-formation through migration—remembering Korean society. Through looking at how Korean migrant women reflect on their home society and how they conceive of their position in that society, I will examine the reasons to search out a new home away from home.

## CHAPTER 3

### REFLECTING HOME

This chapter addresses why Korean women decided to go abroad and how they remember their home society. By looking at these women's life stories, the chapter explores the reasons for women's migration from Korea to the UK, which is difficult to be explained by other rationales such as gendered international division of labour or strong political/colonial relationship between two countries. The chapter traces the individual migrants' stories, with particular attention on what these women *desired*, as mentioned in Chapter 2. "Politics of desire" and of becoming is a powerful way to conceptualise life; it is important to look at their biographies not only "from the standpoint of people's accomplishments," but also "from what people desired" (hooks 1994, p. 217). Following this, this chapter will examine the reasons that these Korean migrant women went in search of another home and what social and cultural conditions construct their desire.

The first section examines women's status in Korea, the Korean way of modernisation, and the recent discourse on globalisation as a background to Koreans' thoughts about their home society. The subsequent section deals with what Korean migrant women understand and value in their home society through their movement to a new area. The third section explores the ways in which work and education led to these women's decision to go abroad and how their family influenced their migration and their lives in the UK. By associating their view of Korea with their reasons for staying in the UK, this discussion will infer the meaning of migration for these women's lives and the context of their expectation of an alternative home.

### 3. 1. Reflecting Home Society

#### Korean Women Today

One of the reasons why Korean young women leave Korea and want to stay in the UK should be understood in the context of women's status. These women find a gap between their consciousness as independent women and their subordinate status, and this gap provides women the motivation to go abroad. In order to understand today's Korean women and the traditional Korean gender ideology, it is necessary to look at Confucianism. Although Confucianism is no longer a state ideology, Confucianist values and ethics continue to shape Koreans' ideas and practices in marriage, family structure and social relations, emphasising social stability and hierarchy (E Kim 1998; Y Kim 2005; Kim & Finch 2002; Park Matthews 2005).

Male-centred Confucian traditions developed such discriminatory doctrines as “현모양처” *Hyun Mo Yang Chŏ* —wise mother and good wife, which idealised the submissive wife and altruistic mother. The “남존여비” *Nam Jon Yŏ Bi* —respect for men but not for women— belief also originated from the Confucian concept of a woman's inherent inferiority, and the relegation of women to a life of self-sacrifice (E Kim 1998). In family norms, some principles such as “남녀유별” *Nam Nyŏ Yu Byŏl* —men and women are originally different— and “내외법” *Nae Oe Bŏb* —women's place in the domestic sphere versus men's place in the public sphere— emphasise that women's first duty is to family and home (Y Kim 2005). Another important concept is “효” *Hyo* —filial piety. Whereas the ideas mentioned above have been challenged and are now considered outdated, “효” *Hyo* is still accepted as a traditional virtue worthy of preservation. Despite its admirable respect for parents and the elderly, this idea is often used to force women, especially daughters-in-law, to sacrifice themselves, because the responsibility to look after aging parents is usually assigned to women.

However, it is impossible to explain today's Korean women only in terms of traditional Confucian ideology; recent changes in gender relations and women's status must be considered. There have been significant legal and institutional reforms

for gender-equality in Korea since the late 1980s. A number of laws pertaining to women have been enacted and amended in the last two decades.<sup>36</sup> As a recent example, in March 2005, the National Assembly passed a law abolishing the “호주” *Hoju* system<sup>37</sup>, the family registry system that recognised only males as representative of the family.

These changes are the results of the growth of feminist scholarship and women’s movements. Since 1977, numerous universities have offered women’s studies classes and launched a postgraduate program of women’s studies. Many universities also set up institutes and published faculty research<sup>38</sup>. Apart from the academy, strong women’s movements triggered the demand for more gender-equality in Korea. Based on the social and labour movement of the 1970’s, women’s rights activists founded organisations and lobbied for democracy and gender equity in the 1980s. Women’s student unions, women farmers’ associations, and women workers’ organisations were created and formed alliances. “Progressive” women’s movements flourished with 민주화운동 *Minjuwha undong* (the People’s Democracy Movement in the 1980s), and focused on the protection of working class women, especially manual workers (S Lee 1994; S KimKee 2004). Against the background of civil society and democratization, the Korean women’s movement of the 1990s and 2000s has dealt with more diverse issues such as peace, environment, sexual violence and trafficking, and its organisations have become more specialised. These feminist groups have contributed to legal and institutional changes and called public attention to gender issues (S KimKee 2004).

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<sup>36</sup> The Equal Employment Opportunity Act came into force in 1987 and was revised in 1989, 1995, and 1999; the Act on the Punishment of Sexual Crimes and Protection of Victims Thereof of 1994 was amended in 1997 and 1998; the Women’s Development Act was enacted in 1995; the Act on the Support for Female-owned Business and the Gender Discrimination Prevention and Relief Act were enacted in 1999 (Korean Women’s Development Institute, 1999, *Korean Women Now* <http://www.kwdi.re.kr>). In addition to these legal achievements, the Ministry of Gender Equality (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family at the present) is established for the purpose of planning and compiling women’s policies and prevention and relief of gender discrimination in 2001.

<sup>37</sup> Under this system, one person (the oldest male member) is recorded as the head (*hoju*) of the family. If the head dies, the title must be transferred to another member. The first in line is a male descendent of the former *hoju* (his son, grandson, great grandson) (<http://antihoju.jinbo.net>) Even though the *Hoju* system caused many problems and children can only take their father’s surname, the system had not been previously abolished because of the strong opposition of Confucians and conservatives.

<sup>38</sup> Korean Women’s Development Institute, 1999, *Korean Women Now* (<http://www.kwdi.re.kr>)

Although the public is now more aware of the demand for gender equality, there is still inequality. The most serious situation can be found in the workplace. The average monthly wage of female employees is only 64% (1,672,720 KRW) of what their male counterparts earn (2,629,549 KRW) (in 2005).<sup>39</sup> During the economic crisis of 1997-8, there were attempts to revive patriarchal ideology and either remove women from the workplace or minimise their role in it. The failure to expand the social safety net under the agenda of 세계화 *segryehwa* (literally meaning globalisation) during the Kim Young Sam period (1992-1998) left Korean workers vulnerable. The unemployment rate in July 1998 was the highest since 1966 (Gills & Gills 2000; Kim & Moon 2000), and women workers were particularly exposed to bad conditions. Throughout the financial crisis, female workers became the target of the covert “lay off women first” policy and full-time women workers were relegated to temporary, part-time, daily and dispatched workers. This is largely due to patriarchal assumptions that see men as breadwinners and women as secondary earners (Kim & Finch 2002; J Park et al. 2000). The problem of women’s irregular labour has become a more serious issue. Seventy percent of female wagedworkers are engaged in irregular work, while 46% of male workers are irregular labour, and the average monthly wage of female irregular workers is 37% of that of male regular workers as of August 2003. This reflects serious job insecurity in women’s employment and double discrimination of employment type and gender to women irregular workers (H Jung 2004). Such remaining gender inequality is one of the subjects of criticism to Korean society for Korean women, who have benefited from higher education and feminist movements.

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<sup>39</sup> Source: Gender Statistics Information System, Korean Women’s Development Institution (<http://gsis.kwdi.re.kr>)

## **“Compressed Modernisation” Complex<sup>40</sup>**

In order to understand Korean migrants’ attitudes to their home society, it is also necessary to look at the complicated and distorted modernisation process, known as “unaccomplished modernisation,” (Kang & Park 1997) “compressed modernisation,” (K Chang 1999) and “rush-to development” (Hart-Landsberg 1993). Tracing its history, the modernisation of Korea began in the late Chosŏn dynasty of the late 19th century when commerce and industry, rationalist thought in academia, and struggles against feudalism converged. A full scale modernisation project, however, was tried under Japanese colonialism, but it obliterated the modernity which had emerged in the Chosŏn dynasty. Rather than having a modernisation based on rationality and autonomy achieved over a long time, Korean modernisation was imposed by the Japanese colonial project. It rushed to plant Western modernity into Korea without first liquidating pre-modernity, and there was tension and negotiation between nationalism and Western-style modernisation (S Kim 2004).

Korean modernisation gained momentum in the 1960s. The regime of Park Cheong Hee (1963-1979) adopted a strategy of modernisation that was to provoke economic growth that would “catch up” with Western economy and technology (S Kim 2004; S Han 1998; D Kim 1998). For this project, Park’s regime drove the policy to support capital but to control labour in order to drive export-centred industrialisation. The regime encouraged the accumulation of capital by suppressing labour movements and by keeping labour legislation to limit workers’ rights. In order to achieve the modernisation project, the regime mobilised the population by using the slogan “growth first!” President Park repeatedly invoked the tragedy of the Korean War and the memory of extreme poverty to emphasise the significance of bringing the nation to prosperity. This strategy was used to appease popular

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<sup>40</sup> Modernity and modernisation are complicated so that there were many sociological debates on these issues, although industrialism, bureaucracy, dominance of secular and rationalist cultural values can be generally accepted as defining characteristics of modernity (Hall et al. 1992, Introduction). While confusing use of “development” as synonym and “tradition” as antonym of modernisation has been challenged (Harrison 1988; Gusfield 1967), discussions on modernisation in non-Western societies still inevitably involve issues of its relationship with Westernisation and dilemmas to apply Western model to address their own modernisation process. The reason why I put the word “complex” here is because this section is about the features of Korean modernisation setting Western “civilised” states as standard and Korean people’s attitudes to reflect the process, rather than about the measurement of modernisation in Korean society.

resistance to his dictatorship. In this way, Korean modernisation went ahead, putting “economic growth first,” and ignoring democracy. The regime associated this slogan with nationalism and the patriarchal family based on Confucianism<sup>41</sup>, in the name of Korean “tradition.” President Park planted a sense of loyalty in government and of filial piety in the family into people’s minds through schools, mass media and public campaigns (S Kim 2004).

Although Korea has escaped from extreme poverty, Korean people have been faced with the ill-effect of this haphazard way of modernisation that survived even after the end of Japanese colonialism and the Park Cheong Hee’s regime. Korean modernisation and its consequences have revealed its systematic problems. A series of tragic accidents made the Korean people realise the structural pitfalls and dangers of their “growth first” economy-driven compressed modernity. The collapse of the Söngsu Grand Bridge over the Han River in 1994, the collapse of Sampoong Department Store in Seoul in 1995, and the underground gas explosions in Daegu city in 1995, resulted in hundreds of casualties. All these accidents were a result of accelerating construction which emphasised speed at the expense of safety. In addition, traffic, industrial and pollution-related accidents put more stress into Korean life (K Chang 1999; S Han 1998). The shock of the economic crisis in 1997-8 also conjured up memories of the abnormal compressed development of the past. H ChoHan (2000, p.55) claims that this crisis had an enormous impact on Korean society and finds the possibility of self-reflection.

[A] “compressed rush-to development” creates a feeling of powerlessness. It draws people into a logic of dichotomies and deprives them of the capacity for self-reflection. The overwhelming speed and out-of-synch timing weakens the ability and will for mutual understanding by instrumentalizing others. However, I believe, and I hope, that in the current crisis, many residents in South Korea will begin to feel that it is now necessary to rectify the unevenness of development and to create a new, balanced society.

For Korean people, quick economic growth is the root of complex feeling towards their country —on the one hand, pride for economic status and quick recovery from

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<sup>41</sup> There is continuity between family and state in Confucianism. According to HS Kim, “the sovereign’s relationship to his subjects was constantly assimilated through the analogy of a father’s relationship to family members, most specifically to his son and wife.” (HS Kim 1993, p. 50)

extreme poverty after the Korean war, on the other hand, shame for the neglect of social and cultural aspects.

### **Korean Globalisation: Being Global, Being Competitive**

If the “compressed modernisation” complex is a key factor in Korean migrants’ memory of home (to be discussed later), the discourse of globalisation in South Korea is the backdrop of Korean emigration. This is because the social mood surrounding globalisation in Korea gives motivation to seek an alternative home outside Korea. The agenda to become a global citizen reached its peak with the slogan “세계화 *Segyehwa*” (globalisation) coined by the Kim Young Sam regime in 1993–1994 and later embraced by the Kim Dae Jung regime (S Kim 2000). In the Sydney Declaration of 17 November 1994, President Kim Young Sam’s administration (1993–1998) announced the drive for globalisation and set up the Globalisation Promotion Committee (*Segyehwa Ch’ujin Wiwŏnhoe*) in order to reform education, science and technology (G Shin 2003).

Fellow citizens: Globalization is the shortcut which will lead us to building a first-class country in the 21st century. This is why I revealed my plan for globalization and the government has concentrated all of its energy in forging ahead with it. It is aimed at realising globalization in all sectors – politics, foreign affairs, economy, society, education, culture and sports. To this end, it is necessary to enhance our view points, way of thinking, system and practices to the world class level....we have no choice other than this. (President KIM Young Sam, 6 January 1995, quoted in S Kim 2000, p.1)

*Segyehwa* is not exactly the same as globalisation. Rather, this is “Korea’s unique concept compromising political, economic, social and cultural enhancement to reach the level of advanced nation in the world” (S Kim 2000, p.3). In all the aspects of the society, *Segyehwa* highlights survival in the race of intense international competition. This government-driven slogan can be understood as “the second neo-conservative modernisation agenda (Kang & Park),” which resembles the modernisation project of the Park Cheong Hee regime in the 1960s in Korea. That is,

the highest priority of national policy is to increase competitiveness of the state by emphasising economic development based on neo-liberal principles.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the failure of President Kim Young Sam's 세계화 *Segyewha* plan, as shown in the 1997-1998 economic crisis, the emphasis on national competitiveness influenced Korean people's everyday lives. The catchphrase "Becoming a global citizen" not only strengthened international competitiveness, but also individual competitiveness. In the name of "global talent" raising projects, many universities and companies emphasise job seekers and employees' ability such as foreign language. For example, proficiency in English has become one of the prerequisites for a good job because many companies require their applicants to earn a high score on tests like the TOEIC. Here, the word "글로벌 global", which has been commonly used in Korea, has meaning of a contrast to national –Korea. That is, while Korea is not considered as a part of the globalised world, "global" refers to the world outside Korea. This "global" space is conceptualised as a more reasonable and modernised society compared with Korea (Y Kang 2007). Indeed, becoming a global citizen and enjoying global culture, in the Korean context, means becoming a cosmopolitan, who experiences the world outside Korea. Reflection on Korean modernisation and the social atmosphere to seek "global" are dominant throughout the participants' telling their memory of home country, as I discuss in the following sections.

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<sup>42</sup> At the same time, it became popular to find out "what Korean identity is." The policy of globalisation stressed the importance of Korean values such as the patriarchal family (Kang & Park 1997). President Kim Young Sam explained "Koreans should march out into the world on the strength of their own culture and traditional values. Only when the national identity is maintained and intrinsic national spirit upheld will Koreans be able to successfully globalize." A proliferation of festivals and events in cities (cf. G Shin 2003), commodities characterised by traditional Korean images, popular catchwords such as "한국적인 것이 세계적인 것이다- it is universal thing that is Korean!" are good examples of this.

### 3. 2. Memory of Home

#### Stress and Backwardness

The women interviewed for this study recalled Korean society as strict, hectic, and stressful: “I never thought about not going abroad. It was just natural. Why do I have to stay in such a small country all my life?” (So-Ra) and “I didn’t feel living in Korea is overwhelming before, but I realised how tight and stuffy it was [after coming to the UK]” (Jee-Young). Their thoughts about Korea were clear, especially in their answers as to their favourite activities in the UK and their first impression of the UK. Most participants refer to parks as a benefit of the UK, where parks are not just physical places. Rather, they are symbols of peace, calm, and the ability to enjoy life.

Young: What do you like in London?

Min-Ju: Well...Environment here is better than Korea, isn’t it? There are a lot of parks. That’s what I like here. (...) Compared to Koreans, British people have an easy and composed attitude. Of course, Londoners may also be as busy as Koreans. But, anyway, there is no person interfering with me here. (Min-Ju)

When I arrived here, it was summer. Sky...I didn’t know how beautiful the British sky was. In Korea, I used to pass through the subway of the crowded [Seoul] city hall area. We didn’t look to the sky properly because of the high buildings, did we? And I like the green grass, which is mentioned by everybody. Yeah...that’s what I like...And, I’ve gained weight. (...) Nobody pushes me to schedule my life strictly, and I am not extremely busy. I think this makes me gain weight. Indeed, I was so thin in Korea. That’s because of stress. I was always under stress. And I wasn’t able to eat properly because of such a busy schedule in the company. It was really stressful. I had stomach trouble. So, I was so skinny that my friends told me to gain weight. But here, I feel calm, though I feel lonely. (Seo-Yeon)

In contrast to their hard work and busy schedules in Korea, which are reflected in the urban scenes, such as tall office buildings and apartments, British parks remind Koreans of composure and healing.<sup>43</sup> These migrants find the nostalgic image in Britain to be the counterpart of Korean urbanism, as evidenced by the fact that they

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<sup>43</sup> See Chapter 5 for a discussion of Korean migrants’ place-making in the UK.

are impressed by parks rather than various other features of the UK (or even of the metropolitan city London). This does not fit the common notion of the West being developed while the East is primary/nostalgic. However, this does not necessarily mean that Korean migrants' impression of the UK is counter-Orientalism (Moeran 1996) or Orientalisation of the European other. Rather than the pre-modern and pre-industrial image, these migrants find the British scene and lifestyle to be more advanced than what Korean people have achieved thus far.

What I feel here is...It seems to be an advanced culture, I'm not sure though...Here, people do take a rest. They take a break with having tea. [They] always work slowly. They don't like to rush. I did a task very quickly at first at the company. I thought I had to finish it quickly. But [my colleagues] said it looked messy and I didn't need to hurry. Well...in Korea, doing it speedy is the best, though...If we work slowly, it would result in blame in Korea. (Yun-Jee)

It's always busy and tough [in Korea]. Here, taking a rest seems to be very important, it might not have been important in the past though. But, in Korea, people just work hard, and sometimes they don't realise why they work. (...) In the tube station, I've hardly seen people running here. But [Korean people] often run and are always busy. Hmm... service is very quick in Korea. That's a good thing. But from their [service providers'] point of view, that is a burden to stand by 24 hours a day. (Bo-Ram)

These migrants women I interviewed also appreciate British people's attitudes about such issues as taking a break and going on holiday as a composure, aspects of advanced culture. This is fairly associated with their reflection on and complaint about Korean society.

In regards to how Korean migrants come to see the problems in their home country, many participants of the study cite crossing the street as a big difference between Britain and Korea. In describing her new experience in the UK, Jee-Young recalls the problems back home.

You know what? Here, people cross the road when the red light is on. This is not a serious violation of the traffic regulations here. Always pedestrian first! (...) Yesterday, my friend and I were walking together on the street, and we thought the car lane is like a pavement because cars usually wait for people. This cannot even be imagined in Korea. My friend said that she was once slapped by a driver when she crossed the road in Korea. One day, she crossed the road but it was not a crossing area. She did not know a car was coming. The car suddenly stopped and the male driver commanded her to come over him. He slapped her on her cheek. (Jee-Young)

This episode not only demonstrates the strict rules on the street, but also the power relationship between an old male driver and a young female pedestrian. This can be ascribed to the authoritarianism of Korean society, rooted in Confucianism, which emphasises superiority and inferiority between people based on age, sex, classroom seniority, and other criteria (Park Matthews 2005). This authoritarianism and the drive for substantial growth, leading to issues such as crowded living conditions, shaped the participants' memories of Korea as a "backward country". They are a reflection of Korean society's abnormal modernisation and the unbalanced form of development that ignored all social demands under the pretext of solving urgent economic problems (ChoHan 2000).

Another example is the matter of disabled people's rights, which participants often mentioned.

My landlady has a baby. He was born here and is now one year old. There was some problem when he was born, so he is hard of hearing. (...) I asked her whether she is going back to Korea or not. She said she will never go back to Korea. I wondered why. She cannot speak English well and has the baby, so she doesn't go out of doors without her husband. (...) She is confined to her home except when going to church on Sunday. She doesn't even know Top shop [a high street fashion clothing shop]. So, I asked why she does not want to go to Korea. She said her baby will have to wear a hearing aid all his life. As you know, it's very difficult for people to accept such things in Korea. She is afraid of that, so never wants to go to Korea. But, here, there isn't such discomfort. I have a classmate who cannot speak and hear. An assistant teacher always helps her. (So-Ra)

In contrast to Korea, where people with disabilities are rarely seen in public because of others' prejudice as well as a lack of facilities, the UK has a somewhat better support system in place, which the participants appreciated, saying "This is a really forward country!" (the owner of H beauty-salon and the members of the single's Bible study group). The participants have reconsidered the condition of an advanced country; they recognise care for minorities, not only economic power, is an important condition of an advanced society.

## Restriction

Many women I interviewed refer to people's excessive interests in others and fixed rules of lifestyle as a distinctive feature of Korean society and their main subject of criticism.

When we think about our country, you know, it comes to us that we must marry at a certain age, must give birth at a certain age, and so on and so on. I didn't like it. I think I disliked such restrictions. (Ja-Yoon)

A good thing about living in the UK is...hmm, this is complex, because this is not only about the UK. This could be similar in any other country abroad...Well, as a twenty-something, as a twenty-nine-year-old woman, I really feel freedom [here]. You know, Korea is a society in which people interfere with others. They say like...why don't you marry, why do you live like that, why don't you decorate your appearance...I'm free from such things here. (Jae-Eun)

The participants' memory of Korea as a stressful society is especially evident in their opinion of beauty and styling habits. The body issue that they mentioned most often is the strict rule of clothing and styling according to size, age, and marital status. Their experiences indicate how these rules pressured them to look a certain way. Given that the ideas about women's body, which is socially constructed, have been used as a tool to control women's bodies and lives (Weitz 1998), these memories of body-styling show their feeling of stress is gendered.

The owner of a Korean beauty salon discussed the relationship of style to a woman's size and age:

Here, people generally wear very tight clothes, except people over fifty. It doesn't seem to be a matter even if they are fat and in their forties. This couldn't happen in Korea. (The owner of H beauty salon, 7 Apr. 2006)

She continues that Korean people do not have the freedom to wear their hair as they wish because their age determines their hairstyle. Ja-Yoon discusses her freedom of styling after she moved to the UK.

People here don't mind their fat bellies. I wear sleeveless tops here in the summer. If I were in Korea, I could not have gone out wearing that, because I was nearly thirty years old. My mum doesn't like it. (...) If I wear a sleeveless top and short pants, my family doesn't like it in Korea. But, here, nobody cares,

or says to me things like “How dare you wear such clothes? You’re thirty!” (Ja-Yoon)

As Ja-Yoon shows, these women’s anxiety of being accused by others when they violate certain rules highlights their memories of Korea as a stressful life. Although such pressures do not only exist in Korea, they tend to consider them as a particular characteristic of Korea.

The participants criticise Korea’s excessive concern with physical appearance and conformity, understanding that this is a part of Koreaness.

This is one reason that I like the UK. Of course, here, fashion trends exist. But this is not as much as in Korea, where everybody wears the same trendy skirt. At first, I thought that there is no such trend in this country, but I recognise that fashion trends exist here as well. But, it’s only for some people, who seek to follow the trend, not for all people and not so strict. (Hyo-Jin)

There are a lot of nice clothes, but it’s too trendy. I cannot find what I want because Korean people are so sensitive to trends. Once an item is popular, only that style is for sale. For example, I don’t like low rise jeans, but I cannot buy other types of jeans because only low rise jeans are produced. That’s Korea. I think there is not such a strong trend here in the UK. (Yu-Jung)

By comparing two countries’ style habits, which is part of the image of the two societies, the participants reveal their thoughts about native Korean character. They think that, while British society allows more individuality and freedom, Korea has stricter rules of what people should wear.

I appreciate people’s clothing habits in this country. They think it’s OK if one feels comfortable. (...) People here wear a black suit and white sneakers together. What an unbalance! But that means they pursue practical and convenient styles. If necessary, they can change into high heels. I like it. (Seo-Yeon)

From a Korean point of view, British people’s choice of clothes is practical and rational. Koreans emphasise formality and modesty, which reflects their conventional notion of culture: the UK = freedom and individuality while Korea = restriction and conformity. Korean beauty practice parallels the women’s memory of Korea, where their schools and workplaces limited their creativity and individuality, as discussed later on.

Throughout these women's complaints about Korean society—caring about others' perceptions, interfering with other people's lives, and not accepting different lifestyles—it becomes evident that they understand these issues in a gender-focused way. As Jae-Eun refers to her burden “as a twenty-nine-year-old woman”, their thoughts about strict and stressful Korean society implicate gender issues. In fact, their comments on strict rules and standards are particularly focused on women's duties, such as giving birth, marriage, and beauty practices. In other words, these migrant women's memory of stressful life is not only about fixed schedules and rigid timetables in urban life, but also about a strict life standard for women.

Accordingly, women's status is considered as a criterion of advanced society and is one of the differences between Korea and the UK. Some criticise gender inequality when they describe their experiences before migration. During the conversation at the P hair-salon, the speakers shared the following memory of women's position in Korea:

Customer (female, 50s): When I drove around Hannam station [in Seoul], male drivers' cars obstructed my car simply because a woman drove the car.

Owner (female, 35): I once heard male drivers saying “Why she is driving now instead of cooking?” behind me, at the petrol station.

Hair dresser (male, 36): Some people used to say that women's driving makes traffic jams worse. (P hair-salon, 24 Mar. 2006)

Because driving a car was identified with going out in public and with conspicuous consumption, men were threatened by women's driving and complained about it. The customer and other participants in the conversation think that Korean society is quickly changing and those episodes about driving are no longer so common. However, they think that Korean society is still generally repressive for women. The customer quoted above recalls Korean society and her first impression of the UK in the late 1980s:

Korea was so oppressive for women. I was *shocked*<sup>44</sup> at how much British women enjoyed their lives with men when I came here first. Of course, there is discrimination in this society, though we don't know that through and through. Gender discrimination in the workplace is repeatedly reported and prejudice

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Italics are used when citing an interviewee's emphasis.

against women's roles still exists. But this is different from Korea, because British society already has a basis [for making gender equality] and tries to develop more than a minimum standard. (Customer of P hair-salon)

Women's status is often considered a litmus test of modernity (Werbner & Yuval-Davis 1999, p. 14), and this has been used for the motive of colonial/western gaze to see non-western/the third world as less civilised. This mindset can be found not only in western society. As seen in the customer's statement, these women mention women's status in Korea as a feature of backwardness. Their complaint on this issue can be found throughout their memory of Korea and their motivation to move abroad.

### **3. 3. Leaving Home**

#### **A Daughter in the Family**

The family plays a significant role in women's migration because it provides incentive and controls the distribution of the resources that can support or discourage migration (Grieco & Boyd, 1998). Although most of the participants in this research are independent and did not explicitly mention family issues as a primary reason for their migration, their family situation as described in their narratives clearly influenced their migration. Their position as daughter particularly influences their migration and can provide a reason to migrate as well as justify the migrant's life in a foreign country.

Hae-Rim, who came to the UK when she was fourteen, found it difficult to persuade her parents. She recalls:

My parents strongly objected to my decision to study abroad. Actually, they had my brother and me very late in their lives. What is more, I was a daughter. They had never thought of letting their daughter go abroad alone. Nonetheless, I was keen to study abroad. I tried to make big progress in my studies in order to show that I could manage to do it. (...) Because I was desperate to go abroad, my parents allowed it at last. But they suggested the UK instead of the US. They thought the US was too dangerous and liberal, but the UK is relatively conservative. (Hae-Rim)

Because she is a girl, the destination was changed to a place her parents thought was “relatively conservative”. However, although her parents did not agree with her decision to go abroad when she was younger, they did not oppose her studying abroad later. It should be noted that Hae-Rim is an exception; no other participant indicated that her parents were adamantly opposed to letting her go abroad.

Being a daughter is not always a barrier to migration. In fact, the participants suggested that their family situation was conducive to their migration and daughters use their position in the family to justify their migration. For example, the last born in a family is considered to be a position that can avoid heavy family responsibilities and the need to bond with their family. Min-Ju thinks that it was easy for her to go abroad without her parents’ opposition because she was the youngest child. She thinks that parents tend to be more generous towards the youngest. She also says that she did not need to attach herself strongly to her family in Korea because her brother and sister are married and have their own families. Moreover, the fact that her parents are still healthy and happy with each other frees her from having to take care of them. Mee-Ran is also the last born and has an older sister and brother, neither of whom is married yet. Mee-Ran is in a similar position to Min-Ju in that she feels free to stay in the UK, but for different reasons. She is in no rush to get married and make plans for the future. As the older siblings are expected to get married before the younger ones, she is spared such pressure from her relatives to get married. For these reasons she can stay in the UK longer if she wishes.

Being from families that do not have serious financial problems, these women were able to capture what they needed in their relationships with their parents and siblings in order to migrate. Moving abroad often requires an agreement with parents for support, especially when migrating for educational purposes. So-Ra says:

My parents have allowed me to do what I wanted. Actually, my older sister is the type of person who never does what parents hate. However, unlike my sister, I used to demand many things of my parents. They easily agreed to my study abroad, in spite of the cost. My parents don’t want their children to miss out on education because they had difficulties in education. (...) My father quit his BA course and could complete it later (...) and my mother only finished high school. So, they said, they had envied people who were rich enough to go to university. (So-Ra)

Studying abroad served as one step towards accomplishing their desire; thus, participants negotiated with their parents, who want to support their children's education.<sup>45</sup>

Some participants say that making an independent life from their family is an advantage of staying in a foreign country. Su-Min's mother influenced Su-Min's destination area. Su-Min had considered studying in New York, but she did not decide on the city as her destination primarily because her mother planned to stay with her for six months in New York if that was where Su-Min settled. Her mother wanted to live with her on a tourist visa because her mother loves the US. For Su-Min, who wanted an independent life in a foreign country, six months with her mother was not an appealing prospect.

Jee-Young's family influenced not only her decision making, but also her life in London. She says that her parents are very strict, so when she lived in Korea she used to come home early: "I didn't like to go home late night, because I felt sorry for my mum waiting for me whenever I came home after midnight." One of her satisfactions with living in the UK is that her parents cannot control her comings and goings, and she enjoys the night life in London. "Having fun at a club till dawn" is one of main differences between her life in London and that in Korea. Similarly, So-Ra mentions "free life without parents' interference" as an advantage of living in a foreign country. Among the married women, this issue is shown in relation to their parents-in-law. Hyo-Jin, who migrated just after she married, says:

Actually, it's good for me that I don't have to see my mother-in-law often. (...) I can honestly say that this is one of the reasons why I don't want to go back to Korea. Our last visit to Korea was the first time I stayed with her. The first week was quite tough because we were not used to each other. (Hyo-Jin)

The women's yearning for independence away from their parents not only means escaping the family's control, but also breaking with the lifestyle of their mothers, who were trapped by the burden of supporting a family. When remembering their mothers, some participants show how their family background

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<sup>45</sup> In terms of education, parents hardly discriminate against daughters. The statistics show that the gap in the average length of education between men and women has decreased (2.08 years in 1985 and 0.4 year in 2000); moreover, this gap is only seen in those above 30 (Korean Women's Development Institute, 2005, Statistical Yearbook on Women).

factors into their desired lifestyle. Jin-Ju says that she grew up in a very conservative family. She admits “I was narrow-minded” before coming to the UK due to her grandfather’s strictness. She described her grandfather as a traditional Korean patriarch who believed that, once a woman and a man go out together, they have to marry. She says, “I couldn’t even imagine dating a man, but the more important reason I didn’t hurry to marry was *freedom*.” Her mother married at twenty-three and has spent her life supporting her in-laws. Her mother tells Jin-Ju “I envy you, because you are free. You do what you want to do and live where you want to live.” Looking at her mother, who is taking care of a mother-in-law who suffers from dementia, Jin-Ju is satisfied with her free and single life. For her, the traditional norms espoused by her grandfather and her mother’s life, spent fulfilling the obligations of a daughter-in-law’s duty, are not what she wants.

Mee-Ran links her memories of home in Korea to her migration in relation to the absence of a home and her mother’s life. Her family wanted her to stay in the UK. After her parents’ divorce, she and her sister lived with her mother in Ulsan, a city in the south. When she was twenty-one, she left Ulsan to work in Seoul. On the first holiday after her mother’s remarriage, they realised that they could no longer enjoy a trip that her family used to take.

Once, when I went to Ulsan, I had a heartbreaking experience. (...) When I went home, as far as I remember, the day was New Year’s Day or *ChuSok* (the Korean Harvest Festival Day). (...) My sister, my mum and I didn’t need to make an ancestor memorial rite, so we always went on holiday. Because mum wasn’t a daughter-in-law, we used to travel. I went home on the day before the holiday. But this day was special, because my mum and stepfather had just got married. Mum had to go to work at my stepfather’s home. The time to travel and have fun no longer existed, did it? She had to go to work. Then, when I went to the terminal to come back to Seoul, mum went there to see me off. At the time, I really felt sore. I felt so sore. I think mum recognised my feeling. She told me that I might be feeling depressed because she didn’t spend her time with me. So we cried together at the terminal. Since then, whenever I went to Ulsan, home was not what it used to be. What I’m thinking now is that, even if I went back to Korea, I would work in Seoul anyway. It would be the same. *There is no difference between here and there.* (Mee-Ran)

Although she thinks that marrying again was very good for her mother, she felt the absence of an enjoyable holiday and a comfortable home in Korea. Because of this, she does not feel the need to return to Korea. Her mother’s shift to becoming a daughter-in-law changed her family’s holiday, which also implies a gender

difference in the family. The conventional duty for women to prepare the ancestor memorial rite, which is normally led by men, is one of the evident cases of a role division between men and women based on Confucian custom (Park Matthews 2005, Ch. 4).<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, some participants mentioned their mothers' active support as a reflection of desirable life their mothers wanted.

My mother, like other mothers, had an ideal life she dreamt of before marriage. Going abroad and studying...this kind of dream. So she gladly agreed with me when I wanted to study abroad. She said I would live a fantastic life. She's not the sort of person who is reluctant to give up marriage. (...) This is not just understanding my intention. I think this is my mum's hope that her daughter will live in style. Going abroad and studying more...it sounds better than marriage and getting a job like other normal people's lives, doesn't it? That's a mum's desire. (Soo-Hee)

Her understanding of her mother's hope is related to the feature of her mother's generation: middleclass wives of the last generation who sacrificed themselves for their family while positively thought independent women's lives. Along with the intention to invest in their children's education, mothers' wish for their daughters the success that they missed, made the conditions better for these women to move abroad.

### **Nightmare of School Days**

The participants found diverse motivations to move to the UK when they told their life story. An excessively competitive and regimented school life is the most often-cited reason for Korean migration abroad.<sup>47</sup> Criticism of the Korean education system and the memory of oppressive school days were common themes in the interviewees' narratives as well. Their shared estimation is as follows:

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<sup>46</sup> The burden of domestic chores for ritual worship and subsequent holiday feast generally falls to women in Korea. This unequal holiday convention is one of the most frequent complaints among Korean women, daughters-in-law in particular, but remains unchanged.

<sup>47</sup> "Cover story" 시사저널 *the Sisa Journal* (No. 600), Apr. 2001.

Korean schools are very strict. The relationship between a teacher and pupils is just one way. It is impossible for students to communicate with their teachers. Also we devote all our time to preparing for exams. (So-Ra)

These women's yearning to leave Korea is related to discontent with the Korean education, which is characterised by cramming, studying until late at night, attending expensive private schools, and adhering to strict regulations.

Hae-Rim's decision to go abroad was directly linked to Korean education. Once she recognised the problems in Korean schools, she became determined to study abroad. Because she made this decision before the boom in the number of teenagers from Korea studying abroad, she was not encouraged by other students or friends who had gone to school in other countries. Instead, she was inspired by foreign television shows.

Hae-Rim: I decided to study abroad when I was in my sixth year in the elementary school [age 12]. On the way home after school, I used to say "I will study abroad" to my friends. When my friends echoed my words "Me too", I muttered "I'm serious!" But when I told my parents that, they didn't allow me to go. They said I could go only after graduation from university.

Young: You mean, you wanted to go abroad right then? Not later?

Hae-Rim: Yes. I wanted to go as soon as possible. I was motivated by books, TV, and other media, for example, TV dramas showing American teenagers' life or foreign school life such as *Doogie Howser*, *Beverly Hills 90210*, and *Carrusel*. (...) I realised a change in learning and teaching style throughout six years in the elementary school. In the first year, pupils could present their opinions and questions a lot, and the teaching style was more like two-way communication. However, as study became more intensive, we just wrote down what the teacher wrote on the board. That was not what I expected. Also the number of pupils in a class was too many. But in the TV dramas, there were only about twenty people in a class. I saw students playing on a huge playground, learning music, and enjoying various other activities in the dramas. (Hae-Rim)

When she finally visited the UK to look for a school, she found one "on the hill having endless grass"—that which she had been dreaming about—and decided to attend that school.

Longing for a foreign life (especially a Western life) is evident in many of the interviewees' stories of their school days. In addition to dissatisfaction with Korean schools, television dramas and books are often mentioned by the participants.

When I turned twenty, I started to think about leaving, though this was not a detailed plan. This was just because I disliked Korea. I always thought “I want to leave, I want to leave...” (...) Actually, I hated Korea even when I was in middle school. I think, at that time, foreign culture, primarily US culture, had started to be imported into Korea. I had a yearning for their culture described in American teenage dramas, which is much freer than ours. (Su-Min)

I don’t know why, but I was really eager to go to Harvard and MIT—those kinds of schools. I had a fantasy, since I was in middle school. Well, I wasn’t desperate like “I’ll die if I cannot study abroad” and I wasn’t the kind of child badgering my parents for what I wanted. But, since middle school, my heart beat quicker when I heard the name Harvard. [laugh] Though I didn’t study hard, I’ve got such a big fantasy about good schools in a foreign country. (Yun-Jee)

Yun-Jee talks about the influence of several autobiographies focusing on study abroad, such as the bestseller “7 막 7 장” *Chilmak Chiljang*, authored by a Harvard graduate who moved to the US in his teenage years, which was published in Korea in 1993. While popular TV dramas and novels showing the US made a fantasy of Western life, such autobiographies made ordinary people think about the possibility of a foreign life, although they also triggered a fantasy of adventurous life.

In addition, acquaintances from foreign countries influenced their desire for the Western way of life.<sup>48</sup> Mee-Ran had wanted to go abroad since she was a teenager, as did by her best friend. She remembered a teacher who had lived in foreign countries:

In my high-school, there was a teacher for English class. (...) I think she lived in a foreign country or lived in a foreigner’s home. She spoke English like a native speaker, and her dress was very unique. As you know, we are not familiar with that kind of fashion. For example, blue stockings and red skirts! She was an object of envy. (Mee-Ran)

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<sup>48</sup> This varies according to participants’ area. People from particular areas in Seoul and the metropolitan area (Jae-Eun, Hee-Sun, and Jee-Soo) say that foreign experience was common among their schoolmates in their neighbourhood: “Almost all kids on our floor of the apartment went to study abroad” (Jae-Eun). Meanwhile, participants from outside Seoul say that they rarely saw people who had lived in a foreign country. Without exception, those who lived outside Seoul mentioned this as a feature of their hometown in contrast to Seoul. In both cases, the participants indicated their feelings of envy in regards to their acquaintances going abroad.

Ja-Yoon also talked about her schoolmate, who had lived in Germany, and how she was an object of envy among girls.

She was unique. Unlike our normal female students' ponytail hairstyle, she had short spiky style. And she wore tight jeans. (...) She was very unique and famous among us. She was a celebrity for having studied in a foreign country. All the students of my school knew her. (...) She had fluent tongue, so when she talked about, you know, freedom in a foreign country, we listened to her, surrounding the heater in the classroom in winter. We were really interested in the story she shared. I can say I was influenced by her. (Ja-Yoon)

Unique fashion style is identified with freedom and difference from normal students' lives. The opposite of the restrictive school life in Korea—namely, life in a Western country—is longed for.

Western education means not only a better environment and curriculum, but also the development of a competitive personality. So-Ra, a designer at an advertisement agency in Korea and now an undergraduate student in the UK, thinks that the passivity and lack of confidence that she and her colleagues have originated in Korea's classrooms.

I was shy and always scared to present my opinion in the classroom, like most other Korean students. (...) There was a difference between colleagues who had studied in a foreign country and those who had studied in Korea, regarding their attitudes and presentation. People who studied abroad tend to be very confident when they give a presentation, even though their ideas are not actually excellent and their designs were poor. In contrast, people educated only in Korea are generally timid. When they present their ideas, they are like "Eh...this is my opinion, but...I am not sure that my idea is absolutely right." They are very sensitive to others' reaction. I think this is because of our education system. I was just an invisible, shy student among many students, sitting in the back of the classroom. Well...just an obedient student. (So-Ra)

She also found a big difference between Korea and Britain in art and design education. She said that British art and design schools emphasise creativity, whereas physical skills are still considered the more important factor in Korea, especially on the entrance exams for art colleges. As a counterpart to confidence and creativity, shyness and even hand skills developed through diligent practice, rooted in Korean education, are identified as Korean characteristics in her narrative. Whereas this kind of "Korean character" is not considered competitive in career and social life, confidence and creativity are thought of as positive and an advantage of foreign

experiences. She recognised experience in a foreign country as a way to attain a desirable personality and life—i.e., “fantasies of identity” (Moore 1994; see Chapter 2).

### **Making a Difference in Work**

Some participants directly and specifically mentioned jobs as a main reason for their migration. Many interviewees said their motivation for going abroad is related to their work or future plan of work, while the narrative of their life shows that other factors such as school life and family also influenced their migration. Gender issues are also obvious in the participants’ stories about work. They cite gender discrimination in the workplace and the low employment rate of women in Korea.

I went back to Korea after one and half years in the UK. I tried to find a job. As you know, it is very difficult to get a job for women over thirty. So I worked at a small company for a while. But it was not good. (...) I worked here [London] for four hours a day. Because I was used to that, I was not happy working from 9 to 7 there [Korea]. I worked longer than here, but was paid the same. (Min-Ju)

In addition to describing gender inequality in the Korean workplace, the participants tell about their own field of work. Mee-Hwa, who majored in architecture and worked at an architectural firm, complains about women’s position in the workplace.

Mee-Hwa: There is no chance for women, even if I’ve got ability. For example, I became qualified while I was in my second year in the university. But, even though I’ve earned the same qualification as a male colleague, priority was always given to males. The boss usually gave drawing tasks to men, not women. (...) Suppose that two entered the company at the same time, earned the same qualification, and had the same career experience. The priority always goes to the man. The woman is in charge of just trivial things. You know, like making coffee.

Young: Women still make coffee?

Mee-Hwa: *There is a long way to go.* Women tidy up the office as well.

Su-Min, who was a photographer in Korea, says that women’s status in Korea is not good; the field of commercial photography was no exception. According to Su-Min,

many female photographers give up their job when they marry,<sup>49</sup> so there are only a few successful female photographers. Su-Min links companies' reluctance to hire women and women's unsuccessful careers to the attitudes of the "older generation" of managers. She thinks that their prejudice against women is evident in their choice of photographers.

So-Ra also describes the difficulty that women face in the workplace. In the same line that she mentioned shyness as a negative characteristic rooted in Korean education, she expressed the need to be a strong woman.

My company didn't like hiring women because women often quit their job due to the physically hard work [e.g., the need to work through the night]. In the cases of other advertisement agencies that have many women, those women tend to be very tough. It's hard to remain in the ad industry without such a strong personality, so companies prefer men. That's why women tend to seek study abroad more often than men, because women need to have a strong point. Actually, if companies support women more, such as in insurance and maternity holiday, women could endure the hard work. But this occurs only in rare cases, except for a big company.<sup>50</sup> (So-Ra)

When employers do not provide benefits for women, women need to have a strong character or some advantage if they are to be successful in their career. What So-Ra described as a strong personality is counter to the traditional feminine ideal of *현모양처 Hyon Mo Yang Chŏ*—wise mother and good wife. For survival in a competitive workplace, she realised the need to break out of the traditional feminine model.

With this critical view, So-Ra found her personal motivation to go abroad in her job. She dreamt of going abroad for a long time, but the real incentive came from her job. She worked at an advertising agency where many of her colleagues had studied in foreign countries. Like them, she wished to read design books written in English, and she wanted to study in the UK, which she considers to be the world's centre of design. When she discovered that one of her female colleagues, who was hired after her, was earned a higher salary, she decided to study abroad.

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<sup>49</sup> This is not just the case for photographers. According to T Kim (1996), 74.9% of female employees withdraw from labour market when they marry.

<sup>50</sup> For this reason, Korean female job-seekers show their preference for big corporations and foreign (Western) companies (see Park Matthews 2005, Ch. 5).

There are many designers in an advertisement agency. They are good at English, so they can read design books in the original text and understand foreign ads. I envied them and felt inferior. I had a colleague enter the company later than me. She started just after graduating a famous American university, while I was already working there. I was shocked because she was paid more than me. (So-Ra)

Just as So-Ra decided to study abroad, other participants with work experience in Korea chose migration in order to make a difference in their career. Living abroad is not only about seeking a higher salary and promotion. Mee-Ran's migration was a way to escape from routine work and take on new challenges. As a hairdresser, her position was quite secure, and no blatant discrimination existed against women. Nevertheless, Mee-Ran made the decision to go to the UK when she grew tired of her job and after encountering several problems in the salon where she worked. She had become a hair-designer while others her age were still assistants. When her new colleagues began to leave the hair salon soon after they started work, she thought that the junior designers and assistants were uncomfortable working with Mee-Ran, the young "old-timer". They might have thought that Mee-Ran was too young and not experienced enough. She remembered the age problem as widespread in Korea's beauty salons.

At the designer level, they tend to respect each other. But the assistant position is somehow different. Because I ordered them to do work, if an assistant is old, it is hard to order them to do work. It is hard for assistants as well. (Mee-Ran)

Aside from this problem of age hierarchy, which generally influences the culture of workplaces, schools, and other personal relations in Korea, the fact that she did not have any colleagues to encourage her made her decide to quit her job and go abroad.

I think a salon should be developed, but the salon stayed the same. There was nothing new. I didn't like it. I wanted to improve my technique, but there were just beginners around me. *What could I learn there? How could I grow there?* (...) So, those things made me decide to quit my job and travel. (Mee-Ran)

Another hairdresser, Hyo-Jin, decided to move abroad in order to do better in her job. Like Mee-Ran, she also had a secure position at work. In order to learn new techniques and new ideas, she decided to go to the UK.

I think you have had the same feeling as me, like “Ah, I have come to the limit. I want to learn something new”. I am the kind of person who is very keen to learn new things. I didn’t like to work on the same hairstyle for my customers. I wanted to try a new style, so I sought to learn more. However, there was no proper beauty-related education system in Korea. That’s why I thought “It’s time to go abroad now!” (Hyo-Jin)

In most cases, when interviewees already had a job, their jobs did not require them to learn English or study abroad as a crucial requirement. Having proficiency in English and foreign experience is rather unofficial pressure for these women to step forward. In fact, all the interviewees indicated that their job was not the single reason to decide to migrate; they were motivated by challenges in life as well. Going abroad, especially studying abroad, is considered a possible option when they feel troubles in their workplace or become fed up with a routine employee’s life.

Actually, I had not been interested in going abroad ever. But, after I worked for a while, I began to think “I want to live another way of life”. Well...but there wasn’t a special different way of living, and...I was keen to go somewhere. (...) I couldn’t get a break since I started to work just after graduation. Also, my job involved quite a heavy workload. Actually, I was very tired physically. Hmm...I wanted to live in some different way. (...) So, I thought one of the ways that other people had already chosen. But just travelling is too short, isn’t it? And, there seems to be nothing different after short-term travelling. (Na-Ra)

Na-Ra says study abroad is a practical choice for workers.

About one year of break in career is too long. It’s quite a big risk. So it seems to be relatively easy to take a break with study. (...) It’s a good opportunity to refresh yourself, studying and earning a qualification at the same time. (Na-Ra)

Going abroad is considered a way to get away from a stagnant life and career. This aspiration to develop their talents and their long-term longing to go abroad prompted their decision to leave Korea; nonetheless they know that migration does not guarantee improvement in their life. Hyo-Jin expresses her wish for adventure:

I had my own regular customers, secure job, and even a senior position in the salon. But giving up all these things was...for me...not difficult at all! (...) The important thing was searching for new things, learning new things, and developing myself. (Hyo-Jin)

## **Distinction between Staying in and Going out**

For Korean women I interviewed, their place of living has special meaning. In contrast to Korea, the UK is conceived as a place of openness and adventure. This is parallel to the hierarchical pattern between global/travel and local/home in discourse on cosmopolitan, as discussed in Chapter 2.

So, I had been working for several years as secretary of the CEO. One day, my friend who was doing her master's course in the UK, visited Korea for holiday and asked me, "Why do you live like that? You are in your mid-twenties. Why don't you see the broader world?" (...) She was ahead of us, even when she was young. She said "Do you know how fabulous open-air cafes [in Britain] are? You should feel it yourself. You are like a frog in the well. Why don't you bravely get out of there and go forth?" My emotional conflict began, you know, because I had a very good job. I discussed this with my father. He's very open-minded, so he said OK. (Seo-Yeon)

Seo-Yeon recalls her friend as "being ahead" in contrast to herself as "a frog in the well". In this clear distinction, she identifies being content with her present job and life in Korea as a shame.

Like Seo-Yeon's case, the challenges that some participants set for themselves indicate how they derive special meaning from specific places. Ha-Jung moved from Yeosoo, a small city very far from Seoul, to study at university. She majored in English language and literature; her mother is a teacher of English. Apart from this background, she was motivated by other students who had already experienced foreign countries. She saw many students admitted to university without having to take the entrance exam under a special admission rule that gives priority to English-speaking students. She thought that those students were more open-minded.

They [schoolmates who have been to a foreign country] are different. I felt they were open-minded. (...) When they chose their future job, they thought of a broad range of jobs. Well...this may be because I'm from a small town, but anyway, they thought something that ordinary people [students who have been educated in Korea] didn't know. (...) They easily tried what we hesitated to do. (...) I felt like I was a bit behind them. (Ha-Jung)

This distinction between people who have worked abroad and those who remained in Korea follows the same pattern as Ha-Jung's experience of moving from a small town to the capital.

Before I went to the university in Seoul, I didn't think there was a big difference between staying in the local area and going to Seoul. (...) However, I found there is something different. Of course, I don't think that all students staying in local areas are narrow-minded. Yet, for example, when people imagine their future career, they are different, and my friends in Yeosoo tend to mind trivial things. For example, they spend too much effort on grades. (Ha-Jung)

She juxtaposes Seoul with Yeosoo, and the contrast she draws between the new friends she made in Seoul and the old friends who stayed in Yeosoo illustrates how she finds that those who moved have some sort of superiority over those who stayed. Extrapolating this, she claims that the experience of living in a foreign country gives a person a more open and progressive mind than remaining in Korea. Through her movement from a small city to Seoul and from Seoul to London, she demonstrates that she expects travelling will expand her view of the world (Molz 2004). Her expectation that travel will broaden her mind is linked to a social atmosphere and structure that prefers people with foreign experiences and cosmopolitan lifestyles to locals.

Meanwhile, Su-Min compares two very different cultures based on specific areas in Seoul: Gangnam, where she lived as a teenager and which symbolised the luxurious life of rich Korean people, and Hongdae, where she worked and which is perceived as an icon of Korea's new generation's progressive culture. For her, the latter was much better and more enjoyable.

I lived in Seocho-dong, so I can say I was raised under Gangnam culture. But my background shifted to Hongdae as I got a job in that area. As you know, those two areas have quite different cultures. Of course the Hongdae culture is superior. (Su-Min)

Gangnam is an administrative area in the southern part of Seoul. Its residents' incomes average the highest in Korea. Gangnam is well known as an area of high consumption, with the highest private education costs, and speculative investment in real estate. 강남 졸부 *Gangnam Cholbu*—meaning people who suddenly made a fortune as a result of the dramatic rise of the value of land due to real estate

development in Gangnam in the 1980s—have become synonymous with the uncultured rich among Korean people. Meanwhile, Hongdae refers to the area around Hongik University in the north-western part of Seoul. Many clubs and art institutes are clustered in this area, which is also noted as a laboratory of alternative culture for young artists. In Su-Min's narrative, the same point was made with regard to the difference between Seoul and London.

I think London is the best place for artists. Artists can express their creativity, and people respect artists' work. The existence of an audience is important because an artist cannot work alone without an audience. I was shocked at the exhibition of the artists leading London's contemporary art during my business trip. I thought I can expand my views if I live this country, where such fascinating works are possible. So, I decided to go. (Su-Min)

Throughout her story, she highlights the disparity between “Gangnam—old generation—narrow mind—Korea” and “Hongdae—young generation—open mind—the UK”. Based on this distinction, she chose her destination—London—because she sees it as a place of creativity and freedom. Her critical view of Korean society and her concrete expectations of Western society compelled her to move to a place that will provide a better environment for her.

In this vein, the reasons these women chose the UK instead of other Western countries indicate their expectations for the destination to broaden their minds and satisfy their thirst for adventure. The most common reason mentioned by language training students is the easy travelling opportunities to other European countries. For those who sought to have good experience rather than permanent residence, the opportunity to travel many countries in Europe fits their goals. In fact, the participants' choice of the UK does not stem from any crucial reason in most cases, except for job-related migrants, such as resident workers' wives. Even people who sought to enter a specific institution—hair dressers Mee-Ran and Hyo-Jin and design students Yun-Jee and So-Ra—say that they chose the UK not only because of the specific schools, but also because of attractiveness evident in the abstract image of the UK.

In addition, their choice is fairly related to their longing to visit an unfamiliar place. Regarding their choice to move to the UK, they face a very common question: Why not the US? This is because the US hosts a large Korean population, and Korea remains under US influence. In giving up the advantage of the US education, which

stems from dominant networks in Korean academies and companies, some participants mention their anti-US feeling. Their antagonistic feeling towards the US is, however, not only political in nature. They do not like going to the US because it seems too normal; Ja-Yoon says that Korea is similar to the US, which means it does not give any room for imagination, unlike Europe. Na-Ra says that US society seems to be too competitive and hectic, similar to what she feels in Korean society, while Europe remains calm. Seeking something different is clearer in Jae-Eun, Hee-Sun, and Jee-Soo's story about their teenage fascination with British popular music. They tell how they enjoyed exclusivity by listening to Brit pop, which was not common in Korea, as their peers knew only American popular music. Thus, the UK satisfies these women's desires for foreign life in a prominent location while simultaneously serving as a place that distinguishes them from common trends.

## Conclusion

Korean migrants' stories about their motivation to migrate and their recollections of Korean society present a gendered desire to become cosmopolitan that formed within the Korean political and social atmosphere. The globalisation discourse, which has predominated in Korea since the late 1990s, pushed individual Koreans to become cosmopolitan citizens of the global community (J Soh 1994). The association with increased international travel and cultural content, mainly from the US, triggered a desire for a cosmopolitan adventure based on a hierarchical conception that ranks cosmopolitan life superior to a local one (as discussed in Chapter 2). Meanwhile, this social atmosphere opened up Koreans' imagination about the possibility of home being beyond the national border. In other words, people thought about the possibility of creating an *alternative home* outside Korea.

Such a desire is shaped in a gendered way. Gender inequality in Korean society permeates work experiences and family stories. Through participants' narratives, they indicated how gender discrimination and social authoritarianism in Korea combined to convince these women to emigrate.

In response to the competitive and authoritarian atmosphere in their schools and the Western image of freedom conveyed in movies and by acquaintances, young Korean women yearn to go abroad. In their work, they find immediate and specific

reasons for living in another country. As they learn how difficult it is to advance in their careers, they realise that gaining a global perspective by living in a foreign country will be essential in moving their careers forward. They distinguish going abroad from staying in Korea. Leaving Korea is identified with a broader perspective and a better future, whilst staying is considered complacent and passive acceptance of the present.

In terms of family relations, their migration is far from self-sacrifice in supporting their family or discouraged due to their gender. These women strategically use their family position to realise their ideal life through migration, justifying their stay in the UK. Their wish for a free life was inspired by watching the sacrifices that their mothers made for their families. Some were able to move abroad through family negotiations, using their parents' financial ability and interest in investing in their children's education.

Comparing their personal experiences in Korea with their lives in the UK reminds the Korean women of the perceived immaturity of their home society as well as its lack of respect for differences and protection of human rights. This is related to their criticism of and reflection on contemporary Korea, a country of compressed growth without attention to other important social agendas. Their migration is a break with the previous generation. Women migrants reject patriarchal customs that emphasise fixed gender roles, hard work for the prosperity of family, company, and nation, and an obsession with visible production. In short, their migration is a result of their desire to escape from what they consider to be the "outdated past".

## CHAPTER 4

### BEING A STRANGER

In this chapter, I explore the gap experienced by Korean women in the UK between their expectation of living a cosmopolitan lifestyle and the reality they experience once here. The chapter will examine the issues Korean migrant women face when they are *not at home* by examining their experiences as an ethnic minority in Britain. In general, hostility directed toward migrants stems from the majority group's belief that ethnic minorities threaten the national identity and traditional values of the majority group, resulting in ethnic minorities' being excluded and discriminated against (Castles & Miller 1993). In regards to more specific experiences, each ethnic group's experience tends to reflect their particular status, as different ethnic/national groups encounter different situations and relations with the majority in the society. For an adequate analysis of any particular racism, the specific group's position cannot be studied in a vacuum; race and ethnicity must be considered alongside other concerns such as class, gender, state, and nation (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1992). It has been argued that racism comes in highly complex forms that go beyond colour racism based on the black-white model. Contemporary racism is evident in contextual ways in specific economic, political, and cultural conditions. Such racism cannot be reduced to a simple relationship between oppressor and oppressed (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1992; Brah 1993a; Mac an Ghaill 1999; Goldberg 1990; M Song 2004).

In this regard, this chapter examines the special type of minority experiences faced by Korean migrant women, focusing on the position of East Asians in the British context. It explores the ways in which these experiences as an ethnic minority are connected to gender as well as the impact of these experiences on the identity of these women.

The first section deals with the process through which these women realise their minority position. Along with various other types of discrimination and alienation, the special implication of English language problems among these women will be discussed. The second section explores the invisibility of Koreans and East

Asians in the British map of ethnicities. The complexity of interpretations and reactions is discussed in the subsequent section, which examines how these women rethink the issue of racism through their minority experiences and how they reposition themselves by appealing to an alternative Korean image. Finally, the fourth section examines the stereotypes of Asian womanhood and how Korean migrant women experience contradictory moments as they pursue their desirable life style.

#### **4. 1. Minority Experiences**

##### **Considering One's Position in the New Environment**

As discussed in Chapter 3, Korean women who move to a foreign country have certain expectations regarding the opportunity to enjoy a better life, expectations which go beyond their specific educational and occupational purposes. However, Korean women who have moved to the UK often seem to feel that their fantasy has somehow been broken; have realised that they need to be more realistic. For these migrant women, shattered fantasies and the need to become realistic mean that the abstract images of the UK/Western society, which before migration were constructed through the media and other indirect experiences, become factual after migration. Yun-Jee, one of the participants, straightforwardly answered questions regarding what she likes and what she dislikes in the UK: "The good thing is lots of enjoyable sights, and the bad thing is people!" Yun-Jee's answer exemplifies what many Korean migrant women find after migrating: problems adjusting to their new lives, especially in regards to relations with people in the UK. In other words, although these women are satisfied with opportunities to broaden their views of the world and enjoy cultural events and sites, they experience problems stemming from cultural differences, isolation, and racism in their everyday lives.

The difficulties relate primarily to the fact that such women are not part of the majority of UK society. Although each Korean migrant woman has a unique background and set of conditions, such women—who are neither mixed race nor of any specific ethnicity other than Korean—still fell within the majority in Korea, at

least in terms of ethnicity. In other words, for these women, life after migration is the first time they experience life as an ethnic minority. From the moment they encounter immigration officers at Heathrow Airport upon their arrival, Korean migrants experience life as a minority in everyday places: on the street, in their neighbourhood, and in schools.

In dealing with the initial hurdles of entry to the UK—visa application and immigration control—migrants begin to recognise the barriers involved in crossing national borders. Eun-Sook discusses her experiences while applying for a visa and in her initial stages of settlement in Britain:

As I heard, they [immigration officers] think we stay in the UK illegally because tuition is expensive and we are not that rich. (...) How dare they treat us like this? We [Koreans] pay a lot here, and they [British] live off of our money. HSBC requires an extra fee for international students. I told them I had a good job and was able to submit proof of income in English, so I wanted a normal bank account. But they allowed me only an overseas account with a five-pound charge. Also, I was angry when I applied for a visa. (...) I sent a letter when applying for the visa. "I have a job, and I am not the sort of person who will live as a working class person, with such small pay in your country." I really wrote like that because I felt so bad. I wrote, "I am going back to Korea after my studies and will have a higher position than in your country, so don't worry!" (Eun-Sook)

The process of getting into the UK requires the transformation of one's position to that of a guest. This involves migrants' recognition and self-checking of their own position, determining who is welcome and who is not welcome as a guest in the destination country.

Indeed, those entering Britain are often treated as suspicious or untrustworthy; they are frequently pushed to prove their purpose of visiting or staying. In addition, immigration control has been shown to reflect prejudices based on race and gender (Brah 1996, pp. 73-75). The recent British government's immigration policy, as infamously expressed in the white paper "Secure Borders, Safe Haven" published by the Home Office in 2002, is summarised thus: "immigration has great benefits both to the economy and in terms of cultural diversity but it must be controlled to ensure that disturbances among the indigenous population are minimized and this is to be done through a process of 'integration with diversity'" (Young 2003). This approach, emphasising both an embrace of diversity and management of immigration, actually means to distinguish proper

migrants—generally highly skilled migrants who meet labour needs within the UK—from unwanted migrants who can cause disturbances to “core British values”. That is, boundary maintenance does not only mean controlling the number of entries but also managing the types of entries by determining who can belong to British society. Economic migrants and asylum seekers, who are not typically highly skilled, have been the subject of controls, as they have been perceived as threatening strangers (Lewis & Neal 2005; Yuval-Davis et al. 2005; Flynn 2005; Young 2003). The border controls at the institutional level, and hostility at the public level, are often directed specifically against asylum seekers (see McGhee 2005), and indeed, the processes of obtaining a visa and going through immigration checks at ports of entry are tailored according to country of origin (Flynn 2005).

This applies not only to asylum seekers but to many other migrants as well. Although Koreans are not placed within the “problem” category, for Korean Women interviewees, preparing for migration requires trying to fit oneself to the condition of a welcomed person. Under restrictive immigration controls, people who enter the UK are not free from the obligation to prove their potential for economic and cultural contribution. As Eun-Sook shows, visa applicants are required to prove that they have no intention of remaining illegally in the UK. In fact, many assumptions about what constitutes desirability in an immigrant are not stated in any official instructions or documents; instead, these assumptions and rumours are spread through the exchange of information with other previous and current applicants. In this informal procedure—the sharing of experiences of failure and success in submitting applications and meeting immigration officers—they not only collect information, but also self-check their status. Notably, it is widely believed that a young single woman who has no proper tax record or stable job is the most likely to be rejected in her visa application—it is presumed that a single woman lacking financial credit is a highly likely candidate for staying illegally or overstaying her visa. In addition to individual status, self-recognition at this stage involves considering the status of one's country of origin. This seems evident in Eun-Sook's comment that “we are not that rich”; another example would be the way some immigrants—primarily Asians—are asked for a medical check at Heathrow Airport, raising suspicions of racism against Asians in the UK. In short, the process leads these migrants to consider their position of nationality, gender, age, occupation, and financial status together with the standards of the host country.

Some women talk about the moment that they realised how difficult it would be to step into the host society. Su-Min says that she was eager to go to cultural events such as exhibitions and concerts, but she remembers an embarrassing meeting with a British acquaintance:

When I saw their real society, I felt...is it possible to fit in with these people even if I live here for a long time? Of course, I need to put my efforts into it though....One day, I came across a British acquaintance, and we went to a pub. We went there with the person's colleagues. I was depressed because of the mood. I wasn't able to join their chat—not once. You know, it's like a scene from a cartoon. The background becomes black and white—everything except me. (Su-Min)

In many cases, the advantages of living in the UK to which these women refer tend to primarily benefit tourists, coming from an observer's view rather than an insider's: most participants limit their positive remarks about Britain to the quality of education (although this is also in doubt and the subject of complaints by some participants), a rich cultural heritage, and special events in the UK, while socialising and close relationships with British people are hardly mentioned. When they realise the difference of status between tourists and settlers and the difficulty involved in becoming a proper member of the host society, they recognise the gap between the expectation of adopting a cosmopolitan lifestyle and the reality they face.

Unlike those who come primarily to enjoy the UK's education and culture, settlement in the UK—gaining a stable job and ultimately citizenship—is not easy. According to Jae-Eun, “Cultural events are not interesting for me anymore. I think it's the time to think carefully about my career.” According to her narrative, her decision to travel to the UK stemmed from her enjoyment of Brit pop culture. After finishing her language training and master's course, she started a job in a Korean company in the UK. She comments that her feeling of being a tourist or student shifted as she has started to enter the “real world”, which is more competitive. Another woman (a customer of P beauty salon in her 30s who has remained in the UK for 15 years) states that “the UK is fine for those who stay temporarily. But, if you decide to settle permanently, the UK would be a very tough country.”

Soo-Hee shared this impression of British society and a recognition of her minority position within it:

What I don't like here is...that the boundaries seem to be clear. Well...I didn't think I was in the lower class or minority when I was in Korea because I was a student and under my parents' influence. (...) It [the boundary] is not only about wealth. It relies on race, resident area, spoken language...I didn't know this in Korea because I was [in the majority] there...but, here...it's so clear. I feel scared and sad about this. (Soo-Hee)

The minority position strongly influences these women's lives in the UK, from mundane daily decisions to the creation of future plans for their lives. When these women weigh the various aspects of their lives and envision the achievement of an ideal life, minority experiences are an important factor in their decisions, playing a role in determining whether to remain in the UK or return to Korea. According to Eun-Sook:

Another reason why I don't want to stay forever in a foreign country is that I can never become part of the majority even if I make a lot of effort. Because I am quite determined to achieve my goals, I cannot accept a marginalised life. Well...I could live like that, but there is no special reason to bear that kind of life. I can live well in my homeland, Korea, speaking my mother tongue. I don't want to live here, being treated as a secondary citizen and trying to renew my visa. (Eun-Sook)

In making career plans, their limitations as a foreigner becomes a key part of their decision-making. Jae-Eun, who works for the UK division of a very well-known Korean company, discussed the relationship between career development and her position as a foreigner.

I really want to move to a British company, but it's not easy. For example, I need to get a work permit. Though I prefer a British company, I don't want to go to a small company. The best option is to go to a company that gives me a position that I want, but it's difficult. (...) Also, I have to be careful when going to a British company because I am a foreigner. If I work at a British company without special skills, I could fall behind the competition inside the company and could be required to stay in the same position. (Jae-Eun)

Besides future plans, being in a minority position impacts the everyday lives of these migrant women, the anxiety of being in a disadvantageous position is evident in their concern over safety issues. Physical and verbal abuse is often mentioned, and some participants indicated that their experiences of being abused by others has included the throwing of eggs or stones, spitting, and the use of racist

terms such as “chink.” Seo-Yeon stated that her several experiences of being abused on the street have resulted in great anxiety for her children.

Have you ever been struck by a stone? I was on the way home after grocery shopping. Because I had heavy stuff, I wasn't able to avoid them [the abusers]. (...) Three teenagers riding bicycles rushed at me. I avoided one boy, but the other two threw stones at me. (...) When I turned round and saw them, they were passing by me, shouting “Go back to your country!” I was so upset. At that moment, it occurred to me that my children could be abused like this. I sometimes ask my children if other kids bully them. (...) Yeah, I would be fine even if I am hurt and they had to stitch up the wound, because I am an adult. But I am worried about my children. I think they [the abusers] are probably studying with many other races of pupils in school. Despite this, they do that [throwing stones]. Oh...it's so scary. (Seo-Yeon)

Seo-Yeon's rock-throwing encounter occurred in New Malden; she insists that the preponderance of Korean residents in New Malden makes this racially motivated experience even more offensive. In fact, some participants indicated a sense of safety in relation to a specific location or situation, although the opinions varied according to individual experiences. While many spoke of recognising dangerous areas by visible signs such as youths loitering on the street, they also frequently focused on the proportion of the ethnic minority in a given neighbourhood. Hyo-Jin, for example, who once lived in a small city in southern England, feels that racially motivated abuse is more evident in rural areas and small cities outside London. And according to Na-Ra, “Some posh areas in London where white people live are more dangerous because a non-white person can easily become a target”. Through their observations and experiences, these women realise the existence of racism from the side of the discriminated, although they had abstract knowledge about racism in other countries and even in their home country prior to migrating.

## **Language**

Among the many difficulties that Korean migrant women encounter while living in the UK, English language is the predominant issue and was evident in all interviews and observations. Such problems seem to be typical for those who moved after they finished learning their first language, making it hard to adapt to British society. However, English proficiency is not just a matter of convenience. Speaking English

is basically an issue of integration for ethnic minority groups in British society; it has a political context in addition to the practical dimension, as it has become a key part of recent immigration legislation and the requirement for citizenship (Alexander et al. 2004). For Korean migrant women, spoken language serves as a marker of alien status and is related to discrimination both in Korea and the UK.

Language problems are evident in the participants' discussions of various problematic situations. Indeed, language problems permeate their everyday lives. Yun-Jee says, "I am a stranger here because I will never make jokes with them"; clearly language creates barriers to integration into as well as understanding of the culture. However, language goes beyond the matter of being a foreigner in some neutral sense. Yu-Jung, the wife of a Korean resident worker, shares what female residents of New Malden advised her in regards to driving:

People say that in accidents, because we are Korean, we are more likely to be found at fault. So I don't put the "L" [learner] sticker on my car. It is disadvantageous to hang the "L" sign. What's more, my English is not fluent. [laugh] That means, I could take everyone's fault upon myself. People say that some bad [British] people use this weakness. That's why young mothers say not to attach the sticker. (Yu-Jung)

Here, her lack of English skills is considered a noticeable marker of weakness in addition to foreignness. Her story shows how language problems pervade her anxiety about being among the disadvantaged.

Although physical and verbal abuse, institutional discrimination, and limitations in access to jobs are clearly racist issues, other situations are often more ambiguous for these migrants. Language, participants' most frequently mentioned problem, is one such ambiguous matter of exclusion and discrimination. Despite the fact that language is an exterior marker along with appearance, it is not often considered an aspect of discrimination.

You know, talking on the telephone is difficult, but sometimes we need to do it, for example, when dealing with a bank. They seem to be irritated [by my English]. I catch that when they say "Sorry, again?" in an annoyed voice. Well...I haven't been badly treated just because I am Korean though. (So-Ra)

So-Ra indicated that she had not experienced racial prejudice, asserting that local people's ignorance is due to her lack of English ability. However, even when phrased

in the negative, the issue of language is still present in the context of the matter of exclusion and discrimination.

In most cases, except a case in which native English speakers mock a non-native speaker's specific accent—in which language issues actually result in racist abuse, ignorance and discrimination in relation to language skills may not be seen as clear racial discrimination. Rather, it is considered as simply a matter of an individual's ability. This often makes these migrants think it inevitable and even acceptable. However, at least in certain cases, this is clearly a form of hostility on the part of the majority against the minority. Ja-Yoon mentioned an occurrence at a job centre as one of her worst experiences in the UK. When she filled out the application form for a job, one of the staff members at the job centre repeatedly pointed out her manner of English writing. For example, in reference to Ja-Yoon's notation of the date, the staff member irritably stated, "This is American style, not British style." Finally, the staff member directly criticised Ja-Yoon's English skills and instructed her to come back after improving her English.

I said "I want this job," pointing to the slip, but she said "You cannot get that job, because of your English." I said "Why? Some other people from my language school got a job, though their English is worse than me." Then she said "Who? There is no chance. You should go to Korea and come back after you learn English more." It was annoying. The job I wanted did not require language skills. As I remember, it was cleaning or some other physical work. Why can't I do that? I was so angry. I nearly cried. (Ja-Yoon)

Given that it is an important factor influencing migrants' ability to enter the labour market (Tubergen & Kalmijin 2005; Chiswick & Miller 2002), fluency in the language of the destination country is vital for migrants. Yet this issue is not only about employment, but also about local people's negative attitudes toward migrants. For Ja-Yoon, the officer's excessive demands to a job-seeker searching for part-time manual work was another way of suggesting that migrants are ignorant.

These migrant women's linking of language to ignorance is evident in their feeling of sympathy to other groups of people. Although Korean migrants do not often demonstrate identification, solidarity, or empathy with other ethnic minorities and migrant groups in their stories, they associate their lack of English skills with a sense of compassion towards other foreigners.

I found other people in the language school also cannot speak English. I realised that they have warm hearts through our awkward conversations with a dictionary. We all spoke clumsy English. That made us feel sympathy and feel closer. (Seo-Yeon)

How can I get an opportunity to chat with such young foreign people elsewhere? This is my chance! [laughs] And they are English beginners like me, so they tolerate my speaking more than my British friends. (Bo-Ram)

She [the manager] wasn't born in the UK. I don't feel any difficulties because she understands my English problems. British people are not tolerant of this, are they? But my colleagues aren't like the British, so I feel at ease when talking with them. (Mee-Ran)

Such empathy coming from a shared lack of English fluency is extended to discontent with British people, when these women talk about their experiences with native English speakers. They indicated their discontent with British people by describing British people's behaviour as "not understanding" and "intolerant".

This problem can be understood in a broad context, given that migrants' language use is a political issue beyond just the practical dimension. The power of English is particularly important to understanding the situation of migrants in English-speaking countries. The status of English as an international communication tool, beyond the local language in specific areas, means that the use of English indicates a special politics reflecting historical, cultural, and social relationships (Tollefson 2000; Pennycook 1994). Historically, English-speaking elites have often obtained social prestige and wealth in their countries, including the former colonies of Britain. Indeed, English is still frequently considered a ticket for social and economic prestige; one's ability to speak English can secure economic benefits even in countries in which English is not predominant (Pennycook 1994). In fact, of course, English ability is a result of one's social/economic background and access to capital: it implies that one has the resources to access a world-class education in non-English speaking countries.

Moreover, the English issue is bound to an ethnic/national hierarchy which is evident in the different attitudes applied to English speakers from different countries. For example, although citizens of all these countries often speak English fluently, the version of it spoken in certain countries—such as the Philippines, India, and Malaysia—are treated differently from those of the US, Canada, Australia, New

Zealand, and England (Tollefson 2000).<sup>51</sup> Also, given that the accents of speakers from non-white/non-European backgrounds are sometimes perceived as a sign of low intelligence, the issue of English language skill reflects a negative set of racial attitudes (Cobas & Feagin 2008).

Of course, for migrants, English-related inequality is often also bound to more overt issues of racism, xenophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiment within a given country. People's movement between countries, especially from a non-English-speaking country to an English-speaking country, demonstrates the way English ability can serve as an international gatekeeper (Pennycook 1994). Here, the majority's attitude towards immigrants' language involves racial issues. Crawford (1989) argues that language policies that force everyone to use English can be a racial issue because such policies become efficient alternatives to racial politics, such as the case of the English Only movement in the US.

Early in this century, those who sought to exclude other races and cultures invoked claims of Anglo-Saxon superiority. But in the 1980s, explicit racial loyalties are no longer acceptable in our political discourse. Language loyalties, on the other hand, remain largely devoid of associations with social injustice. While race is immutable, immigrants can and often do exchange their mother tongue for another. And so, for those who resent the presence of Hispanics and Asians, language politics have become a convenient surrogate for racial politics. (p. 14, quoted in Pennycook 1994)

Inequalities in English skills are used to justify discrimination towards and ignorance of migrants without any feeling of guilt. Along with skin colour, language is a mark of people's origin and length of stay in a country. While discrimination by skin colour is considered unforgivable behaviour, the use of language is considered a matter of an individual's ability, inherently improvable with practice. However, native-speaker status is actually never attainable even after mastering English as the individual continues to be pressured to speak a better style. As is evident from the fact that accent reduction is often included in EFL courses, an accent betraying one's mother tongue is considered the mark of otherness—something to reduce and hide.

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<sup>51</sup> This problem is also evident in Korea. For example, English language tutors from the Philippines are considered "fake" and "low quality" English speakers. ("영어터리 전화영어 강사 판쳐 Fake Tutors work for English lessons by telephone" *The Munhwa Ilbo*, 13 Jul. 2007)

Returning to the case of Korean migrants in the UK, the language issue relates to both the status of English language in Korean society and post-migration life. Seo-Yeon, who was once a legend in her high school in Korea for her talent and charismatic personality, shares her feelings of isolation and frustration:

If I were in Korea, I could have shown my ability more than here. But, here, I can show only ten percent of my real ability for one reason: my lack of language skill. I cannot belong to any community or organisation. My husband operates a business whose targets are foreigners, not Koreans. So I can see that he develops his ability by meeting many people from diverse backgrounds. I can confidently say, I could have been better than my husband if we lived in Korea. (Seo-Yeon)

Although Korea was never colonised by any English-speaking country and Korean is the only official language of the country, English proficiency plays a significant role in the reproduction of social/economic inequality. This is because English is considered a vital condition of international competition (economically) and becoming a global citizen (socially/culturally). Furthermore, even within the Korean community in the UK, English fluency functions as a criterion to determine the failure or success of migration. Thus, the lack of English is, for these migrants, not only a matter of integration into the host society, but also a matter of self-esteem.

#### **4. 2. “One of the Poor Countries in Asia?”**

##### **“Nobody Knows Us.”**

Apart from abuse and discrimination, both covert and overt, the attitude Koreans most often encounter among non-Koreans in the UK stems mainly from the fact that Korea is an “unknown country”. According to Jin-Ju, “For most people here, I am the first Korean they have met. I feel like an ambassador”. Many Koreans find that other people have no idea about Korea. Most of the participants of this study also mentioned embarrassing moments when meeting other people.

Su-Min: When I went to work and met the kids for the first time, I asked them which country they thought I was from. They said “Japan? China?”

Thailand? Singapore? Hong Kong?" They mentioned almost ten countries.

Young: Did they say Korea?

Su-Min: They didn't.

"Where are you from?" "Korea...Have you seen the [football] World cup? Do you know Samsung?" and, that's the end of conversation! They haven't got any more topics. (Hee-Sun)

In a public lecture, Cho Yoon-Je, the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the UK, focused on Korean economic development, clearly mentioning his intention to introduce the lesser-known Korea to the British public (LSE Public Lecture, 2 May 2006).<sup>52</sup>

British people's lack of information about Koreans stems primarily from the relatively small number of Korean migrants in the UK as well as a lack of historical colonial relations between the two countries. Such an absence of information on a certain ethnic group seems to be rather natural in the UK, where extremely diverse populations exist in terms of country of origin, language, and religion (see Vertovec 2007 for super-diversity in Britain). However, Korean migrants tend to note a different reason for such unfamiliarity with Korea among the British: Korea's low reputation in the world.

Although "unknown" does not always mean "powerless", some Koreans do indicate concern that their home country is powerless. They tend to see an issue with doubt of being ignorant due to the perceived powerless country of origin. For instance, in regards to the Old Bailey judge who handed down only a five-year sentence for a British man who killed and chopped up his Korean wife<sup>53</sup>, Min-Ju interprets this as a sign of the victim's powerless national background. She claims, "This is because our country is weak. (...) If the wife had been Japanese, it would have been different." Such anxiety over powerlessness is rooted in Korean people's collective notions of their national history and their position in contemporary

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<sup>52</sup> Asia Research Centre public lecture "Reform, Innovation and Internationalisation: The Challenges of the New Korean Economy".

<sup>53</sup> Paul Dalton (35), who killed his Korean-born wife, then cut up her body and hid it in a freezer, was sentenced at the Old Bailey in July 2005 to five years in prison—two years for the manslaughter and three years for preventing the burial of the body. (BBC News <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/4714731.stm>; CPS News ([http://www.cps.gov.uk/London/cps\\_london\\_news/latest\\_news/sentence\\_of\\_wife\\_killer\\_referred\\_to\\_court\\_of\\_appeal](http://www.cps.gov.uk/London/cps_london_news/latest_news/sentence_of_wife_killer_referred_to_court_of_appeal)))

international relations—namely, the old description of Korea as “the Land of the Morning Calm” and the fact that Korea has never been spotlighted on the international stage.

When these women talk about British people’s lack of information about Korea, their interpretation of these experiences implicates not simply a feeling of injured pride, but also deeper issues such as the British sense of superiority and presumption towards Asia.

Young: What did you find about British people’s attitudes towards Koreans?

Min-Ju: Basically, British people are seemingly polite, seemingly kind, but...well... anyway, they don’t know about Korea. You know that, don’t you? They have no idea about Korea. They know only China and Japan. If I go out dressed up, they suppose I am from Japan. If I say “No, I’m from Korea”, they say nothing more.

Korean migrants’ experience in facing other people’s reactions to them includes issues of presumption and hierarchical notions of ethnic groups. Min-Ju’s statement—If I go out dressed up, they suppose I am from Japan—shows not only an unfamiliarity with Korea, but also prejudice towards each ethnic group. Unknown Korean people are often mistaken to be members of other, relatively well-known groups, such as Chinese and Japanese. As evident in the joke among Korean migrants—“People suppose I am from China when I am poorly dressed, while they suppose I am from Japan when I am dressed up”—this involves the presumption that Japanese are tourists or businessmen from a wealthy country while Chinese are working-class migrants from a developing country.<sup>54</sup> Even within the category of “East Asian”, these people experience a complex racial hierarchy (M Song 2004) in their everyday lives.

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<sup>54</sup> Nishimuta’s research (2008) on Japanese students in higher education in Britain shows some commonalities with the Korean migrants’ case regarding racism. For example, these Japanese students also experience verbal abuse on the street, frequent misrecognition as Chinese and subtle forms of racism based on lack of English skills. Also, their majority position within their home country and their first experiences of being an ethnic minority in Britain are similar to those of Koreans. However, they show some differing perceptions of racial discrimination: whereas Korean migrants (even in higher education) expect discrimination in Britain to some extent even before they arrive, through visa application and other indirect experiences, their Japanese counterparts tend to experience this process as a shock. In Koreans’ case, they are concerned about Korea’s world reputation. Relatedly, some participants of my research felt that Japanese are much more respected by British people, because of Japan’s different power status. Although they think the Japanese are friendly and easy to get close to, they often show discontent about British people’s willingness to show favour to the Japanese.

In fact, people's unfamiliarity with a specific group of others does not mean a pure lack of knowledge about them. As Ahmed (2007, p. 21) asserts, people "recognise somebody *as a stranger*, rather than simply failing to recognise them." That is, "strangers are those that are already recognised through techniques for differentiating between the familiar and strange" (Ahmed 2007, p. 37). Misrecognition implies some perception of threat, disruption, or general trouble-making. Misrecognition of Koreans does not end with a mere absence of information, but the possibility exists for the creation of another stereotype. Unfamiliarity with Korea is linked to an image of the country as a poor/undeveloped/pre-modern Asian one. This relationship between an absence of information and negative stereotyping is clearly evident in one participant's comments:

Nobody knows Korea. They don't even know where Korea is. They just think that Korea is one of the poor countries in Asia. (Yun-Ja)

### **The Invisibility of Koreans/East Asians**

As Koreans feel invisible and unfamiliar in the UK, the participants often end up rethinking their identity as Asians, particularly since other people define them as Asian rather than Korean.

When I walk alone on the street, sometimes a drunk person or a gang of young people say something negative to me, mocking Chinese. Stupid! ... [I murmured to them] I am not Chinese though. You should rather say Korean! (Na-Ra)

As Na-Ra's comments indicate, Korean migrants share a commonality with other Asians in terms of being the object of racial abuse. In addition, preconceptions of Asians lead migrants to develop anxieties that as Asians, they are always perceived as a specific type of person. Hee-Sun's episode shows her sensitivity regarding being Asian in everyday life. After perpetually bad treatment by the manager of the shop where Hee-Sun worked part-time, she complained:

Finally it burst because I felt extreme stress. We [the manager and I] had a big quarrel and said some serious things. I said “Why do you abuse me? Do you think I am submissive because I am an Asian?” (Hee-Sun)

Being Korean/ (East) Asian in the UK involves troubles in several ways, related first to the homogenous grouping of Asians; second, to being a minority within a minority; and third, to illusionary positive images.

First of all, when Koreans are identified as Asian by others, they find a gap between their own notion and others’ (outside Asia) ideas of Asia in terms of the label “Asian” and notions of “Asianness”. The Asian label varies depending on the host country in which Asians live. For example, the category of Asian in general in the UK differs from that in the US. East Asians such as Korean, Japanese and Chinese are categorised as “Asian” or “Asian American” in the US (Bhachu 1993)<sup>55</sup>. After the 1965 Immigration Reform Act, the population of Asian Americans increased considerably, coming from a diversity of national origins. The number of Asian Indians, Koreans, and Filipinos grew rapidly, unlike in the past, when Chinese and Japanese dominated. Accordingly, divisions of class and ethnicity became more prominent, and the framework of racial interests that has guided pan-Asian activity became ambiguous (Kibria 1998).

In Britain, on the other hand, “Asian” generally refers to South Asians, including Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis (Bhachu 1993). According to the map of race in Britain, African, Caribbean, and South Asian immigrants share commonalities in their disadvantaged economic and social position as well as their non-whiteness and their shared experiences of British colonialism (M Song 2004; Brah 1993a, pp. 196-200). Since criticism of the use of the term “Black” for African-Caribbean and South Asians has emerged, and since recognising the different sufferings of South Asians from others was called for (Modood 1994), different types of discrimination and exclusion have been illuminated beyond the shared historical experiences of British colonialism among those groups (M Song 2004; Alleyne 2002).

However, despite increased attention to the differences within a group which had been placed in a simplistic category (Alleyne 2002), “East Asian” remains

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<sup>55</sup> For a brief outline of the recognition of Asians in the US and geographical/cultural figures of Asia, see Prasso (2005) pp. 3-28.

undistinguished in Britain. Chinese are the only distinctive ethnic group among groups originating in East Asia.

The thing I hate most is ticking the ethnic categories, you know, for job applications and human resource research kinds of things. The categories are Chinese, Other Asian and so on...(…) I think the form has not been changed for ages. I once complained about this at a previous workplace. Why am I “other Asian” if I am not Chinese? (…) I always tick “Other” because I’m not Chinese, never. But I make a ( ) mark and write “Korean” there. The form has never been changed though. (Na-Ra)

For Koreans who have no doubt that they are Asian based on geographical category, the British classification of ethnicity<sup>56</sup> is embarrassing because it is based on one's relationship to the British majority rather than geography. It is difficult for Koreans to find any logic in this classification: Asian refers to South Asian and East Asian refers to Chinese. It is natural that Koreans hesitate between “any other Asian background” under the category of Asian or Asian British and “any other” under the category of Chinese or other. Seeing all East Asians as Chinese relates to the lack of understanding regarding East Asia and the misperception of other people as simply “the rest”. As such, the minority status of Koreans is multiplied.

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<sup>56</sup> National Statistics interim standard classifications for presenting ethnic and national groups data ([http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/Classifications/ns\\_ethnic\\_classification.asp](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/Classifications/ns_ethnic_classification.asp))

White

- British
- Any other White background

Mixed

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed background

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Any other Asian background

Black or Black British

- Caribbean
- African
- Any other Black background

Chinese or other ethnic group

- Chinese
- Any other

Being “the rest of Asia” is problematic in its association with the ignorance of differences among Asians. Asia is often dealt with as a homogenous group, despite differences in history, languages, religions, political systems, etc. The British and other Westerners often view and treat Asia as “one Asia” by ignoring the differences among Asian groups, ultimately contributing to racial stereotyping of Asians as a whole.

First of all, East Asian is recognised as stranger. According to C. J. Kim’s (1999) analysis of racial triangulation, Asian Americans occupy a different position than whites and blacks; blacks are denigrated as inferior, whereas Asian Americans are regarded as alien and foreign. As “yellow”—neither black nor white—Asians are considered inassimilable aliens, perpetual foreigners who never gain entry into American membership; their culture is characterised as “weird”, “funny”, and “strange” (Espiritu 1997, pp. 109-110).

Meanwhile, in the British context, compared to European migrants who have a geographical closeness to the UK and the large numbers of African, Caribbean, and South Asian migrants as well as their historical relationships, East Asians are even more alien.

I am a foreigner who never joins others here (...) Other people are also all foreigners, but I feel like I am more of a stranger than those because I am an Easterner. (Jee-Young)

Therefore, East Asians’ relative unfamiliarity within ethnic minorities and Koreans’ relative unfamiliarity within East Asia deepen Koreans’ feelings of alien-ness.

The problem here is their status as a minority within a minority means that their particular situation is not easily exposed. Ang-Lygate (1996) argues how women from Korean and other origins, who are not categorised into black/Asian, have trouble making space for their voices in order to enhance their rights:

The popular images presented of “black” people resident in Britain are also dominated by peoples from the African and Indian subcontinents or of African descent from the West Indies. Although it is true that their populations are larger than other groups, these images distort and exclude peoples from other origins. Hence, the term “black” renders many women, who are often unpoliticized and cannot visibly identify as Black (or white), invisible. (Ang-Lygate 1996, p. 156)

This invisibility is never a disconnected issue from these people's "otherised" status, even when they are considered relatively trouble-free or even appreciated as having positive value. Asians are often represented as having certain values related to an emphasis on family, education, hard work and respect for elders (Kibria 1997). Although these values are appreciated and valued, making an ethnic group exemplary is, in fact, just another route of otherisation. That is, while Asians are assessed in a positive way, there is no change in the opposition between the white self and the non-white other (Ang 1996).

As a clear form of this attitude towards Asians, the advent of the "model minority myth" in the US suggests how a seemingly positive description of an ethnic minority group can be used to the majority's benefit. Since the early 1980s, the US media have reported on the educational and economic achievements of Asian Americans, highlighting their success. This stereotype of the "model minority" is, however, challenged by several facts. First, in terms of its validity, it is not an accurate reflection of the socio-economic status of Asian Americans because it is too simplistic measurement. Second, it obscures the actual socio-economic diversity and polarization among Asian Americans, functioning to ignore the real problems existing in Asian society, such as unemployment and poverty, while being used by mainstream whites to hide the existence of discrimination. By emphasising Asian Americans' achievement, it suggests the US is an equal society that provides opportunities to all racial/ethnic groups. Finally, this stereotype leads to a confirmation of the belief that the failures of other groups, like African Americans and Latinos, are the result of their lack of effort rather than discrimination. Therefore, they can comfortably be regarded as inferior or lazy (Yanagisako 1995; Kibria 1997; Hurh & Kim 1989; E Min 2003). As Ang (1996) argues, some Asians—in her text, welcomed guests in Australia—are chosen for their national economic and social benefits, yet have never been accepted as real insiders by majority whites. The problem of Korean as (East) Asian can be characterised as an ethnic group, who are less noticeable, but still a minority, an other.

### 4. 3. Reflection and Rejection

Experiencing life as an ethnic minority in the UK, as discussed thus far, does not simply causes feelings of anger or unease. In fact, in responding to invisibility and in/direct discrimination in the UK, the participants show some patterns of reaction. First of all, they indicate that they have reflected on racism in Korea—that is, through their experience of being discriminated against, they have had the opportunity to ruminate on racial discrimination in their home society.

I have come to understand minorities in our [Korea] society. I wasn't interested in foreign migrant workers' issues before. But I could be a foreign worker if I work here. Yes, I could be a migrant worker who has a different colour of skin and be paid just minimum wage. I got the opportunity to think more about minorities and migrant workers in our society because I myself experienced discrimination here. (...) If I hadn't moved out, I would never have realised this. If I were only inside there [Korea]...because there would be no chance to become their position, to meet them, and to think about them. They [migrant workers] were outside my boundary...If I hadn't lived abroad, I couldn't have recognised that. I can see that now and find *our society is the same as here*. (Eun-Sook)

This position-change based reflection is related to issues of racism and migration in contemporary Korea. Due to the homogeneity of ethnicity and language, the myth of “one blood” and “단일민족” *Danil Minjok* (the “racially homogenous nation”) has been emphasised in Korea for a long time. Issues of racism and cultural diversity have not gained much attention among Korean people or academic and social movements either. However, changes have come about since the influx of a large number of immigrant workers in the late 1980s (H Lee 2003). In addition to immigrant workers' labour issues, the formation of ethnic communities as well as increases in the number of international marriages (particularly between Korean men in rural areas and women from other Asian countries) has raised concerns of a multicultural society (H Kim 2005). Korean society can no longer ignore hidden racial issues such as racism against mixed races among Korean nationals. Emphasising the homogeneity of the nation has resulted in severe exclusion against blacks and Asians rather than whites/Euro-Americans. From this background, Korean migrants reflect on their home society, recalling their memories of the majority side after experience life in the UK as a minority.

Although the experience of living as an ethnic minority in a multi-ethnic society provides the opportunity to look back on Korean society and rethink racism issues in Korea, some of these migrants think of this as a backwardness of Korea.

I think we Korean people cannot complain about racism here. That is more serious in Korea, isn't it? At least, people [ethnic minority and foreigners] can get a job here. But, in Korea, it is hard to even get a job...and you know, if someone wants to marry a Chinese or a South East Asian, the family is in an uproar...well, marrying a Western White could be acceptable though. (Bo-Ram)

At first, I was very concerned about race, though I'm getting used to that and don't mind now. When I first came here, I felt that people saw me as very strange and ignored me. [laugh] I felt that a lot. But I think there is no more seriously racist country than our country. How horrible people treat brides from the Philippines! When I see such stories, I think Korean people are really bad people. (Jee-Won)

At this point, the possibility exists to create another standard of advanced society, as these migrants not only reflect on their home society, but also compare it with the host society. For some of those who had not experienced direct racist abuse, like Bo-Ram, the UK is respectable to some extent. In other words, these migrants criticise discrimination and exclusion, but at the same time, they respect the environment that enables different ethnic groups to live together. By identifying the good (or at least the better-than-Korea) points such as race-sensitive regulations and neighbours being open-minded to different cultures, the participants ironically think that such issues only occur in advanced, mature, Western societies.<sup>57</sup> They understand this as a virtue of an advanced country and serves as a barometer of a society's cultural maturity.

In addition to reflecting on Korea, some Korean migrants reject being the subject of racism by emphasising their position as a consumer in the UK. They demonstrated a mindset of "we pay you" throughout their interviews when complaining about how Korean people are unfairly treated in the UK. The fact that the vast majority of Korean people in the UK are students and resident workers employed by Korean companies leads the migrants to believe that Koreans receive

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<sup>57</sup> On the British side, respecting cultural differences without discrimination is also considered a cultivated manner opposite racism's ugly and shameful manner, as in the narcissistic use of the words "multiculturalism", "tolerance", and "cultural differences" by British government and media. Emphasising "hospitality", "tolerance", and "generosity" as the features of the national identity also connotes their sense of superiority (Gibson 2007).

no economic benefit from the UK. Indeed, they identify themselves as spenders in Britain (thereby contributing to the British economy) through sarcastic remarks such as “Poor British universities would be bankrupt without us overseas students” and “They subsist by selling their heritage and language for tourists and students”. In this way, the migrants ultimately jeer at the unfairness of British racism and their consequential bad treatment.

This positioning is used not only to criticise the host society, but also to distinguish themselves from other migrant groups. In fact, the UK—especially London—is a place in which they can have relationships with people from diverse national/ethnic groups. In this multi-ethnic society, Korean people not only become the subjects of discrimination, but they also make other ethnic groups minorities. Although Korean migrants are influenced by British policy on migration control, they do not always feel sympathy and solidarity with other groups of migrant workers. Moreover, in some cases, they have the opportunity to demonstrate prejudice against other groups. Some participants admitted: “I became a racist here” (Min-Ju) and “I know this is bad, but unexpectedly, I have got some prejudice [for other people]” (Ha-Jung). In fact, they also indicated some negative stereotyping of others.

Some Koreans’ views of other ethnic minorities follow the concepts established in the West through sets of images: “‘western’ = urban = developed; or ‘non-western’ = non-industrial = rural = agricultural = under-developed” (Hall 1992b, p. 277). As such, they judge society according to a standard of how close it is to the West. This is particularly evident in Koreans’ Orientalist way of viewing other Asian societies (S Kim 2007). In other words, while they identify Korea as a society “catching up with” the West because of their economic and industrial development, they see others as “far away from” the West, in a discriminative gaze (Hall 1992b, p. 277).<sup>58</sup>

My previous Bangladesh landlord used to tell us, “We are all Asian,” like we are friends. (...) How dare a Bangladeshi say that we are all Asian, [including himself] with us Koreans...It’s annoying that he says it like that because he

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<sup>58</sup> A similar outlook emerged among the Japanese, who distinguished themselves from their Asian neighbours in terms of technology and military power by the first half of the twentieth century (Louie 2003, p. 9).

thinks we are on the same level. (...) I think that what belongs in Asia is Japan and...well...at least China, because China is becoming [prosperous]. But I am annoyed when a Bangladeshi insists they are Asian. How are Bangladesh and Korea comparable? (Ja-Yoon)

The Korean attitude toward other groups indicates how they ostracise other non-Westerners/Europeans/whites as they are simultaneously being ostracised by Westerners/Europeans/whites.

However, this does not simply show their contradictory construction of hierarchy. As seen in Ja-Yoon's story, to resist the Western idea of a homogenous Asia, they try to highlight their unique features as Koreans. In this way, they demonstrate that they are not from "just one of the poor Asian countries". At the same time, this shows that they have changed their own ideas of (East) Asia, as seen in Ja-Yoon's condition for belonging to Asia. For Koreans, Asian characters can be "dynamic" and "prosperous" rather than backward and tradition oriented. In this regards, emphasising Korea's economic/technological development is a kind of resistant reaction to the conventional Asian image.

Samsung, a repeatedly mentioned subject is an example that Korean people are establishing a Korean image.

At first, I was a bit surprised seeing the sign of Samsung at Piccadilly Circus. I was proud of that. Other [Korean] people also said they are proud of that. (Mee-Hwa)

Samsung refers to a *cheböl*<sup>59</sup> group of companies and is usually recognised as a branch company of the group –an electronics brand– for the public in Koreans in the UK. It is often used as a tool among Korean migrants to confirm what Korea is in communicating with other people.

The reason that many Koreans chose Samsung as the most well-known mark of their home country instead of any other cultural heritage, landmark, or traditional thing may be that electronics are more familiar topics for most people. Unlike special events such as food festivals and other Korean cultural festivals organised in institutional dimension, commercial brands are an easy subject for routine situations

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<sup>59</sup> *Cheböl* is a unique business form defined as "a family-owned-and-controlled group of businesses operating in a number of unrelated industries" (Park Matthews 2005, p. 158).

(see Chapter 5). However, their choice of Samsung (and some other companies such as LG and Hyundai in a similar manner) as a marker of Korea implicates further meaning. It indicates Korean migrants' attachment to appearance in the global stage, which is also a very financially based idea. This fits the company's motto—"the first class in the world"—as well. In addition, it is related to Korean people's self-image of Korea as a high-technology country. The development of the techno-related industry and a superior infrastructure of information technology is used to destereotype the fixed Asian image of tradition and backwardness.

Here, they face the irony that Samsung is considered an immoral *chebŏl* inside Korea but it becomes a national pride outside Korea. While Korean public have negative feelings against *chebŏl* due to their wealth accumulation by unfair advantage from their connection to government/politician, these groups' monopolistic position in Korean industries, and family-based ownership of diversified businesses (Park Matthews 2005), they ironically feel the pride from this noted company as a proof of wealth, development and technology.

#### 4. 4. Dealing with Asian Women Stereotypes

##### Lotus Blossom Image

The participants show how they face others' presumptions of not only an Asian, but also an Asian woman. These women recognise the perception of Asians in a gendered and sexualised way.

Eastern women, a fantasy of Eastern women rather than Korean women... There is something like that. Sometimes I am watched in that kind of way. Guys just try to talk to...and flirt with [an Eastern woman] in a pub. "Are you from Japan?" "No" "China?" "No" "Then, where are you from?" "I'm from Korea." In such cases I feel my identity as a Korean woman. (Eun-Sook)

All the Korean girls in my language school, including me, have been lured by guys at one time or another. A black man who I met in the tube still sends me e-mail, even though I said that I have since married. (...) Every girl has similar experiences. That may be because they think us easy. Why do they flirt with us

instead of other more attractive women? They think Eastern women are easy, while they don't dare dash to Western white women. (Bo-Ram)

As you know, we often meet people who say *Nee Hao* [Hello in Chinese] and *Gonnichiwa* [Hello in Japanese] to us on the street. Sometimes, I have heard 안녕하세요 *Annyonghaseyo* [Hello in Korean]. I feel not good...If they know Korean word, if they flirt with and whistle at us...I can suppose that our Korean girls' value has dropped. (Jee-Young)

The women analyse personal relationships and episodes happening every day in the racial and national dimensions. Eun-Sook understands the Korean woman's image has been constructed by others by combining a vague notion of Asia (never distinguishing Korea) and sexual fantasy (the object of flirtation); Bo-Ram and Jee-Young think that Korean women are collectively considered as women who are easily enticed, intertwining women's value with racial/national matter.

These women's recognitions are related to the stereotype of Asian women, in terms of their gender role, as *victim*, and in terms of sexuality, as *sexual object*; both are from the same root of Orientalism. In regards to the former, as is well known, Asian women are often considered to be passive subjects under a male-dominated social culture; they lack decision-making power, are victims of violence or strict hierarchy, assume roles of burden in the family as well as workplace, remain under their parents' authority, etc. Therefore, an Asian woman is thought of as a person who cannot succeed because of her social limitations. Yet these stereotypes overlook internal variations in Asian women and their subjectivities and challenges (Chun 2003; Pyke & Johnson 2003; M Song 1995; Lee et al. 2002).

Jae-Eun indicated how she senses this type of image of Asian women in the UK in her relationship with her boyfriend:

My [British] boyfriend visited Korea [once I had returned and was studying to finish my undergraduate course]. Before that, he seemed to think I was a special Korean girl...who needed to be saved by him...So he might have thought that I should be in London. But after meeting foreign people in Korea, he realised that I had enough resources to live well in Korea. He realised that I could have a good job and be wealthier in Korea than in Britain. He thought it would be harder if I came to the UK, and he felt burdened by that. Also he had a complex about our age gap...So, we broke up right after he visited Korea. (Jae-Eun)

Her experience and her interpretation of the relationship with her British boyfriend highlight the difference in perceptions between the time she stayed in the UK and

lived in Korea. In the UK, she was seen as a poor migrant woman from an unknown Asian country; however, in Korea, she was actually a promising young woman living in a rich area and attending a highly reputed university.

While they are seen as feminine, passive women in Britain, these women are considered too liberal (Westernised) in Korea. This parallels the description of Korean migrant women in the US as “미국물 먹은 여자 *migukmul möken yōja*” (literally meaning a woman who has drunk US water), an illegitimate Korean woman who is Westernised in Korean nationalistic cultural discourse (Rhee 2002, p. 17). The participants discussed their recognition of the contradictory images in two societies. Jee-Won, who has seen many inter-ethnic married Korean women at her working place, feels these women have different personalities: “Korean women, who intermarried, tend to have a very strong personality.” Mee-Ran finds herself far from the traditional notion of Korean women due to her decision to defy customs and her glaring appearance.

Well...I have been willing to date a Korean man, but I don't have a chance. I think I am not the type Korean men want. [laugh] Actually, I have seriously thought about this. I am not their style. Korean men don't come to me. Maybe they think I am too much for them. (Mee-Ran)

Here, in contrast to the general Korean male point of view, these women do not think negatively of this different style of woman. For them, this personality is energetic and strong rather than vulgar and dangerous. As they described their acquaintances, who have been in a foreign country, had different fashion style and strong personality (which were desirable) in their memory (in Chapter 3), some migrant women perceive these characters, which are different from normally expected as Korean women, in positive way.

Meanwhile, the stereotype of Asian women is also evident in the way it is associated with a sexualised image. The “Asian mystique” constructed by Western imaginary is no more than a fantasy; Asian women exist only as one homogeneous mass in this kind of image (Tajima 1989; Prasso 2005). Asian women are described as exotic beauties (Prasso 2005; Espiritu 1997), in contrast (but on the same basis of racialisation of beauty) to black women as hypersexual (Collins 1990; Craig 2006; hooks 1992) in many sexist/racist representations. The racialised femininity of Asian women is often evident in media representations. Kim and Chung (2005) insist that,

although the range of racial/ethnic repertoires has been widening according to the rising need for consumption within the global culture, the stereotyped Asian women's image remains, and Orientalism has not weakened in American media representations. Analysing Asian women's appearances in American cinema, Tajima (1989) argues that two basic types of images of Asian women exist: "the Lotus Blossom Baby (a.k.a. China Doll, Geisha Girl, shy Polynesian beauty), and the Dragon Lady (Fu Manchu's various female relations, prostitutes, devious madams)" (p. 309). The Lotus Blossom Baby, the prominent type of Asian women in American films, is a hyper-feminine and exotic sexual object; this type of image has been more welcomed based on her erotic possibilities for American males (H Kang 2002). Asian women's stereotyped passive image is, in Tajima's expression, "the common language of non-language—that is, uninterpretable chattering, pidgin English, giggling, or silence" (p. 310).

Mee-Ran says that her Korean friend was furious about this image of Asian women in a TV program showing a series of opinion poll surveys carried out around Britain.

Mee-Ran: My friend told me what she saw on a TV program. Men talked about their thoughts and images of Eastern women. I don't remember whether they were British men or other men, though. Anyway... The top-ranked answer was that Oriental women always smile. It sounds good, but... (...) she said it was bad. She thought they meant that Eastern women just smile without any meaning. Just smile, without thinking, without feeling...

Young: Hmm, the first thing was smiling...

Mee-Ran: Yes, just smiling whatever they say... that was the first, and... cooking well was on the list. And, what else... Ah, not good in bed. [laugh]

Young: Did they say "not good"?

Mee-Ran: Yeh, No technique. What do you call it, just following [a man in bed]?

Young: You mean, passive?

Mee-Ran: Oh, yes. Passive!

Young: Hmm.

Mee-Ran: So, she said she felt so bad watching that, so she decided never to smile.

An image that is far from active and subjective women's character made Mee-Ran's friend furious. This unpleasant notion of Asian woman is seen in some participants' experiences with men's flirting, as discussed earlier.

## Negotiating Femininity

Korean women's attitude to the presumption of "available women", in fact, cannot be merely getting furious, rejecting, or snubbing others. In some cases, Western men's thoughts and treatment are not just harmful to women's pride. For example, Ha-Jung indicated her complex feelings:

I think we presume... actually, they could be genuinely interested in me. When they talk to me, I cannot accept this proudly. Let's suppose that a guy talks to me, and it's not a doubtable mood. It could be normal and we can think of this in positive way, like "he is interested in me." But we have prejudice to this kind of situation. Well, it might be because we are a bit timid... In such a situation, I think "So, do you disregard me now because I'm from an unknown country?" Actually, I talked about this issue before coming here. People said "Foreign [Western] men like Asian women, but be careful!" (...) They don't really want to know who I am, but just try to flirt. But, to tell the truth, it doesn't seem like it's that [bad], does it? It could be true. But we often doubt it. (Ha-Jung)

While she is aware of men's view of Asian women, she raises the question of Koreans' excessive feeling of being victimised: she doubts not only the guy's intention, but also her over-caution. In trying to distinguish flirting from genuine favour, she has ambiguous feelings of "doubting whether he disregard me" and "accepting it proudly".

Such complex feelings are also evident in the aspect of their own desires. Asian women's hyper-feminine image is used to these women's pleasure. As seen above, Bo-Ram finds the reason that men talk to Korean girls stems from racial hierarchy and Asian stereotypes. However, she also says that she enjoys it.

Bo-Ram: Well... It doesn't seem to be dangerous. A pub is an open place, so there are many people, if anything dangerous happens. Maybe because of this, guys don't harass me much, but just try to chat me up.

Young: But, even that attention could be annoying.

Bo-Ram: Actually, maybe because I am a married woman, I want to get that kind of attention. [laugh] It never happened in Korea, because I was in my house almost every day. But here [it happens], it's fresh, isn't it? Even if I don't actively talk with them... Anyway, it means that they see me as a woman. [laugh]

She finds pleasure from being treated as a woman. For her, what she described as “fresh” is the kind of experience that means escaping the boring life of a married woman. “Seeing me as a woman” means a different experience from usual consideration of a married woman as asexual in Korea.

Furthermore, Bo-Ram argued:

People say that a female student abroad can easily be liberal, negatively say, vulgar. But I understand girls. Because women have been oppressed too much in Korea, they feel freedom here. (...) Generally, people think a woman goes out with a foreign man just for sexual reasons or to learn English. But, actually, women think about men’s background even when dating Korean men in Korea, don’t they? Nonetheless, people see it negatively, going out with a foreign man. (Bo-Ram)

She justifies Korean women’s desires—both sexual and romantic as well as the desire for a better life in the host country by quick settlement with British/European men, criticising Korean men’s condemnation that Korean women want to date Western men for an inappropriate reason. Korean migrant women get the opportunity to be honest about their desires, which is not allowed in Korea, using their feminine image.

This enjoyment relates to body issues, given that their physical attractiveness offers a chance for pleasure and confidence. In fact, participants often referenced body and beauty topics. For some women, their unfamiliar appearance gives them a uniqueness and the relative freedom from a strict body size gives them opportunity to feel confident about their appearance. Yun-Jee shows this change in her discussion of clothing, from “I couldn’t even imagine wearing a skirt” to actively adoring her body.

Ladies shoes in my size are not produced in Korea, so I didn’t have high heels. Here, people don’t say that I am chubby. If I ask “Am I fat?” they answer “No, you’re not.” In Korea, I couldn’t make myself look feminine because I was afraid of being criticized. I rarely put on makeup and always wore trousers. But here, well...because people don’t mind anyway, I wear skirts and ladies shoes that fit. (Yun-Jee)

While dressing up in a feminine manner was not permitted in Korea because it was criticised as a fat woman’s improper aspiration, she took advantage of the

opportunity to change her body image through migration. Similarly, Mee-Ran indicated how she enjoys her body and clothing in Britain.

I am pleased when people say to me “You look gorgeous!” here. When I was in Korea, I felt small because of my size. Also, the advantage of living here is....though there are more East Asian people here than before, anyway, I feel like I am special. I enjoy it. I don’t need to care about what others think, and I’m confident about myself. (Mee-Ran)

Mee-Ran has stopped worrying about her weight as much as she did in Korea. Furthermore, she can try to show more femininity in her appearance. She enjoys the range of sizes in ladies’ wear in the UK, so the clothes that are available to her are more feminine than those she had to wear in Korea. For her, the exotic feminine image of Asian women provides her with the opportunity to express her feminine beauty. She uses this to maximise her attraction, although she is clearly aware that Western males tend to see Asian women as sexual and passive.

As such, the women put their bodies in the context of feminine attractiveness.<sup>60</sup> The issue of the feminine beauty in body is, for these women, related to both their experiences of being under pressure pre-migration and the new circumstance in which their bodies are understood differently. They come to re-evaluate their bodies in new circumstances. Some signs of the exotic body—typed in a gendered and racialised way from the standard of the white male—are rediscovered and used (Ali 2005). For example, the slim and small body, young-looking face, and even un-hooded eyelids, which are often the subject of cosmetic surgery in Korea, are mentioned as features that make them charming. This leads the body to be narrated in a different way from language, which is considered in the context of discrimination, even though both body and language are markers of race/ethnicity. Like South Asian women’s paradox of “highly exoticised and essentialised, yet the same time pleasurable, images” in the fashion trend of “Asian cool” in the UK

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<sup>60</sup> Racial/ethnic marks about the body have resistant possibilities, and these marks are used for negotiation and showing pride; for instance, the Afro hairstyle has become a symbol of black pride and black power (Mercer 1994). Black hairstyles and skin have political meaning and symbolic significance given that they are responses to their historical devaluation and part of a strategic contestation of the cultural power of whiteness (Mercer 1994; Tate 2007). However, in the Korean women’s case, they use their body image for strategy to enhance their attractiveness.

(Puwar 2002, p. 82), Korean migrant women find contradicting pleasure from their body image.

## Conclusion

The chapter has dealt with Korean migrant women's interpretation of and reaction to being an ethnic minority in the UK, focusing on Western prejudices against Asian migrants. Gender and ethnicity/nationality cross various dimensions of exclusion, creating a complex situation for Korean migrant women that resulted in them being termed "the other".

Suddenly becoming an ethnic minority by moving into a multiethnic but white-dominated society makes Korean women understand how their ethnicity/nationality influences their lives. They realise and check their status on the condition of welcomed guests—"not a dispossessed refugee with no job and no proper linguistic skills living on welfare, but a 'westernized' highly educated professional whose English is *almost* fluent" (Ang 1996, p. 47). They suffer from multiple layers of alienation and discrimination—as a foreigner, a non-Westerner, a non-white, an Asian, and a Korean—in obvious or ambiguous ways. In terms of being a Korean/Asian woman, they find themselves being stereotyped as passive, submissive, and hyper-feminine. Throughout their experiences, they have the opportunity to reflect on the exclusion and racism evident in Korean society. Meanwhile, they feel the need to negotiate Asian (especially East Asian) images in the UK. Challenging the unfamiliarity of South Korea and the invisibility of East Asians in Britain, they attempt to highlight distinctive Koreaness—high-technology and economic power—to contest the represented image of pre-modern and powerless.

In negotiating their situation in the UK, these women face several contradictory points. Firstly, while they become a minority and consequently experience discrimination, they authorise and demonstrate discriminative views upon other ethnic minorities. Secondly, although they find unfairness in the discriminative treatment at the hands of the British, they minimise the misunderstanding of other cultures and racism to a matter indicative of the advanced Western society's virtue,

making another standard of civilised society. Finally, they find their passive sexual Asian image to differ from reality and their expectations of having a strong personality. However, they also realise this feminine image could be advantageous as a source of pleasure and acceptance into Western society. This is evident in their different attitude to body/beauty and language: Both can be generally ethnic markers, but the former is considered as a source of confidence, while the later is a shameful lack of ability. Following the external influences discussed in this chapter, the next chapter will look at another axis that impacts Korean migrants' life: internal factors in Korean migrants' communities.

## CHAPTER 5

### MIGRANT HOME-BUILDING

This chapter explores Korean communities in the UK. As ethnicity itself is a historically and culturally constructed concept and simple belonging is not possible (Hall 1992a), the notion of an ethnic community has also been contested: a simple idea of community as a collectivity of people who are from the same country of origin, so that they share the same interests and a homogenous culture, is challenged. Such a simple notion of community emphasising homogeneity and ignoring individual and collective agency, from the perspective of majority white British, ultimately serves the otherisation of ethnic minorities (Alleyne 2002; Alexander 1998). An ethnic community consists of multiple layers of different networks rather than a fixed and coherent one (Alexander et al. 2007). Also, the networks of relationships within such a community are not, as some assume, always on the defensive from the difficulties posed by the new environment (Alleyne 2002). In this vein, this chapter deals with the dynamics and complex practices within Korean communities in the UK based on the specific features of their history and member composition.

After tracing the history and background of the formation of Korean communities in New Malden in the first section, I go on to explore various practices of collective home-building, focusing on Korean migrants' communities in New Malden. This involves different dimensions of a community—as an “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) and as the concrete experiences among personal networks. The section deals with, first, an examination of the activities of some representative institutions in Korean communities in order to tease out the relationship between manifested Korean identity/culture and concrete practices. Then, focusing on locally based lived experiences rather than a mythical place constructed from an imagination of homeland—two factors of diasporic home (Brah 1996)—I examine how they construct Korean migrant culture in a local place, through looking at their self-image, neighbourhood, and consumption in New Malden. I will also explore Korean migrant communities as a field in which different

interests contest each other by looking at variations among Korean migrants and interpersonal relations.

### 5. 1. New Malden

It is hard to understand Korean migrants' home-building in the UK without referring to New Malden. As introduced in the first chapter, New Malden and the surrounding area has the biggest Korean population in Europe in terms of density. Around New Malden rail station, which is a 20-minute train ride from London's Waterloo station, several examples indicate the Korean town: Korean restaurants, acupuncture medical clinics, travel agents with signs in Korean, franchised beauty-salons of well-known Korean beauty-salons, and a Korean café with the latest Korean television shows playing all day are evident all along New Malden High Street and Kingston Road.

The history of settlement in New Malden by Koreans traces back to the official residence of the Korean ambassador in Wimbledon in the 1980s.<sup>61</sup> In addition, some Japanese migrants were residing in this area before Koreans, which made it relatively easy for the Koreans to settle there due to their similar culture, especially related to food. Apart from these factors, another possible reason for the growing settlement of Korean migrants in New Malden is that the office of Samsung Electronics UK was initially based nearby, although this company has since relocated to Chertsey.<sup>62</sup> In fact, resident workers of Korean companies have a special role in the Korean society in New Malden, despite their small proportion in the Korean population in the UK. This is evident from the fact that, in the early period (1965-1988) of the Korean Residents Society, most of the representatives were resident workers of large Korean companies' UK divisions.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile, the most frequently mentioned reason for living in this area is the highly ranked secondary schools in South West London. Many Koreans believe that Korean people stay in the New Malden area for their children's education, especially because of these "good

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<sup>61</sup> "Another Korea in the UK", 2 Feb. 2007 *The Chosun Ilbo*

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Public Relation Officer of the Korean Residents Society (17 Nov. 2006)

<sup>63</sup> The Korean Residents Society, <http://www.krsuk.org>

schools”, which send many pupils to famous universities. This belief reflects the idea that Korean people consider such attachment to education to be a very Korean characteristic.

Since Korean restaurants and groceries targeting resident workers, tourists, and students opened in the early 1990s, New Malden has become the hub of Korean expatriate networks.<sup>64</sup> With the increasing Korean population, the local branch of a bank hired two Korean employees and a Korean police officer are currently employed in the area. The function of New Malden is not limited to Korean residents in the area. Korean groceries, restaurants, medical centres, and other shops attract Koreans living outside of London. It is not difficult to see Korean people travelling with their families and friends to shopping far away from New Malden. In the meantime, many Koreans do not work in the New Malden area but live there. Among the interviewees of this study, Yu-Jung’s and Bo-Ram’s husbands work at Korean companies located in central London, but their families live in New Malden because of the “convenience for Korean people” and “in accordance with the custom of resident workers”.

One of the reasons that New Malden has taken on the role of the hub of Korean networks is its residential stability. Many of 주재원 *chuchewŏn* (resident workers from a Korean company’s UK division) and 교민 *kyomin* (residents who intend to settle permanently)<sup>65</sup> live in New Malden in family units, while independent migrants such as students spread out to other areas in London instead of New Malden to easily commute to their schools.<sup>66</sup> The family units’ settlement has led to the formation of a Korean town, including service businesses for Korean

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<sup>64</sup> “Another Korea in the UK”, *The Chosun Ilbo*, 2 Feb. 2007

<sup>65</sup> 주재원 *Chuchewŏn* and 교민 *Kyomin* refer to a resident worker from a Korean company and a permanent/long-term settler (or Korean descendant) in a foreign country, respectively. These Korean terms will be used in interview quotations to deliver the exact nuance.

<sup>66</sup> In London, where more than half of the UK Korean population lives, Golders Green has emerged as another area in which Korean people, especially students, live close together. Although no statistics about the Korean population in this area are available, frequent advertisements for flat-sharing on Korean websites and three Korean supermarkets suggest a considerable number of Koreans reside around Golders Green. In addition, Centre Point in central London is a shopping point with a grocery, bakery, beauty-salon and several Korean restaurants located together. This place offers a good shopping opportunity for those who live far from New Malden, with the advantage of good location close to many language schools and universities as well as easy access from all areas of London. Due to the distance from New Malden, students often choose central London (e.g., Tottenham Court Road and Soho, where several Korean restaurants are located) as meeting points for socialising.

customers and bases for various organisations. Also, it has a culture distinguished from that of independent migrants (which will be discussed later in this chapter). For Koreans outside New Malden, New Malden is seen as a place in which people are stable while maintaining a Korean style of life. According to Bo-Ram, a *chuchewŏn*'s wife, in the case of resident workers' families, it is common that newcomers take over a house and a car from another family who return to Korea for convenience purposes. A house is taken when a husband comes to the UK first a few weeks before the wife and children's arrival. This practice also contributes to Korean resident workers' continued settling in New Malden (Women's role in this process will be discussed in Chapter 6).

New Malden is not just a physical place for dwelling, but also a symbol of Korean society in the UK. In many cases, participants consider New Malden to be a term that indicates the collective Korean migrant society. New Malden is a place for showing the cultural identity of Korean society as well as obtaining Korean materials. Keeping with Korean customs is commonly observed in New Malden. C church, where participant observation was conducted, as well as other Korean churches regularly offer lunch after worship and serve Korean food. In addition, these residents celebrate Korean holidays. On *Chusŏk* (Korean Thanksgiving day), B hair salon provided free haircuts and traditional Korean rice cakes for elderly customers. Annual Korean festivals and events, for example Korean Food Festival and Korean Festival (which will be discussed later in this chapter), also serve to introduce Korean culture to other people in the local area as well as offer Korean people a chance to get together.

In addition to sustaining Korean style, the residents connect to their homeland in a collective dimension. An example of this transnational character of home-building is C church's donation. The church provides financial support for Korean missionaries working in other countries and for bible college students in Korea. The recipient's letter of thanks for the scholarship is posted in the church's weekly bulletin (22 October 2006). Along with this constant support, the church organises annual events. The church has held a charity concert in which all of the music was performed by members of the church. The money raised at the concert was donated for children with tuberculosis in North Korea and the homeless in Kingston (2 Dec. 2006). Contributing to both local society and Korea is considered a virtue for Korean residents. As members of their country of origin, they show a continuing attachment

to their country by donating to other Koreans.<sup>67</sup> In the meantime, their participation in the local society by donation *in the name of Korean community*<sup>68</sup> shows the possibility of migrants' practices of citizenship and belonging beyond the boundaries relating to home and host country. Through both transnational ties and local attachment, migrants create a new place of belonging (Ehrkamp 2005). (Individual women's transnational ties will be discussed in Chapter 6.)

## 5. 2. Institutions and Practices of Identity

There are formal/institutional dimensions and informal/personal dimensions of community (Alexander et al. 2007): formal community institutions serve to “testify to the existence of a ‘community’, manifest its most significant features and articulate its needs, often standing as a mediator between ‘the community’ and wider society”(p. 791). As the number of Korean settlers has increased, several institutions have been established. The representative organisation of Koreans in the UK is the Korean Residents Society. Launched in 1958, it is now based in New Malden. The association aims, according to Clause 3 in its *Articles of the Korean Residents Society in the UK*, “to promote friendship and prosperity between members and to improve relationships and cultural exchange between Korea and the UK in order to contribute to the development of the image of Korea in the UK.” Membership in the association is voluntary, and full membership is given only to Koreans who have lived longer than one year in the UK or the Republic of Ireland. The main activities are as follows:

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<sup>67</sup> Of course, this type of transnational ties in a collective dimension—donation activities by religious institution—is just one of many cases. For example, there were some political actions by Koreans in the UK to raise their voice for current issues in Korea and to show solidarity to Korean people's protests: Korean postgraduates studying in the UK issued a statement against the Korean government's plan for privatisation of key industries. They refuted Korean government's positive mention of privatisation in Britain (1 April 2002); Candlelight vigils about two Korean teenagers' death by a US Army's armed vehicle were held in Leicester Square, London (14 and 31 December 2002); a candlelight vigil to protest the Korean government's decision to import US beef, with BSE, better known as “mad cow disease” was held in Richmond Terrace, London (7 June 2008).

<sup>68</sup> Another example of the contribution to the local society is Korean Restaurant Association(KORSA)'s donation for Kingston council (especially for activities for youths with drug problems). KORSA has donated the benefits from their annual Korean Food Festival for the past six years (2002-2008). (한인신문 Korean News, 5 Sep. 2008)

Clause 4: (business) We conduct the following activities to further the aims of this association:

1. Social meetings, picnic parties, athletics meetings, annual year end party and similar events as approved by the association
2. The association supports Korean schools in the UK
3. It carries out business activities together for the purpose of fostering and maintaining a close relationship between the association and the UK, including the association of soldiers who had formerly participated in wars, organising events, lecture meetings and presentations to improve friendship and cultural exchange between Korea and the UK
4. Any other activities & business which the Board of Directors may consider necessary and in accordance with the aims of this association

(Articles of Korean Residents Society in the UK, revised on 16 Feb.2004)

The chairperson of the organisation represents Korean residents to the borough of Kingston and at Korean governmental events such as meetings of overseas Koreans' associations. Because of the number of Koreans in the area, its main field of activities is in and around Kingston. According to the PR officer, the organisation pursues cooperation with Kingston borough. Besides this ongoing effort, he provided an example of becoming an important part of the local society: representatives of the Korean community were invited to the opening event for a film festival at cinema, the Kingston Odeon (Nov. 2008), and the opening-night film was a Korean movie. Moreover, the following statement shows the organisation's aspirations at the institutional level:

We have to provide a stepping stone for the second generation of Koreans in the UK to enter into the majority society of the UK. It is time to do our best together to support them for becoming future leaders. (...) We have to bring our youths to become a Mayor, a M.P, a Leader of Council, and the leaders of British majority society. (The Chairperson's column on *the Korean Residents Society News* No. 2, Mar. 2006)

To reflect these goals, the old motto of “Bridge the gap!” has been replaced by a new one, “Integration!”<sup>69</sup>

Among the activities organised by the Korean Residents Society, the biggest event is the annual Korean festival. This event aims not only to serve as a social gathering and a place for remembering Korea, but also to introduce Korean culture to non-Korean residents. The programme of the 10th Korean Festival in 2007 (30, June, Fairfield Recreation Ground in Kingston) was as follows:

- An opening ceremony
- A ceremonial parade of British Korean War veterans
- Gilnori (traditional Korean opening performance) to announce the start of the festival and pray for a successful festival
- A programme of traditional Korean dance
- A music programme of Kayagum (a Korean string instrument) and guitar
- Demonstrations of Korean traditional musical instruments
- A raffle drawing (Raffle prizes include a return air ticket to Korea)
- An arm wrestling competition
- Modern dance by the youths (Girls hiphop and B-boy and popping performance)
- A taekwondo demonstration
- A performance by football freestylers
- A hapgido (a martial art) demonstration
- Samulnori (a traditional Korean music genre) performance
- Demonstration of a traditional Korean wedding
- Daedongnori with hand-in-hand & joint tug of war (traditional Korean games which are usually played to mark the ending of an event)

As seen in this programme as well as those of other similar festivals<sup>70</sup> and institutionally organised events, the main purpose is to show traditional Korean culture. This includes the presenters’ wearing of traditional Korean costume, which Korean people reserve for special occasions, as well as traditional musical performances, which even Koreans can see only in theatres nowadays.

Along with showing and introducing Korean culture to non-Korean people in the UK, the internal agenda within the Korean Residents Society is to express Korean identity at an institutional level. For example, the continuation of *Hyō*

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<sup>69</sup> Interview with Kim Yoon Sung, Public Relation Officer of the Korean Residents Society (17 Nov. 2006)

<sup>70</sup> Other programmes of Korean cultural events organised by other institutions show similarities with this festival. See Appendix 5.

(filial piety) as a national culture is one of the goals of the department of culture/arts within the Korean Residents Society.<sup>71</sup> In such festivals and institutional events, national/ethnic identity is expressed in a relatively simplistic way compared to migrant people's real, everyday experiences. In fact, Korean migrant women in this research showed ambiguity on the matter of filial piety: some participants say that they enjoy their lives in the UK without their parents' interference; others cite their familial obligations, or stress in their relationships with their in-laws in Korea, as an important factor in their decision to remain in the UK (see Chapter 3); still others say that they have feelings of guilt over being away from their parents (see Chapter 6).

Meanwhile, in addition to the Korean Residents Society, there are several associations based on business and interests, such as the Korean Restaurant & Supermarket Association and the Korean Sports Council. Among such institutional activities, Korean schools and newspapers clarify their purpose as maintaining Korean identity. Maintaining Korean identity and enhancing Korean values, however, involve complex practices.

The first Korean school in the UK opened in London in 1972 with 24 students. The number of Korean weekend schools has increased since the mid-1990s, with 23 such schools currently operating throughout the UK.<sup>72</sup> Financially they rely on the Korean embassy in the UK, tuition fees and donations. In most cases, schools outside London have a small number of students (10-30 pupils). However, the South London Korean School located in Chessington has an exceptionally large number of students (approximately 300-350 pupils) and teachers (23, most of whom have career experience and earned their qualification in education in Korea) due to its long history and proximity to New Malden. The curriculum consists of Korean language, maths, sociology, music, and Korean history, although it is somewhat flexible depending on the need. They use the same textbooks as those used in Korea, which are supplied by the Korean embassy in the UK. The classes are open every weekend and a graduation ceremony is held every year. Pupils are between the ages of four and fifteen.

According to the head teacher of the South London Korean School, the purpose of Korean schools is basically to help children uphold Korean identity,

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<sup>71</sup> *The Korean Residents Society News* (No.1) 31 Jan. 2006

<sup>72</sup> The Korean Residents Society (<http://www.krsuk.org>)

especially by teaching Korean language. From parents' perspective, the reason they send their children to Korean weekend school is more specific: in the case of *kyomin* and intermarried parents, they are concerned about Korean language and hope to help their children avoid difficulties when meeting other Korean people because of the language barrier; in the case of *chuchewŏn* parents, they want their children to continue their education in Korean classes after returning to Korea. Many parents believe that Korean language, as a marker of Korean identity, is also strongly related to enhancing their opportunities in their future careers. Among Korean parents, it is believed that speaking only English is not enough for getting a job even in companies in Britain (at least for Korean workers). They also think that fluency in Korean language is needed in case they end up working in Korea. Although the object of Korean schooling is, at the abstract level, to help young Koreans maintain their Korean identity, parents' thoughts concerning their children's study abilities and future careers are often more practical and realistic.<sup>73</sup>

Another kind of institution focused on the maintenance of Korean identity is the Korean newspapers. Six community newspapers are currently available for Korean readers in the UK, all of which are weeklies available for free at Korean-related places (see Introduction chapter for a list of these newspapers). The head editor of one Korean-language newspaper says that the role of an ethnic community press is to keep national/ethnic identity in a foreign land as well as to give information about settling down.

Well...I think, you can write a thesis only with 동포신문 *dongpo sinmun* (Korean community newspapers published outside Korea). There are differences among [Korean] community newspapers in different countries. Community newspapers are very special. They are distinguished from the newspapers published inside Korea. The most important thing is to help Koreans settle down well here as soon as possible. (...) That is what Korean people want. Another thing is...though we are living here, we still miss our home country. We must not forget our Korean identity. Among various purposes, they are the key points. So, I think, the most important role of community newspapers is to effectively deliver these two things together to Koreans. (Kim Soo Jeong, the head editor of the *Korea Post*)

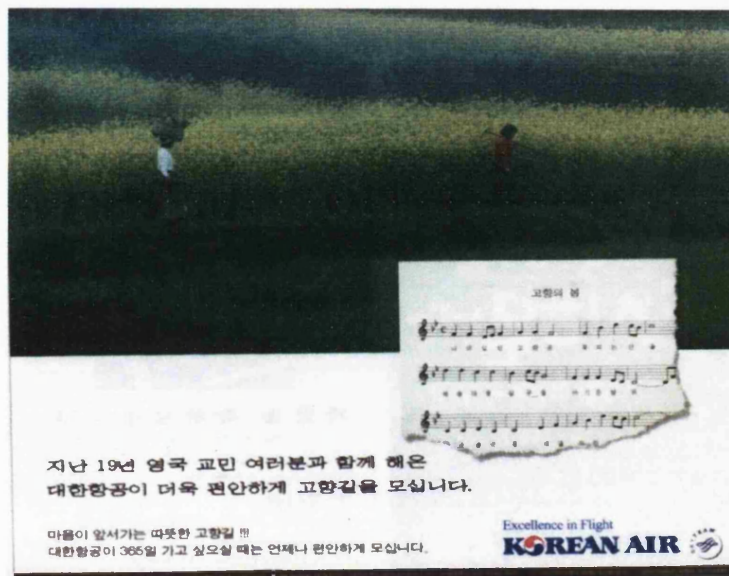
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<sup>73</sup> This is based on the interview with Kim Kyong Mi, the head teacher of the South London Korean School.

Accordingly, the order of importance of the news articles is, in the case of the *Korea Post*:<sup>74</sup>

- 1) News stories inside Korean communities in the UK,
- 2) Migrant-related issues in the UK (e.g., visa regulations),
- 3) Information for living in the UK (e.g., changing utility bills),
- 4) General news of the UK, and
- 5) General news of Korea.

In fact, diasporic images, especially in advertisements, are a manifestation of the special identity as migrants who are living in a foreign country.



**Figure 1: Advertisement for Korean Air**  
on the *Korean Residents Society News*, 31 May 2006

In the above image, an advertisement for an airline company targeting Korean migrants in the UK overtly appeals to migrants' nostalgia for their home country.

The copy is translated as:

Korean Air has always been there for you, Koreans in the UK [*Kyonmin*], for the last 19 years, and will escort you for a more comfortable journey to your hometown.

On the way to your hometown, your heart has already arrived there.

Korean Air will take you 365 days a year, whenever you want.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Kim Soo Jeong, the head editor of the *Korea Post*.

The advertisement uses the tune of “Spring of My Hometown”, a very well-known song among Koreans, which is useful for the creation of nostalgia by bringing up memories and reminding the reader of the lyrics, which are about missing home.

Another example, the figure below, also appeals to migrants’ emotions as being away from where they are familiar.



Figure 2: Advertisement of HanKang [the Han river] Restaurant  
in *The UK Life*, (No. 699) 22 Jun. 2006

Translated copy:

“Mother’s table” My mother’s meal, in the good old days. I never forget it.  
The HanKang restaurant reminds you of your mother's cooking, because we  
serve the food with our warm heart.

The image of a Korean meal and the copy about “Mother’s table” together emphasise what migrants miss and long for, in order to advertise the authenticity of food at a Korean restaurant.

In the practical aspect, the newspapers function to share information about Korea and help Korean people settle down in the UK (see Figure 3).

## 영국 영주권/시민권 시험 실전문제

올 4월부터 기존 시민권 취득 예정자들만 보아왔던 시험을 영주권 취득자들도 통과해야 하는 법이 발효되었다. 이에 영국 영어 훈련원에서는 한인헤럴드를 통해 그 예상 문제를 풀이한다. 본 내용은 British Citizenship test Study Guide를 번역하여 실는다.

### [종교]

Question 1: You have to follow a religion to be British.  
option 1: TRUE                      option 2: FALSE  
영국인이 되기 위해서는 종교를 가져야 한다.  
답: 아니다. - 종교의 자유가 있다.

Question 2: In the 2001 Census, just over 95 per cent of the UK population reported that they had a religion.  
option 1: TRUE                      option 2: FALSE  
2001년 인구센서스에 의하면 영국 국민의 95%가 종교를 가지고 있다.  
답: 아니다. - 75%가 종교가 있는 것으로 조사됐다.

Question 3: How much population of UK is Christian?  
option 1: 85%                      option 2: 70%  
option 3: 75%                      option 4: 80%  
영국의 크리스찬 비율은 어느 정도인가?    답: 2 - 70%가 크리스찬

Question 4: How much percentage of population is Catholic?  
option 1: 10%                      option 2: 15%  
option 3: 20%                      option 4: 25%  
카톨릭 인구는 몇 퍼센트인가?    답: 1 - 10%가 카톨릭 인구이다.

Question 5: How much percentage of population is Muslims?  
option 1: 1%                      option 2: 3%  
option 3: 5%                      option 4: 7%  
모슬렘은 몇 퍼센트인가?    답: 2 - 모슬렘 3%

Question 6: The top 5 religions groups after christianity in the order of its population are:  
option 1: Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists  
option 2: Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, Buddhists  
option 3: Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists  
option 4: Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Jews, Buddhists  
크리스찬 다음으로 차지하는 5개 종교 순서는?  
답: 2 - 모슬렘-힌두-시아-유대교-불교

Question 7: Who is the head of The Church of England?  
option 1: The Prime Minister                      option 2: The Queen of England  
option 3: The Minister of Religions                      option 4: The Prince of Wales  
누가 영국 교회의 수장인가?  
답: 잉글랜드 여왕

Question 8: The monarch at the coronation is required to swear to maintain which Religion in the United Kingdom.  
option 1: Islam                      option 2: Judaism  
option 3: Protestant                      option 4: Catholicism  
대관식에서 군주는 영국의 어떤 종교를 지킬 것을 맹세하는가?  
답: 3 - 신교를 지킬 것을 맹세한다.

번역 및 해설  
박필립 영국 영어훈련원장 parkphilip@hanmail.net

**Figure 3: Mock Test for Citizenship/Denizenship**

*the Hanin Herald* (No. 241) 7 May 2007

Here, a mock test for British citizenship/denizenship was published serially in a newspaper. The instruction part of the column (figure 3) reads, “According to the newly enacted law in April, applicants to denizenship have to pass the test, which was only for applicants to citizenship in the past. The English Training Centre gives anticipated questions and correct answers for the test to *the Hanin Herald*.” This shows the role the press can take in “home-building” in a migrants’ community (as

mentioned in Chapter 2), especially in the creation of a “sense of possibility” for exploring opportunities in the host society (Castles & Davidson 2000).

Although news on Korean communities, Korea, and the UK related to issues of settlement is important, as the editor admits, the timeliness of this kind of reporting is actually not important for Korean community newspapers because migrant people can easily access the latest news on the Internet. This is why cultural topics tend to predominate over other news topics.<sup>75</sup>

Actually, perhaps the most significant role of the newspapers is to serve as a kind of yellow pages; this stems from their financial situation, as they rely heavily on advertising fees. Most of the newspaper agencies are struggling financially; some cannot afford to employ a full-time editor. This makes it difficult to produce original articles, and many articles in these newspapers are actually copied from other Korean media. Moreover, due to the limited nature of their customer base and their reliance on it for revenue, it is extremely difficult for these newspapers to engage in productive criticism of Korean communities. Indeed, because of the limited number of businesses and the complex personal relationships amongst Korean migrants, a critical article on a specific person, business or organisation may cause subsequent

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<sup>75</sup> The translated list of contents of one of these community newspapers, *The Hanin Herald* (No.249) 2 Jul. 2007 is as follows:

Main title	“Overseas Koreans could be entitled to vote”	p.1
Editor’s column	“After Korean festival”	p.2
News of the week	“State of emergency, UK prepares for terrorism”	p.4
Local news	“Man stabbed to death in Kingston night club”	p.6
EU news	“Brown’s new cabinet”	p.8-9
Column	“Miliband’s power”	p.10
Special issue	“666, heretical symbol ”	p.11-12
Society	“Larcenist meets mother”	p.15-16
Migration	“Recent UK work permit assessment criteria”	p.17
Column on Korean politics		p.18
Politics and economy	“Conservative churches’ political actions (Korea)”	p.19
International news and gossips		p.21-22
Sports and Entertainment	“8 Korean golfers out of top 10 in US open”	
	“Spice girls reunion”	p.25-27
Korean language study and poem		p.28
Education	“Sex education for children, how much?”	p.29
Health	“The effects of coffee”	p.30
Golf	“10 ways to reduce 6 par”	p.31
Notice board		p.32-34
Cooking Recipe		p.35
Lettings		p.36-37
Sports news and gossips		p.38-39
Showbiz news and gossips		p.40-45

losses of sponsorship.<sup>76</sup> The ideal function of the community newspaper—to help Korean people maintain their Korean identity and provide information for those settling in the UK—is, therefore, never fully independent of the relationships between interested parties within the migrants' society.

### **5. 3. Neighbourhood, Home-styling, and Consumption**

In terms of “spatial practices” (Harvey 1989), migrants' reshaping the local place involves “symbolic marking of places, the presentation of symbols of recognition, the expression of collective memory in actual practices of communication” (Castells 1989, p. 351). Actually, the landscape of Korean migrants' residential area does not show many obvious visual marks. Although the high street of New Malden has many Korean shops and signs, no special landmarks such as monuments or religious buildings are evident. Some Korean visitors from outside New Malden have expressed their disappointment when seeing the New Malden area because of its unremarkable and outdated appearance. Unlike other commercialised expatriate areas, such as Chinatown in Soho and Banglatown in Brick Lane, Korean New Malden is more like a residential area. Indeed, aspects of Korean culture such as food have not yet been well developed for commercialisation to non-Korean customers in this area.

Ethnic markers are hardly noticed on the outside of flats and houses in New Malden. Rather than reforming their houses in order to carry their home environment to the local area (Krase 1993), Korean migrants modify their places by using small items inside their house. That is, the practice of Korean migrants is to have an exterior following the local style and an interior following the Korean style. This pattern is proven by the figure of a typical Korean migrant family's house, in which the family uses Korean gadgets and cooks Korean food in a house with a garden, like other English houses. A back garden means that Korean migrants complement what they missed in contemporary Korea after rapid industrialisation. Gardens in Korea

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with Kim Soo Jeong, the head editor of the *Korea Post*.

have become rare, as the typical urban scenery is full of tall apartment blocks. Along with parks, the back garden is symbolised as relief from the overwhelming urban life for Korean migrants.

Using Korean gadgets and eating Korean food are identified with being well-settled in the UK. Jee-Young reveals that she knew she had finished struggling when she could afford to buy Korean rice.

I really had a difficult time for the first several months. Since finding a part-time job, I have been relieved from the financial difficulty. Although my parents send less money than before, I can spend more now because I earn money. You know that rice that is only 50p in Sainsbury? I ate it for six months, but I could finally change to Korean rice. (Jee-Young)

As seen in Jee-Young's case, consuming Korean food means sorting out financial difficulty to some extent. Keeping the Korean style of eating and using other goods means settling down (mainly economically) in the UK, rather than maintaining habits or keeping identity. This is based on the fact that Korean food is relatively difficult to buy and more expensive than other types of food. In addition, Korean people appreciate their healthy food and think of Korean electronic goods as being high quality. In this way, wooden floors, Samsung mobiles, and LG televisions are items representative of both settling down without monetary problems and living as they are accustomed.

Of particular interest in the New Malden Korean migrant culture is the attempt to establish a middle-class trend. Despite the fact that differences exist among Korean migrants depending on their status, many participants tend to think of the financial and familial stability of resident workers as one of the main features of New Malden. In other words, resident workers' and some wealthy settlers' culture based on their economic status is not one culture shared by all Korean migrants, but a dominant culture recognised by these people. The owner of P beauty-salon stated:

Here in the UK, I can see many high-class people because people mix together in the church. It turns out that some are high ranking government officers and some are human cultural assets. How could I have seen such people in Korea? They went to churches that are exclusive from ordinary people in Korea. Actually, *chuchewŏn* [resident workers] people are also quite competent and good at English language so that they were appreciated by their companies. There are many Korean students in the primary schools in this area [New Malden]. Because their parents are intelligent, the children are good at their

studies. Korean kids rank highest within primary schools here. (The owner of P beauty-salon)

Although she does not identify herself as part of the *chuchewŏn* groups and other wealthy people, she thinks that their status shapes the feature of the Korean community in New Malden. Children's academic achievements are considered proof of Korean migrants' resources, and this pride can play a role of the root of as well as negotiation with the disjunction between Korean migrants' self-image –successful middleclass settlers– and others' perception –strange/poor Asians.

In fact, the middle-class background and the belief that Korean migrants pay more than they earn in the UK influence their attitudes related to local society as well as other ethnic groups (see Chapter 4). This mindset stems not only from Korea's economic status, but also from migrants' class background. According to Yu-Jung, a resident worker's wife and a New Malden resident, the cost of housing in New Malden has risen among Korean people. She says that landlords prefer Korean tenants because they pay rent without delay and do not share their flats with others. Na-Ra speaks about Koreans and housing in New Malden with a critical attitude.

As I heard, the cost of housing in New Malden and the Kingston area has risen thanks to Korean people, especially *chuchewŏn*. (...) Resident workers don't care about rent because their company gives them money to pay for it. (...) *Chuchewŏn* always changing and there are always newcomers, so there is always a demand for houses. That's why the cost does not drop. (Na-Ra)

Korean migrants' culture related to the middle-class style is evident in their consumption. As Oswald (1999) puts it, migrants' consumption habit shows special interdependent relationship between consumption and ethnicity: what goods they purchase are an example of their negotiation of both home and host culture as the situation demands. Korean migrants' consumption habits indicate how migrants' consumption reflects their class background as well. Migrants' shopping is not only about their ethnicity-based needs (e.g., rice steamers and Korean food), but also about tastes and trends, which are not limited to within an ethnic boundary. While ethnic identity can influence migrants' everyday consumption, Hamlett et al. (2008) point out, ethnicity is not a single variable to explain their shopping habits; other variables include the interconnectedness between ethnicity and consumption needs and wider consideration of other factors including social status, gender and age. In

the Korean case, this is often linked to the tendency to follow the middle-class tastes of the current fashion.

Purchasing luxury goods is mentioned as one of the features of Korean people in New Malden.

There is a ceramic shop selling Portmeirion kind of things in New Malden. That's because brands such as Wedgewood and Royal Dolton are certainly on the top of the shopping list for *chuchewŏn* before going back to Korea. (...) Portmeirion is a British brand. It has a vivid flower and fruit print, and the bowl especially fits Korean tastes. I guarantee that you can see them in a Korean family's house. Among Korean residents' homes that I have visited, almost all had them. (Na-Ra)

These migrants have the chance to purchase British/European brands among globalised commercial goods already popular in Korea. That is, their consumer behaviours are related to purchasing what they desired and valued (even if not necessarily needed) in Korea. The existence of a Korean-owned shop that sells various luxury goods such as clothes, china, and small furniture in New Malden as well as Korean employees in a Burberry shop in central London were mentioned as proof of what they conceive as Korean feature of consumerism —excessive attachment to designer brands and being swept along by fads.

In addition to consumption habits, playing golf is also often mentioned in a similar manner.

It's cheap to play golf here. Actually, most workers play golf to associate with clients. This is not their taste or intention, but it's more like an obligation. My husband doesn't like golf, but he has to play it. Learning golf here is a way to save money [because learning golf in Korea is quite costly]. He will start lessons soon. (Yu-Jung)

Due to the relatively cheap price of playing golf in Britain, some Koreans think that this is a good opportunity to enjoy golf—one of the most expensive sports in Korea. Reflecting this, Korean community newspapers published in the UK have a regular column with golf lessons. Playing golf in Britain is a way to socialise for Korean salesmen and serves as a method for networking with other Korean people in the UK. By playing golf, these people keep their habits in Korea or mimic the tastes of the upper middle class.

As such, throughout their home-styling, consumption, and leisure behaviours, migrants' choice is not merely holding up the traditional Korean materials and customs, but following trends and pragmatic needs. Migrants' choice is supposedly a result of their preference for being "very Korean," but actually stems from more practical reasons, as evident in Korean migrants' choice of beauty-salons. Although no statistics are available to compare how many Korean migrants use Korean versus other beauty-salons, the large number of Korean beauty-salons and independent hairdressers serve as proof that many Koreans use Korean hairdressers. More than ten Korean-owned beauty-salons exist around New Malden alone (New Malden High Street and Rains Park). In New Malden, the majority of customers of those beauty-salons are Korean. In addition to beauty-salons, there are many freelance hairdressers who work from their homes or at clients' homes.

Koreans prefer Korean hairdressers because it is easier to communicate with them, and the hairdresser can understand exactly what the clients want. In addition, Korean migrants claim to have other reasons for choosing their hairdressers, including Korean hairdressers' skill, the texture of Korean hair, and price. Clients believe that Korean hairdressers are highly skilled—a belief already seen in the US, where Korean- and Asian-owned beauty-salons have prospered. As an ethnic business, Korean beauty salons in the US are based on the assumption of "Asians' good fingers"—that is, Asian people have great manual dexterity (Kang 2003).<sup>77</sup> In fact, this idea is accepted by Korean migrants as well.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, it is believed that Korean hairdressers can understand Korean people's hair texture. A senior hairdresser (B beauty-salon) commented on why Korean people prefer Korean beauty-salons: "Because Korean people's hair is different from British people's hair;

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<sup>77</sup> "Nimble fingers"—a stereotype of Asian women, was also used as the rationale of feminisation of labour in export-oriented manufacturing industry to justify their suitability for detailed manual work in a factory (Croll 2000, p. 135-136).

<sup>78</sup> This has both positive and negative meanings: the dexterity of Korean dentists is praised; but the lack of creativity and originality in the descriptive drawing of Korean art students is criticised, as seen in a designer's criticism in Chapter 3. As such, a characteristic of a national/ethnic groups stereotyped by others is the object of negotiation, which people can resist, accept, and even actively use by themselves depending on situations. For example, Rezende's research (2008) on Brazilian postgraduate students in Europe and the US shows that these students use the stereotyped national character of "emotional Brazilians" in order to be close to people in the host society. Although their emotionality was produced by colonisers' view and this meant lack of control and an opposite character to reason, this is used to develop their relationship with other people in a foreign country in positive way, through being valued as "warm and open" people.

British stylists cannot deal with Korean hair. They think that Korean hairdressers, who are already used to treating Korean hair, are better at making the proper hairstyle for Koreans.”

However, another hairdresser provided a different opinion, criticising such an argument and adding that price is the most important reason for Korean people’s preference for Korean beauty-salons.

Young: Korean people generally say that Korean hairdressers have good skill.

Hairdresser: I don’t think so. It depends on the person. Yes, actually, most Korean hairdressers are good in technique. But, this is not the point. Are British hairdressers bad? No. Look at the British women on the street! There are a lot of women who have stylish hair. The reason why Korean people think Korean hairdressers are good is that they haven’t gone to expensive British hairdressers. Korean people usually choose their hairdresser by cost. They never do their hair at an expensive salon. Basically, British hair salons are expensive. Moreover, senior hairdressers are more expensive. So people go to Korean beauty-salons, which are relatively inexpensive. Korean hairdressers have good skill but they are affordable. That’s why Korean customers think Korean hairdressers have better technique. (P Beauty salon, 28 Apr. 2006)

Some senior Korean hairdressers give good service at relatively low cost because they might not be able to work in a British salon (they might not have a work permit and be less than fluent in English). This makes it possible for customers to get a chance of relatively low cost hair-cut. In fact, some Korean owned beauty-salons offer different prices to Koreans and non-Koreans even for the same service. Still, some customers believe that a Korean hairdresser is more familiar with Korean hair texture than a non-Korean hairdresser. As such, migrants justify their consumption of beauty services with their presumption of racialised beauty and racialised beauty-industry (cf. Craig 2006; Tate 2007; Harvey 2005). Thus, Korean migrants’ choice of consumption is a result of the mixed seeking for conceived Korean style, practical needs and cosmopolitan forms of consumption.

#### 5. 4. Differences among Korean Migrants

Although Korean migrants' status is not extremely polarised, differences do exist among members within Korean communities. According to resident status, differences exist between temporary migrants and permanent migrants, which often overlap occupational and economic differences. In addition, antagonistic relationships exist, which often cause tension within Korean networks, such as between service provider and customers, and employers and employees. These differences shape other features of Korean migrants' culture.

First of all, some participants say that they experienced emotional suffering from other Koreans' departing, and this is related to the high proportion of temporary migrants (resident workers and students). Losing this kind of close relationship, which is made by supporting each other in a new environment, causes emotional suffering, especially for people who remain in the UK.<sup>79</sup>

Because I am a person who has lived here for a long time while other people leave, I am always seeing people off. In the beginning, I used to set my affections on [Korean] people [whom I met in the UK]. But I am now feeling guilty because I don't give people my heart any more. Someday, they will leave me anyway. I don't want to be hurt. (Seo-Yeon)

Frequent sending off of people is not only a personal, emotional issue. For some participants, member-changing is considered to be one of the reasons for the weakness of Korean society in the UK. When one customer talked about how she was ashamed of the Korean Festival because there were too many mistakes, the owner of H beauty-salon responded: "Because Korean migrant society has a short history and there are not many permanent migrants, they don't know how to manage such events" (H beauty-salon, 18 August 2006). Similarly, Seo-Yeon claims that the high proportion of short-term migrants is a barrier for the prosperity and empowerment of Korean society.

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<sup>79</sup> Long-term/permanent residents' feeling of *chuchewŏn* is not only about their temporary staying. Some Koreans recognise resident workers' wealth as difference from other Koreans—for example, "More *chuchewŏn* parents send their children to a private school than *kyomin* families" (the owner of P beauty-salon).

That is one of the reasons why Korean society in the UK is not strong. The high proportion of students! There is an imbalance between the number of students and *kyomin*. (Seo-Yeon)

She argues that permanent/long-term residents' successful settlement should be first, saying that it could be possible to support students by scholarship if many Korean migrants settle down with their own businesses in the UK.

While variation depending on resident status and migration purpose distinguishes migrants, some relationships involving opposite points of view lead to tension between them. The service provider–customer relationship is one example. The owner of H beauty-salon talked about her customers' reaction to the Korean supermarket's cheating:

We found the supermarket put the wrong labels on the snacks during the sale. They marked them much higher than the original price [prior to the sale]. They pretended to cut down the price a lot. But actually, that wasn't the case. If you were not a regular customer, you would not notice it. But, we mums know the original price for sure because we often go shopping there. We agreed to go to other supermarkets instead of that one. We need to do so. If people use one supermarket more than the others, it will happen again. (Owner, H beauty-salon)

In fact, complaints about Korean merchants, especially businesses targeting primarily Korean customers, such as supermarkets, travel agents, and mini-cab merchants, are one of the frequently posted topics on Korean migrants' websites.

Employer–employee relationships also contain many problems. Hyo-Jin revealed her criticism of the Korean-style work environment. Based on her work experiences as well as those of her husband, she compared Korean and British beauty-salons. According to Hyo-Jin, the labour conditions of Korean-owned beauty salons are similar to those in Korea, even though they are based in the UK.

Korean beauty-salons are more like being in Korea. It's not like British beauty-salons [in terms of working conditions]. (...) Beauty-salons in Korea generally close at 9 pm, but those in Britain close at 6 pm. Korean beauty-salons here are open until 7 pm. So, compared to British salons, they work long hours. (Hyo-Jin)

This is one of the reasons that she avoids Korean-owned beauty-salons. Mee-Ran, a hair-dresser working at a British beauty-salon, quotes what her Korean acquaintances who once worked at Korean beauty-salon says "Koreans are even worse than others."

More serious cases are found when employees' status is weak, such as in catering services, which do not require special qualifications and experiences, meaning many newcomers and language training students work in them. Poor labour conditions, especially paying less than minimum wage, in some Korean restaurants is a serious issue among Koreans, which led a voluntary organisation (재영한인시민연대 *Jaeyŏng Hanin Simin Yŏndae*, launched in 2004) to set this problem as their top agenda, investigating it by collecting exploitation cases from employees.<sup>80</sup>

Mobilising ethnic resources is a key part of ethnic business and the support from co-ethnics includes various forms such as ethnic customers, employees, suppliers, and media (Silverman 2000). Given the significance of the use of ethnic resource including labour, the conflicts related to ethnic business can be frequently noticed.

In addition to poor labour conditions such as long hours and low wages, unequal treatment between Korean and non-Koreans was mentioned by some participants. Seo-Yeon complained:

Koreans' attitude to foreigners [local people] should change. They are overly nice to British staffs, but not to Koreans. For example, even when I am overwhelmed but my British colleague is not busy at all, senior staffs add to my workload. (...) We prepare tea for a Monday meeting every week, but British colleagues are not obliged to do so. (Seo-Yeon)

For Seo-Yeon, the senior officers' attitude towards British employees is sensible and respectful compared to their treatment of Korean staff. This is related to the fact that the company encourages a conventional Korean organisation-culture only for Korean employees.

Korean companies don't pay much to the locally recruited Koreans if they are not *chuchewŏn* [sent from Korea]. In my office, I'm working with three other locals, all of Indian descent. The company treat me differently than them. It's unfair. (...) For example,...as far as I know, about a four-week holiday is legally protected in this country, even if you work at a restaurant. [When I didn't use my holiday] the manager said "Let's just pass it. It's better not to make an issue" because I am a Korean. If a British person had the same problem, she would get a refund. It's guaranteed by law. But not for me, because I am Korean. The [Korean] manager wants me not to make such issues. (Min-Ju)

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Café.daum.net/UK

As Min-Ju's case shows, the mindset of being "between us, the same Koreans"—emphasising sharing the same nationality—makes it difficult to raise an official appeal about labour conditions and contracts. When an employer and an employee are both Korean, the relationship becomes ambiguous because the feeling of sympathy for their shared Korean identity. For example, a member of C church working for a Korean dentist stated that it was difficult to quit a job until the owner recruited a new person in a Korean small business because the relationship between the boss and the worker tends to be a personal relationship.

Meanwhile, the different status among Korean migrants and complications within Korean networks are reshuffled in their cross-relations. That is, people in different conditions are blended in some places while people at polar opposites meet each other in different relationships, such as neighbours and members of the same church. A good-bye speech by the member of C church highlights this:

I would like to point out this church's good point. Even if some members are in a high position outside the church, they are all very humble inside the church. They serve the church as if they are on the bottom. (a *chuchewŏn* family in C church, 20 Aug. 2006)

This is because a church, especially in New Malden area, has diverse groups of people such as *chuchewŏn*, *kyomin*, students, and all different age groups. Churches provide opportunities for networking and sharing information. Bo-Ram says:

People even say, if you want to settle down in a foreign country, the first thing you have to do is attending church. They say that a Korean church's role is huge in the first stage of settling, I didn't go to church on purpose though... Especially those who have children seem to be helped by church members, when they move out or need driving. And new comers are not good enough to speak English, so, it is helpful. (Bo-Ram)

A parallel case to show the key role of Korean churches in migrant networks can be found in the US. Forty percent of Korean migrants in the US attend a Christian church, while approximately 20 percent of all Koreans in Korea are Christian (Protestantism). H Shin (2005) gives several reasons for this high rate of church attendance among Korean migrants in the US. First, most of them are urban and college-educated, and therefore grew up under the influence of Christianity in Korea during the 1970s and early 1980s. Second, the churches' group activities give social

capital to Korean migrants. Third, migrants tend to have a strong affiliation with their religious activities due to the religion's function of refuge.

However, Korean churches have ill-effects: As many participants point out (as I will discuss this issue in the next chapter), frequent meetings and close relationships often cause gossips and scandals. A farewell speech of a senior member of C church shows how much this problem has been seriously taken by the members of Korean churches. She said that the church recommended deaconess-candidates to take an oath, and one of the rules in the oath, which they had to observe was "never talk behind someone's back and never argue with other people" (24 September 2006). In such various cross-cut ties discussed so far, tensions sometimes dissolve, but they may amplify. This means a Korean migrant's relationships with other Koreans are never simple. Moreover, the density of Korean networks provides the possibility of falling under the control of others.

## **Conclusion**

Korean migrants' homemaking is conducted not only individually, but also in relation with collective home-building. The existing Korean communities and New Malden are example of this home-building. The features of Korean ethnic communities not only challenge general notions of an ethnic community as a group sharing a homogeneous culture, but also call for the rethinking of traditional notions of migrants and migrants' communities as hard-working people and isolated ghettos. As both the physical residence area and a symbol of Korean migrants' network in the UK, New Malden has taken on the role of the hub of Korean communities. However, in New Malden, not many ethnic landmarks are visible in the neighbourhood, and the homes tend to have a British exterior with a Korean interior. Rather, Korean migrants' home-building practices are characterised by middle-class trends, as shown through their consumption habits. Their pattern of possessions and home-styling shows that migrants' material objects are not merely about keeping their memory of home or indulging themselves into culture of the host country.

As seen in the inside circumstance of some institutional activities, any manifested Korean cultural identity and activities to preserve Korean identity is actually related to crossing interests of small groups and individuals. The existence

of the representatives of Korean residents and organised events for introducing Korean culture suggests a manifested cultural identity presented by New Malden as an abstract cultural community. However, on the other hand, it is obviously the concrete meaning of “personal communities” to which Alexander et al. (2007) refer as a distinct version of a community from an abstract “imagined community”, given that there are more substantial and complex networks of family, friends, and neighbours, which will be more clearly illustrated in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### WOMEN AND COMMUNITY

This chapter explores Korean women's attitudes towards the existing Korean communities and their strategies for relationships with other Korean people. Rather than seeing a migrant society as a stable and neutral society, this chapter holds fast to the belief that gender dynamics exist in such communities (Fortier 2003; Mohanty 2003; hooks 1990; Clifford 1997). Focusing on these women's points of view, this chapter will show how Korean women have developed a complex, often tense relationship with Korean communities regarding their purpose of migration, and how these women react to and negotiate with this tense relationship.

The chapter starts with Korean women's often uneasy experiences within Korean migrant communities. It further explores how these women react to patriarchal features reminiscent of their home society, focusing on their attitudes towards Korean men. The second section draws on their strategies of belonging to Korean communities, including various features of personal relations to consist an ethnic community. The third section turns its focus to Korean women's participation in Korean communities. Here, I explore the features of women's networks in relation to gender roles.

#### 6. 1. "Be careful! New Malden is a Hotbed of Rumours."

##### Gossip and Controls

The most frequently mentioned advantage of living in the UK for the participants is being free from judgment by others. On the other hand, the women also feel that Korean migrant communities undermine their liberty. Many participants explained how the smallness of these networks and the sheer amounts of gossip constrain them. When talking about Korean people in New Malden, Jin-Ju discussed her experience

in her previous flat there. She found that her Korean landlord had talked about her to various Korean neighbours, which she found annoying. Echoing this, Su-Mee shared her experience of telling someone about her family in the UK; her colleague guessed the identity of her brother-in-law after just a few questions. Su-Mee said this made her realise that New Malden is a hotbed of rumours, so Korean women should be careful (Single women's bible study group, 16 Apr. 2006). Other participants also identified their anxiety:

I'm really scared of being gossiped about by other Korean people. I try to keep clear of them. (Seo-Yeon)

I hesitate in going to a Korean church, although I was a church-goer until high school. I live in the southern part of London. So if I go to a Korean church, it means I am totally on display to other Koreans. (Ja-Yoon)

Especially in New Malden, the dense neighbourhood networks (e.g., companies, sports clubs, parents' groups in schools, and religious communities) provide opportunities for spreading rumours.

Young: So, your husband's colleagues and their wives are the closest people to you, right?

Yu-Jung: I am close to people whom I met within the boundaries of my everyday life. I often see other *chuchewŏn* families and English study group members. And we sometimes have small meetings.

Young: Like lunch meetings?

Yu-Jung: Yes. We go to each other's homes for lunch in turns, with kids. And I get together with the study group members of my previous church. And...you can see many mums at the toddler playgroup. They are also easy to get along with.

Young: Korean mothers?

Yu-Jung: Yes. Because it's such a small area, it is easy to know almost every other mum.

Young: Hmm...because they go to the same places.

Yu-Jung: Because there are limited places we can go...We can easily come across others. (...) If you've got a child, you would meet them because many go to the toddler playgroup. And we get to know people in many different ways. We hear about everything, like "You know what? Mr. so and so was sacked." Even if I didn't know it directly, I can hear such news from my acquaintances, or acquaintances of acquaintances.

People who have the same interests and live close to one another certainly serve as an important source of information and opportunity for socialising. However,

because of the limiting boundaries of routine lives and networks, they can be easily exposed to others. For these women, it is not easy to simply ignore other Koreans' eyes or the Korean manner operating in Korean-related places.

The anxiety of being the object of gossip ultimately controls women's behaviour, which is related to appearance and dating in many cases. Bo-Ram discussed the direct control of the Korean community over her life.

We came here as a *chuchewŏn* and family, not as a student. So senior employees notice if a worker's wife does not take care of herself. At couples dinner meetings for staff, which are held at least once a month, they say "Try to go to a beauty-salon. Do not dress poorly. If you are shabbily dressed, other people could say that the company does not pay well." (Bo-Ram)

Here, she is placed as the subject of control in her relations with her husband, the company, and the *chuchewŏn* networks. As a place in which Korean norms and customs are operating, New Malden and other Korean communities can continue pressuring women to meet Korean norms for appearance. Ja-Yoon explained how she, as a married woman, feels the pressure:

I didn't think that skirt was too short. Well...I had blue jeans I didn't wear any longer, so I altered them into a skirt. It was not short, really! It fell just above my knees. Nonetheless, someone said I was wearing a short skirt. The word didn't spread, but anyway...someone said that. It's hard to hang out wearing what I want. (Ja-Yoon)

In regards to dating, two resident women in the cooking class of the Korean Resident Society stated that they feel uneasy in New Malden because they are continually under the eyes of other Koreans. They are especially careful in their relationships with men. One of these women, who works at a family business where she meets many Korean customers, states:

There are a lot of churches and seniors in New Malden, so it tends to be conservative. It makes young people careful about their behaviour. Golders Green is not like New Malden because people in Golders Green are mostly young language students. I've heard that there are many couples living together and some even do drugs. (a cooking class attendee at Community Centre, 16 Oct. 2007)

Despite the danger to accuse Korean women in Golders Green of poor behaviour, this woman illustrates how young people are under pressure in the specific condition of New Malden, compared to Golders Green, where young independent migrants supposedly create a different, freer culture. In particular, she points to New Malden as a barrier to her freedom in terms of dating, which she contrasts to Golders Green people's living together without marriage (a practice not commonly accepted in Korea).

Another noticeable aspect of these women's attitudes is their perception of the vulnerability of single women in Korean networks. Ok-Ju, a member of C church, says that other people curiously said, "Why would a single woman come to Britain?" Because she currently neither works full-time nor is she studying in higher education, her migration is not easily justified to these people. This doubt is, of course, not the case for married women who have moved for their husband's work. Another single woman, Yoon-Ja, responded to Ok-Ju, saying "Never mind! You know what? When I first came, people said behind my back that I am probably divorced." (Single women's bible study group, 12 Mar. 2006) Indeed, a single woman in her late 30s or 40s often falls under suspicious eyes and becomes the subject of gossip. Moreover, single status appeared to be a barrier to entry to Korean networks and social groups, especially family-based ones. Jin-Ju said that she had experienced trouble becoming close to other members of the church, even though she had attended the church for one year; she found that she had little in common with others who had children and family to talk about. This is parallel to what Hellermann (2006) found in her research on single women from eastern Europe in Portugal—single women migrants experience negativity and mistrust, resulting in a lack of social capital.<sup>81</sup>

Meanwhile, even outside New Malden, such women feel the need to be careful to insure that their personal relationships do not become the subject of gossip. Jee-Young, who kept company with other young Koreans in central London, said that having a Korean boyfriend is risky.

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<sup>81</sup> Although I agree with her argument that migrants' social capital is gendered and ethnicised, this issue needs more consideration vis-a-vis migrant women's strategies for the creation of alternative networks (not only as social capital but also as emotional support groups). For example, Yoon-Ja, Ok-Ju and Jin-Ju organised a small single women's group in the church. The issue of women's strategies will be discussed later in this chapter.

I meet Korean acquaintances on the street by chance. I think it is very possible to encounter these people again in Korea. As you know, people go downtown to have fun and work in office towns in Seoul. It's small. Some older [Korean] women advise me, "Be discreet with your behaviour here, people can notice you in Korea." (Jee-Young)

Especially among those who plan to return to Korea, there is a concern that information about their behaviour will spread back home.

Some participants say that going out with a non-Korean makes them feel especially uneasy under others' gazes. Soo-Hee feels that her French boyfriend makes her a target for gossip by other Korean people. Jae-Eun also states that she does not discuss her British boyfriend with other Koreans before she gets very close to them. The idea of women as "symbols of the national 'essence'" (Yuval-Davis 1997a, p. 116) influences attitudes towards women who have experienced foreign life as well as women's relationships with foreign men. Given that women are often identified with the territory in nationalist discourse, control and exploitation of women in a foreign country are considered by men as conquering a nation, and foreign men's possession of their women is considered dishonourable (Enloe 1989). This is frequently shown in Korean men's hostile attitudes toward Korean women dating non-Korean men.

In addition to being gossiped about, "being reminded of bad things in Korea" is a reason why these women may dislike Korean communities. The participants indicated that some Korean people remind them of what they hated in Korea. That is, they are faced with unpleasant situations that once made them leave Korea. For example, Su-Min does not like to belong to Korean student communities in art school in London.

I do not think it is bad to study together with other Korean students. Making friends with only foreign students is not always good, and Korean students can give more help to other Korean students. However, among people studying photography and graphic design, there are some students who are not very good. Well...how can I say this...hmm...hypocrisy? They are a kind of people who tend to make an outward show rather than make an effort with their work. Simply said, they love grandstanding. I don't like it, so I want to avoid them. (Su-Min)

As she thinks of hypocrisy and vanity as weak points of Korean society, Su-Min does not want to be around these kinds of characteristics in the UK.

## Men in Trouble?

One major negative aspect of Korean culture for many of these women is gender issues. Their critical attitudes in relation to the Korean migrant community are frequently connected to a complaint against gender roles reminiscent of the patriarchal characteristics of Korean society. For example, Na-Ra's condemnation of New Malden targets Korean men.

[Korean] men prefer living in New Malden. They want to live just like they do in Korea. For example, they eat food served by a landlord [in a Korean lodging house] and wear clothes washed by the landlord. They are mostly dependent. Men who have never experienced independent life before usually live like that. A [male] *chuchewŏn* who comes alone definitely goes to live in New Malden. They want to live the same as they did in Korea. The host family of a guest house replaces these men's wives. Actually, women are more self-sufficient and self-determining, aren't they? I've rarely seen a woman choose to live in New Malden without a special reason. (Na-Ra)

Men's lifestyles, which are the same as in Korea, are not exemplary or attractive for Korean women. In these women's narratives, Korean men's determination to stick to the Korean way of life is linked to Korean men's chauvinism. Furthermore, they relate Korean men's chauvinist manners to a failure to adapt to Britain.

They [Korean men] seem to think they are the most precious. Even when I come home late after work, my husband still waits for me without cooking dinner. He has persistently refused to cook. (...) He thinks cooking is my job now. I argued a lot with him but finally gave up. So I do all the cooking. Hmm... That's Korean men. Bad looking...and, such [patriarchal] ideas...*It is so natural that they are unpopular.*<sup>82</sup> (Jee-Won)

Indeed, the unpopularity of Korean men has considerable meaning for Korean migrant women. By comparing themselves to Korean men in the UK, these women recognise their relatively advantageous position in the host society, especially due to

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<sup>82</sup> This is also related to Asian masculinity from the Western viewpoint. In an effort to underscore the superiority of white masculinity, Asian men have been represented as asexual, in Western society. In other words, racial stereotypes have been constructed from heterosexual Western views to marginalise Asian men while simultaneously portraying Asian women as erotic (Eng 2001; Khoo 2003; Espiritu 1997; EH. Kim 1986; Kelsky 2001; Louie 2003).

others' different attitudes. They realise that they are more adaptable to British society than Korean men.

Su-Min: Eastern men are looked down on except some very good looking men.

Young: Are men more ignored than women?

Su-Min: Women are not ignored much.

Men feel that. They say, when they go to language training abroad, in the UK or wherever...they find, basically, always, white women never see Eastern men. While local men welcome [Eastern] women, [local men and women] don't do so for men. It's hard for men to live in a foreign country. You know, I've never been looked down upon for being a woman since I moved to the UK. I haven't got that kind of experience. Though I've been snubbed by some arrogant women here, I haven't had any really tough experiences. (Jee-Soo)

Compared to Korean men's inferiority complex outside Korea, these women find their position to be more easily accepted in Western society. A women's status as more acceptable is related to preconceptions of Asian women's femininity, and this is one way in which these women negotiate and exploit images of Asian women (see Chapter 4).

According to these women, men who had the benefits of patriarchy in the home society are perceived as "losers" in the host society, because they cannot live without Koreans and cannot adapt to the new environment. The participants criticise Korean men in this way:

They [Korean men] don't enjoy cultural events, but this doesn't mean they study hard. They just go to New Malden and spend money on drinking. That's it. (Su-Min)

I have seen several cases that they weren't able to adapt to life here and went wrong. In Korea, they were bullies, but here... Well, they should sometimes give up some self-respect, but they don't do that. So, Korean men ... gather and drink at home among themselves, something like that. (Jae-Eun)

Here, [British people] don't often have dinner meeting kinds of things [obligatory dinner party with colleagues], do they? But, Korean people do that the same as if they were in Korea. They still go to *room salons* [karaoke bars with female staff] as well. (...) I never understand them. How can they go there even here, this enjoyable place [London]? These people say London is so boring. It's interesting, isn't it? (...) Why do they [go to a room salon] instead of enjoying a musical? Why do they go to only Korean restaurants for every dinner meeting? (...) My husband doesn't like it because he's young. But older people

just keep doing it as they used to do. They don't know any other way of being entertained. (Bo-Ram)

Contrary to women, who describe themselves as “self-sufficient”, “self-determining”, and “able to enjoy the culture of the host country”, they describe Korean men as those who “stick to Koreans”, “keep Korean styles”, “cannot enjoy British culture and entertainment”, and “cannot adapt themselves to Britain”. They seem to think of belonging to Korean migrant communities in a negative way.

## 6. 2. Dilemmas and Strategies

The advantages and disadvantages of living in New Malden and belonging to a Korean community seem to cause a kind of dilemma for these women. In many types of communities, such as flat-sharing, neighbourhoods, and religious groups, they face such dilemmas.

When looking for accommodation, the easiest way is to search Korean websites. That's how I moved here [to a Korean landlord's flat]. Also, if I live with foreigners, there are lots of things I have to be careful about, such as food. It's hard to eat what I want. I usually eat *kimchi chigae* and *doenjang chigae* [traditional Korean food that smells strong]. I really want to eat those things whenever I want. (Mee-Ran)

Feeling comfortable without extra care and tension is a major reason for choosing to live with other Koreans. However, this is perceived as inhibiting the achievement of their goals, such as improving English. Hyo-Jin explained how she and her husband had avoided Korean people, but finally went to a Korean church.

We didn't like belonging to Korean communities here. My husband suggested not associating with Korean communities in order to improve our English. That's why we went to a British church. But we realised that it's difficult to deepen our faith without a full understanding of the sermon and associating with other believers in the Korean language. Also, we thought it better to go to a Korean church and get along with Korean families for our baby's sake. (Hyo-Jin)

Even as they receive information and emotional support through complete communication, these migrants often hesitate to develop close relationships to Korean communities.

The dilemma seems essentially to be one of convenience in Korean communities versus the difficulty but ultimate preferability of adapting to British culture. While easy access to Korean services and useful information is convenient, it leads Koreans to feel that they live in isolation and without adventure. Living in New Malden is often mentioned as a place where one never improves one's ability to speak the English language—that is, living in New Malden causes isolation, which is a barrier to adapting to and enjoying British culture.

The wives of my husband's colleagues living in New Malden say that their English has not improved at all because they don't need to speak English. I stayed at a [Korean] guest house for one month before moving into my house. During the days, I did not speak a single word in English. The only exception was one sentence to a clerk in the shop who changed my watch battery. (Bo-Ram)

Given that the experience of a new culture and the improvement of verbal English skills are highly valued in Korea and are the purposes of migration for a majority of Koreans, this isolated life gives a feeling of being left behind.

Under this stress, Korean migrant women in this study try to find a way to sort out the problem. The first strategy for managing relations with Korean communities is “keeping a distance”.

Since I realised what New Malden is like, I have tried to keep away from the area. I don't go there even for shopping. (Na-Ra)

Some dislike the culture of the Korean community, so they intentionally avoid other Koreans. They also keep their distance from other Koreans in order to adapt to British society and achieve their goals quickly.

There are many Korean guardians and study abroad agents, but I never looked for them. I associated only with British people until I entered the university. I thought I ought to be with the British as much as possible. (Hae-Rim)

Because these women recognise the possibility of tension between Koreans and it is difficult to sort out the trouble once it has happened, merely having the same national background is not enough of a reason to be close to other Koreans. Su-Min left her part-time job soon after a conflict between her values and those of other Koreans.

When I worked at a Japanese restaurant [in London], I worked with Korean colleagues, but I didn't like to get close to them. They were two men and one woman. Anyway, I needed that job, so I just wanted to keep a good relationship with them. (...) They always stuck with each other and enjoyed their events. I didn't like joining them because I thought there was no reason to spend time and money on them. One day, they suggested cooking Korean food and inviting other colleagues to the restaurant. I said no, because I didn't want to do that. (...) One guy strongly condemned me. He said that he's never forgotten that he is a Korean. Have I forgotten I am a Korean, then? [laugh] He said some stupid words, like "We Koreans have our traditional virtue." I quit the job the next week. (Su-Min)

The condition that allows these women to refuse a close relationship with other Korean people is not only their strong determination but also their social and economic independence: they do not rely on other Koreans' help, instead managing their lives in the UK through their own economic abilities and access to information. Moreover, the fact that they do not have other dependent family makes them more confident in their ability to live in a new country without desperately seeking other Koreans.

Keeping a distance does not manifest itself only physically—as in avoiding Koreans—but also in cultural habits. Employed at the UK division of a Korean company, Jae-Eun recognises that her position is somehow different from other Korean colleagues who are employed in Korea and working as resident workers. Using this position between two cultures, she avoids the manners required strictly by Korean employers.

The senior-level staff are all from Korea, so the culture of the corporation is more like the Korean style. The British people, the majority of employees, cannot adapt to the Korean system at the company, so there seems to be two different systems. People who are Korean but employed locally, like me, follow both styles half and half. For example, I can go home early when I am sick. From the Korean view, managing health is considered to be an aspect of one's ability [to manage work and life]. But British people don't think so. They think that if you are sick, it's better to go home for yourself as well as your colleagues. I can say I am ill. I'm in the middle between the two sides. (Jae-Eun)

On the basis of her recognition of the differences between Korean and British working cultures, Jae-Eun uses her unique status to make her work conditions easier.

Another strategy is belonging to special groups. Many participants try to keep or organise their own networks. This can be called “personal communities” showing various forms of practices in individuals’ everyday lives, which “cannot be easily overlaid onto predetermined and static ethnic groups” (Alexander et al. 2007, p. 786). In fact, the negative feelings of these women against Korean migrant society do not necessarily mean refusing all relationships with Koreans; most of the participants have a few close Korean friends. Instead of fostering new relationships, they keep close friends whom they already knew before migrating. Others have good relationships with other Korean people who share the same interests. Many participants try to keep up their interests through such special communities, which are often carved out of larger communities.

The singles Bible study group is an example of this. The group for single women of C church was officially launched with five members including the researcher in February.<sup>83</sup> The purpose of this group is to provide emotional support; single women have found it hard to find a place in the church. Like other Christian churches, this church has a children’s group, a youth group, and a mature people’s group. Usually, adult groups involve primarily married couples, while youth groups are for those who are in early 20s; so it can be difficult for a single woman over 30 to feel like she belongs to either one of these groups. In the regular meetings after Sunday worship, they talk, pray for each other, and study the Bible. At other times, they gather informally at a member’s home or a coffee-shop. Similarly, Hyo-Jin and her husband also joined the “30s’ group” in the church she attended. The members cultivate friendships and exchange information about living and caring for children.

Meanwhile, Jee-Soo mention that her close group is an online community of international married Koreans and that she also has actual meetings with the members. Hyo-Jin says that she keeps in touch with some Korean hair-dressers in the UK. She also spends time in an online community whose members want to become hair designers in the UK.

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<sup>83</sup> When I started to attend the church for field work, some members told me that they planned to organise a group for single women in the church, and I became a member of the group.

There is an internet community of hair designers [who are currently working or hope to work in Britain] that has been launched by my husband's previous colleagues. They are now working at Tony & Guy. (...) You can find many online communities for hair-dressers if you use a search engine. We usually get information from those web-sites. And, there are many web-sites for study abroad. If someone posts questions like "I want to go to Vidal Sassoon. How can I register? Which course is good?", other people answer them. (...) One of my husband's friends organises off-line meetings for the online community. We go to the meetings. It's sometimes difficult to attend the meetings because we have a baby while the other members are mostly single. But we often get in touch with them. (Hyo-Jin)

The Internet plays an important role in fostering new relationships or complementing existing connections to other Koreans. An ethnicity-based community on the Internet represents a shared diasporic sensibility (Gajjala 1999) and functions as a public sphere for the construction of identity outside the national time/space (Stubbs 1999). With the emotional sharing of experiences of marginalisation and discrimination, such communities serve to cultivate ethnic minorities' voices by organising political campaigns, even as their debates provide differing viewpoints within an ethnic group (Parker & Song 2006). Korean users' Internet communities in the UK show how Internet communities respond to migrants' various needs and interests. As seen in Hyo-Jin's participating in the Korean hair-dresser's community, huge numbers of Korean users' Internet communities based in the UK (as well as across all other countries), which over time have evolved to create small groups with various specific issues such as hobbies, occupations, study subjects, regions, and schools, have become an essential part of these people's lives.

Ja-Yoon discussed launching a small group on the biggest Korean migrants' online community: she tried to organise a small community of Koreans working in the UK. Her purpose was not only to exchange information about careers, but also to have friendly conversations. "When I watch the drama *Sex and the City*, I really envy the four friends [the leading roles] who are chatting and laughing a lot". Ja-Yoon wants to chat with others, sharing the same interests and background.

I sometimes want to do 수다 *Suda*, but I do not belong to any specific Korean community, and all of my Korean friends have gone to Korea. That's why I wanted to meet [Korean professionals]. (Ja-Yoon)

Soo-Hee discussed the emotional support she gets from online Korean communities as well as practical tools for getting information or exchanging essentials.

Young: Is there any Korean community you belong to?

Soo-Hee: *Lovely UK* on Cyworld.com and *UK Love* on Daum.net (...) Those online communities are really helpful. (...) I gathered information on how to prepare for coming to the UK. Also, I was often comforted by reading posts on the freeboard about how other people are suffering. I feel relief from that kind of post, though I don't actively write on the board. I also visit the *flea market* board to buy what I need.

Soo-Hee has very few Korean friends in Britain and is living away from Korean residential areas; Internet communities have become an important source of emotional comfort and practical advice. The groups that these women organise or join can be alternative communities in which they can take advantage of Korean society in the UK, while keeping away from unpleasant situations related to being a Korean migrant.

### 6. 3. Women in Korean Networks

Although many women try to keep a distance from Koreans and make alternative groups, this does not necessarily mean all Korean women are able to do so. Especially for those who migrated with their families and reside in New Malden, joining Korean networks is almost inevitable. In fact, informal relationships such as family, kinship and friends play a key role in sharing information related to basic everyday life in the UK and helping to settle quickly (Boyd 1989; Ryan 2007). In particular, child-oriented networks, as discussed by Hyo-Jin and Yu-Jung earlier, are important for those who need information on childcare. Due to their specific situation as migrants, who lack information on local facilities and childcare as well as family/kinship support, they feel a keen need to create a local network (Ryan 2007).

Just after my husband had been offered the post [in the UK], I got an email from the wife of a person who had already been working at the branch office. She gave me a list of things to bring to the UK, such as food and clothes, and basic information about children's schools, electricity, the Internet etc. (...) When I went to the meeting of my husband's alumni group in Britain, I heard that other

companies also have this kind of know-how file, which is passed down from wives to other wives. Since I arrived here, I attend the meetings of my husband's colleagues and their wives at least once every couple of months. At this meeting, we share information about shopping and education. Sometimes one introduces a private tutor for children to another family. I live almost independently from others because I haven't got a child and I'm younger than others. Other wives seem to meet each other more often than me. (...) Because husbands work and wives are generally in charge of children's education and most of the domestic chores... For this, wives are helped by other *chuchwon*'s wives, people in churches, or mothers of their children's friends. I think this advantage makes people live in New Malden together. Husbands may feel inconvenienced because of the distance to their companies. But, for wives, who deal with real lives, New Malden is good, because there are good schools, Korean supermarkets, and Korean people. (Bo-Ram)

*Chuchwon*'s wives' networking, as Bo-Ram discusses, suggests the importance of women's networks in ethnic/local communities. It also shows the role of women in the process of temporary migrants' continued settling in New-Malden (and broader Korean communities).

Indeed, some women actively participate in the activities in Korean communities. For example, Korean weekend schools have many female teachers. In the case of the South London Korean School, twenty-one of the twenty-three teachers are women. The head teacher says that she has been able to find many Korean female teachers who are experienced and qualified. In fact, the head teacher's own involvement in the school began when she sent her children there; eventually, she became a teacher. She ultimately took on the role of head teacher because of her extensive career experience in Korea.

The Korean Residents Society has an entire department devoted to women. The history and present activities demonstrate an ongoing need for Korean women's networking. According to the department's manager, there was a special demand for an official organisation to represent Korean women in the UK, although some Korean women's informal groups based on friendship existed at the time. For example, when Korean politicians visited the UK, there was a need for a proper representative of Korean migrant women at the reception. A direct need for an official women's organisation arose again while organising actions in response to the murder of a Korean woman by her British husband (see Chapter 4). In response to these needs, the women's department was launched as an official part of the Korean Residents Society in 2006. The main activity of the department is organising public

classes at reasonable cost. The classes are usually on practical and artistic topics, such as English conversation, cake-baking, English food cooking, knitting, and sports dance. The participants are in their late 20s to mid 40s; about 70 percent are *chuchewŏn*'s wives while the rest are permanent residents and students. Many of the courses' teachers are inter-ethnic married Korean women, who are qualified in the subjects. In fact, the departmental manager emphasises and expects that more inter-ethnic married Korean women can take an important role in the Korean Residents Society, because this would provide them with opportunities to use their abilities and experiences built in the UK.

A unique feature of the women's department activities is that they bridge formality and informality in Korean networks. According to the department manager, the classes provide an exceptional opportunity to open the Korean Residents Society to Korean migrants. In fact, the Korean Residents Society holds two big annual events—the Korean festival and the farewell night—but does not actually provide any activity in which Korean migrants can participate on a daily basis. The department's public classes resulted in Korean women's visiting the community centre. The attendees of the cake-baking class, who are in their 20s and who chatted with me following the interview with the departmental manager, say that although they never want to be involved in Korean communities, they enjoy the class and feel free in it. The departmental manager says that the women's department has contributed to the Korean Residents Society by developing activities that Koreans actually need.

Given that one of the main duties of the department (as stated in the official introduction of the Korean Residents Society) is to support the familial occasions of its members (e.g., funerals), such activities are generally based on conventional gender roles in which women are in charge of domestic matters. Despite this, the department's activities provide the opportunity for informal networking within a formal institution. As the manager proudly stated: "Actually, there is no place women's hands don't reach in Korean migrant's society".<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> This is drawn from the interview with Oh Young-Ae, the manager of the Women's Department at the Korean Residents Society

## Conclusion

Migrant communities play an important role in the lives of migrants, both in terms of settlement and in rethinking their nation/national identity. However, for Korean migrant women, New Malden and other Korean communities in the UK are not always supportive. They remind these women of what they think of as the bad side of being Korean and undermine the freedoms gained by migration. These women are concerned about being the object of gossip among Korean people. In disparaging Korean men as “losers” who are unable to adapt themselves to the new environment, the women criticise and challenge the gender roles and patriarchal characteristics of Korean society and reposition themselves in the new setting.

In a dilemma between convenience or emotional comfort and adaptation to the host society, these women seek to manage their relationships with Korean communities by keeping a distance; belonging to small, close groups; and joining alternative communities. In particular, their participation in small groups based on shared interests shows how they organise networks to fit their practical needs and to avoid unnecessary tensions. Although the women frequently expressed their critical attitudes towards Korean migrants’ communities, some women, especially those with children, join their own communities. As evident in wives’ networks and the official activities such as the women’s department in the Korean Residents Society, women’s communities and activities are shaped by traditional gender roles. However, given that such networks are often based on basic needs related to migrant living and can bring such needs to institutional activities, these networks comprise an important part of Korean migrants’ making “home” in the UK.

As seen in previous chapters and this chapter, these migrants’ home-making involves various difficulties, dilemmas and strategies. Then, how is their sense of home influenced by these matters and re-shaped in the home-making process? This question will be examined in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 7

### HOME ON THE MOVE

Concepts such as hybridity, heterogeneity, and multiplicity (Rouse 1991; Brubaker 2005; Portes 1997) have been used to describe lifestyles in transnational social places. In the globalised world, does increased geographical mobility mean that people can have multiple homes? Does it mean that voluntary migrant people in travelling do not need any feeling of having a home? If migrants long to have a home, is this the same as feeling homesick? In exploring these issues, this chapter investigates how individual migrants re-shape their sense of home. It also looks at what they miss and desire, which often includes a feeling of home. Linking with the concept of “home” and transnationalism in migration, discussed in Chapter 2, this chapter focuses on migrants’ strategic transnational positioning.

In the first section, I will discuss the various ways Korean migrant women understand “home,” and how their feelings about home have been changed by their migration. The second section deals with these migrants’ worries about the uncertainty of their future, which is connected to their anxiety over losing home in both countries. The next two sections explore how they manage their relationships with people in Korea in order to keep and supplement feeling at home; they will also examine the factors necessary for transnational connections. I will also discuss the ways in which Korean migrant women’s transnational ties to Korea are gendered, and the differences between their cases and those of other migrant women.

#### 7. 1. “I am floating.”

While the common concept of home is based on terms such as privacy, security, family, intimacy, comfort, and control (Putnam 1990, p. 8), the meaning of this term has expanded beyond traditional notions of a fixed and stable place (Rapport & Dawson 1998). In terms of its scale, home crosses over different scales such as

household, homeland, and nation (Morley 2000; Blunt 2005). In its meaning, home is both symbolic and physical: it implies dwelling and lived experiences, as well as identity and belonging in both individual and collective ways (Rapport & Dawson 1998; Al-Ali & Koser 2002; Blunt & Barley 2004; Terkenli 1995; Krase 1993). Although home has been primarily defined in a spatial context, it also implies certain social and habitual conditions, referring to “a state of being, constructed on the accumulation of personal habits, thoughts or emotional patterns of the lifeworld” (Terkenli 1995, p. 332). The concept of home is, in fact, a “slippery, multi-layered, ongoing process,” and each individual seems to have a different idea of what “home” means (Wiles 2008, p. 116).

The participants in this study indicate diverse ideas and conditions of home across different scales from household to nation, and different ideas from residence to identity. Indeed, even one person can show several different understandings of home. One of the participants, Soo-Hee, indicated that her own idea of home amounted to a synthesis of place, time, habit, and emotion:

When I think of home, Kwangwhamun-crossroads [in Seoul] automatically comes to me. Because my house was nearby, and I often got off the bus there on the way home from high school. I loved walking around the street, when I felt depressed or was in trouble, or...even when I felt good. (...) I don't think it [my feeling that this street is home] will ever change. Though I've never fixed the place as my home...when I hear the word “home” I think of the place in which I can ease tension and relax. Kangwhamun is that. Well, I haven't got such a place in Britain yet. (Soo-Hee)

The name of the place which Soo-Hee indicated as her home is both a geographical location (in Seoul, Korea), but also involves her memories of specific times of her life (when she was a teenager), everyday habits (hanging out), emotions (depression and happiness). Additionally, as exhibited by her statement “I haven't got such a place in Britain yet,” the geographical notion of home expanded to include ideas of nation and region after Soo-Hee relocated to another country. This extension of the geographic scale of the concept to include country means that the question “where is my home?” can be read as “which country is my home?”

Home is, for migrants in particular, interrelated with perceptions of movement and change (Ahmed et al. 2003): migrants' homes can be mobile (Rapport & Dawson 1998), and migrants change and develop their ideas of home in

accordance with new perspectives gained after migration (Wiles 2008). While nostalgic images of home/homeland play an important part in migrants' home-making, this involves the reinterpretation of their home society, and is typically based upon the present situation of the migrants—that is, migrants' way of understanding home is not just an affective function of missing their homelands left in the past, but actually comes out as a physical process of home-making in the present. This process takes shape in the daily practices of migrants negotiating with their circumstances, such as their various relationships with others and their own future plans (Ahmed et al. 2003). In this process, the traditional, essentialised concept of home becomes fragmented (Wiles 2008).

These migrant women who have relocated to the UK exhibit many changes in their feelings about home. The first noticeable change is a shift in the places where these women feel comfortable and familiar. After the routine lives of these women, including studies or work, have moved to the UK, some women view their current residence as their home. Jee-Won, who left Korea just after marriage and no longer has a house or any belongings in Korea, feels comfortable in her home in the UK.

I used to think that my home was Korea. But now...well...basically, I've got the house where I reside here [the UK], and I feel comfortable here. I think that because my place isn't there anymore, I cannot feel easy in Korea. Neither my parents' home nor the home of my husband's parents is a relaxing place. People [other Koreans in the UK] say that they miss here [the UK] and want to return soon when they visit Korea. They say that the UK is their home. They seem to feel like visitors when travelling to Korea. (Jee-Won)

Jee-Won seems to consider the concept of home to refer to an address or a comfortable residence where their daily routines are fulfilled. This is especially true in the case of married women, who say that visiting Korea is tough and busy because they do not have their own place, but scuttle around to various family events and fulfil responsibilities such as caring for parents. Living with family members in their own house, their home in the UK becomes more comfortable than the home they stay in while visiting Korea.

As Jee-Won indicates when she refers to her feeling of being a “visitor when travelling to Korea,” this sense of home —comfortable residence— is noticed particularly when these women talk about visiting and staying in Korea. So-Ra and Jin-Ju say that they think of Britain as a place to which to return, because that is

where their lives and work and possessions are. Yun-Jee says that when she visits Korea, she gets the feeling of being a tourist. She speaks of how her absence of several years made her feel as if she were floating between two countries.

When I go to Korea, I meet only a few very, very close friends. I don't enjoy myself much. But here [in Britain], I do not enjoy myself 100 percent either, because I'm a foreigner. Well, I am adapting to life here. It could be because I'm married. The last time I visited Korea, I felt like a tourist. And, while I have a lot to talk about with my Korean friends who are living here, in Korea, it's not very enjoyable to meet someone at first because I haven't got a topic to share with new people. I can only talk a lot with my friends. So, I can say that I am floating in the middle of two countries. (Yun-Jee)

Because her current interests have more to do with life in Britain, she cannot easily relate to people in Korea, whereas she finds she has a lot in common with Koreans living in Britain. As such, for some participants, a visit to Korea provides the opportunity to think about how notions of home have changed for them throughout this transition, causing these migrants to re-think and modify their viewpoints.

In addition to shifts in routine life, some participants say that changes in status, especially in regards to their careers, influence their feelings about moving home. For example, a transition from student to a professional makes these women feel that their position in Britain has shifted from temporary to long-term (although perhaps not permanent). This also means departing from their former insecure status and moving one step closer to the original purpose of migration. Yun-Jee and Hae-Rim, who migrated as students and are now professionals, point out what made them feel that their home had changed.

Nottingham was terrible. It made me feel mentally unstable. When I returned there after a journey, as the train got close to the city, I would get nervous...because I really hated it and was so scared. (...) Before I moved [to another city and got to feel more comfortable], I was a stranger. I hated the floating. (Yun-Jee)

In her narrative, Yun-Jee defined home as “a place which one misses and is pleased to return to after a long journey” giving as an example her hometown in Seoul. She recalls Nottingham as a terrible place in contrast to her hometown, because she had a tough time while at the university—she was often lonely and had difficulty adapting to the new environment. The hard times did not completely end even after her

marriage to a British man. She says that the shift of home from Korea to Britain only came after she got a job.

Yun-Jee: I really thought that my home was in Korea until just one month ago. Even though my parents changed houses, I thought of my parents' home [in Korea] as my home. (...) But recently, in the last few weeks, I have started to think of here [the UK] as my home.

Young: What do you think caused this change?

Yun-Jee: I was not able to settle down before I graduated from the university, because I didn't know where I would end up.

Yun-Jee was not sure where she would be able to get a job, so she could not feel settled down. However, after she finally got a job in London, she finally felt more comfortable in the UK. For her, feeling at home in the UK is identified with the achievement of stability by getting a job.

Similarly, Hae-Rim describes changes in her feeling of home thus: "I am in transition. I feel like I am floating." Again, her belief that her home was obviously in Korea is now changing because of her decision to stay in the UK and get a job.

Until I entered the university and even during my undergraduate courses, I intentionally sought to know Korean things [such as news and culture]. I had always been attached to Korea. But my attitude changed after I graduated from the university, decided to get a job here, and went to law school. There were almost no Korean students in the law school. To work here, I needed their [British] thoughts and knowledge, and needed to understand them well. For this reason, I am staying away from Korean newspapers more and more, though I don't avoid them on purpose. (Hae-Rim)

In Hae-Rim's case, she decided to consciously try to make the UK her home. For her, familiarity is not just passively received, but an object to purposefully attain and work towards.

I have to know about this society. The thing is, where I want to work is not a Korean company but a British company [a law firm]. The field I want to get into is a very conservative one. So in order to become a member of this society, I need to think of here as my home. That will lead people here to accept me better. (Hae-Rim)

Meanwhile, Hae-Rim refers to having her own house as the most significant condition of home. She links buying a house to settlement and financial stability.

Hae-Rim: I think my own house would be important for making a home. I am still living in a student residence hall. Even if I were to move out and rent a flat, I could not say I have a home, because that is not my own house.

Young: Is there any special reason that you think owning a house is important? You said that home is not physical but conceptual.

Hae-Rim: Buying a house doesn't mean only that I have a physical place to reside. Rather, it means I settle down in my job here and stay for at least a few years. It also means that I am financially stable.

By identifying owning a house (a material object) with attaining a secure position in her job (a status of being), she strongly links home to career. As serial factors of job, financial security, and property ownership make her feel settled down, and as she is in the early stage of her career, she feels that her home is in transition from Korea to the UK.

For these women, the feeling of home is closely related to life plans such as independence from parents, getting a job, and forming their own families through marriage. Given that they are all in their twenties and early thirties, these issues strongly influence their feelings of settlement. These future plans have an even greater influence on their attitudes towards British society than their past time in Britain. This seems to be related to the fact that their migration was originally driven by career and educational purposes: thus settlement is identified with reaching career and educational goals, and this means their sense of home is linked to the matter of achievement. For this reason, it is hard for these women to finish making a home in Britain—the process is never complete. Jin-Ju, who is working at a hospital and is taking a course in nursing, states:

I cannot say "I settled down here" until I succeed in my study. I will be satisfied with my life once I have finished my study and my job. Actually, settlement is like an ongoing project. (Jin-Ju)

She admits that settlement is a work-in-progress for her and could be never finished, because she has a new plan and set of goals for the next stage in her life. Another case, Jee-Soo is going to marry a British man within two months and is seeking a job, so she feels the need to adapt herself into British society more than before.

In my case, I don't have anxiety about being in Korea anymore, because I decided to stay here. Instead, I have anxiety about adapting well here. (Jee-Soo)

However, Jee-Soo does not think of Britain as her destination for permanent settling, and she thinks that she can move to any other country for a job. Jee-Soo and another woman, who married a British man, Yun-Jee, show that marriage influences their feeling of settlement or need to adapt to British society, but this does not mean settling down. Yun-Jee and Jee-Soo also express their concern with having a child, which could possibly change their short-term plan and make them adjust their early career plans. Indeed, none of the participants says that their settlement is complete. Their feeling at home in the UK does not mean complete settlement or the end of home-making. As their careers develop and life goals are ongoing, their home-making projects remain incomplete.

Another prominent feature in these migrant women's feelings of home is a certain discord between physical residence and home. Home for them is not just a residence for everyday life, but more of an emotionally attached place. Their home is sometimes where they gain something, such as freedom, career development, or enjoyment, but is also sometimes where they are rooted. So-Ra, for example, thinks that home is "a place where I can do what I am used to doing and what I have to do." The fact that her school and all of her belongings are in London makes her feel at home in London. Even so, when I directly asked her where home is, she answered that her home is still in Korea.

So-Ra: It's funny that I think of the UK as my home. On the airplane coming back to London from holiday [in another country], I thought "Ah, I'm going home now!" Even when I came back from Korea to London, I thought "I am going home." There have been some changes [in where my home is].

Young: What if someone asks you where your home is?

So-Ra: Then my answer would be Korea.

Ja-Yoon straightforwardly describes a distinction between her emotional home and her current residence.

Ja-Yoon: The place where I am living is the UK, but my home is Korea!

Young: Hmm... You said, you don't have your place in Korea any longer. Nonetheless you think your home is Korea, eh?

Ja-Yoon: Sure. When I arrive at the airport [in Korea], I feel like “Yeah! This is my home ground! My area in my hand!”

Ja-Yoon, a married woman working in a British company and living in her own house in the UK, also indicates that Korea feels familiar to her—that she feels comfortable and confident when she visits. Her case shows that even a seemingly successful settlement in the UK, in terms of career and property—things that other participants want to achieve—does not necessarily mean feeling at home in the UK. Seo-Yeon thinks that her home is Korea and that she will miss Korea forever. She also shows discordance of residence and home and a sense of home as a place of confidence and familiarity. In her case, family, relatives and friends are key elements for feeling at home.

I dream of a rural life. I mean, not a rural life in Britain, which would be lonely, but Korean rural life where I can freely go anywhere I want in my own car and meet my friends and relatives whenever I want to see them. I have missed that kind of life for the last ten years. Hmm... to compensate for this, I will stay at least one-third of a year in Korea after my children grow up, *though my main residence will still be here*. (Seo-Yeon)

At the beginning of the serial interviews, Seo-Yeon stated that she plans to return to Korea someday in the future, but in this later interview, she says that her main residence could be in the UK. She has a job and two children, and her husband's business is based in the UK, so she recognises that her residence cannot easily move to Korea. In her story, it is clear that she misses feeling at home, which for her means confidence as well as familiarity.

As evident in these cases, the distinction between home and place of residence seems to involve matters of familiarity and confidence. While familiarity is about long-term stays, memories, and close relationships such as family and friends, confidence involves the issue of status. This is why confidence has great importance in migrants' ability to feel at home. As revealed in the participants' descriptions such as “terrible Nottingham” (Yun-Jee), “lonely Britain” (Seo-Yeon) and “Korea, my area in my hand” (Ja-Yoon), the sense of home is linked to feelings of insecurity and lack of confidence in the UK due to being a stranger; this contrasts sharply to Korea, a place in which they feel relatively in-control. For these migrants, this notion of home as a place in which they feel secure, comfortable, and in-control always exists

as a counterpoint to a place which is not so. Their longing for home is not pure homesickness, which people who moved away from a previous residence generally feel. Rather, this is a reaction to an uncomfortable situation in the host country, which may include political issues such as racial discrimination and unwanted prejudice. Sense of home includes political issues of racism and integration, which is discussed in Chapter 4. In the meantime, this distinction between a physical dwelling and a place of identity, belonging, and emotional affection indicates the possibility of continuing attachment to the country of origin.

## **7. 2. Anxiety of “No Home”**

The feeling of “floating” encompasses several different meanings for these migrant women: the sense of home in transition between Korea to Britain; the difference between residence and home; the sense of having no single, perfect home. In fact, in many cases, neither the UK nor Korea counts as a perfect home. The reason that these migrants cannot easily feel settled down in the UK seems to be linked to their uncertainty about remaining there. Many of these migrants’ original plans to stay in the UK have changed. Most participants say that they, as well as many Korean acquaintances, have stayed longer than they had originally planned. This is due to various unforeseen reasons, such as undertaking a further course of study, getting a job, marriage or simply a desire to live in the UK. Also, their future plans are often flexible and unsettled, and they are not sure about their future; many participants found it difficult to answer my question regarding short- and long-term future plans.

My original plan was to stay here for one year, six months for language training and six months for volunteer work. But, [one year later] I felt this was not long enough. My English had not improved as much as I expected, and I felt I needed something more. My volunteer work was not enough to make my CV look good enough. So, I started a short course [in a university]. (Eun-Sook)

When I married and was preparing to come here, I said to my relatives that I would be back in three or four years. But, my study was delayed because I was pregnant, and we have to earn money by ourselves without parents’ support. We had language training for two years, instead of one year, before starting the hair-

design course. Then I had my baby. It's already been four years since I came here. (Hyo-Jin)

Mee-Ran: At first, when I said "We need to stay here for at least five years," my friend [who moved with Mee-Ran] said, "What? Five years? [such a long time]" But, as time goes by...two years, three years...I realised that a five-year stay was a quite realistic plan.

Young: So, you haven't got any fixed plans to go back to Korea?

Mee-Ran: No, nothing is fixed. I could stay on if I meet and marry a good person. Actually, I have no idea. But, I'm concerned about my visa. I'm going to ask my boss if I can get a work permit. If that's sorted out...well, anyway I have to go to Korea because my visa is pending in the home office...If I fail to get a work permit, I will go home. If not...well, I have no clear plan. (Mee-Ran)

An uncertain future and unstable status is, as Mee-Ran mentions, frequently linked to visa status. Ja-Yoon also discusses sorting out visa problems as essential to feeling settled down.

I think settling down in a foreign country is reliant on getting a visa, because we can't live here without a visa. (...) I feel at ease since I've got a work permit. I don't need to worry about it. It's very expensive to extend a visa, hundreds of pounds as I've heard it. I don't need to worry and I can live here as long as I want to for at least for five years. That's a kind of settlement, isn't it? (Ja-Yoon)

Staying in a foreign country with a visa implies temporariness of residence and an unsettled situation. Moreover, given that it sets boundaries on migrants' activities, such as getting a full-time job, a visa seems to serve as a symbol of unstable status and an unsure future in Britain.<sup>85</sup>

In this situation, Korea also fails to provide a stable sense of home, and there is anxiety among these women regarding their sense of having no home in Korea. The question of how they would settle down in Korea, should they need to return, is a continuous concern. The general anxiety over lacking a home is related to these

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<sup>85</sup> Most participants of the research have fixed-term visas (see the profile of interviewees in Chapter 1 and Appendix 1). In the case of student visa, which many Koreans hold when they entered to the UK for study, the holders can take part-time (up to 20 hours a week) or holiday work. Extending a visa costs £295 by post and £500 in person at the present.

women's perception that if they did return to Korea, they would have trouble settling well.

Well, it's a problem. While the Korean language is far more comfortable in my everyday life, I don't know even one single term about my subject [design] in the Korean language. Moreover, I have no job experience in Korea, because I started my career here. So, I don't know about my field in Korea. I don't think I could adapt to Korea if I went there. The thing is, I cannot get used to here either, because I am Korean. I cannot be familiarised to this place 100%. Maybe 80%? I always think I lack 20%. There are about forty people in my company. If I were to work in Korea, four or five days would be enough time to get close to colleagues. But it took three months to do so here. I think it would be hard to adapt to the field, if I were to go back to Korea. (Yun-Jee)

These migrant women are often unable to perfectly integrate into British society, but at the same time they feel insecure about their position in Korea. Na-Ra also says that she does not see the UK as a place for permanent residence, although she, unlike Yun-Jee, does not talk about her difficulties in adapting to Britain. For her, Korea is a nostalgic place she misses, but not a place to which she can soon return.

I am not 100% sure that my place [in the UK] is a perfect place to settle down. We [my husband and I] just feel like "Ah, this is my home. There is no place like home!" when we come back from a visit. (...) I don't have a plan to return to Korea. Our original plan was to go back when we are around forty, and we are not forty yet. (...) Now, my husband seems keen to get a job here. If not, we could go to another country. We are not thinking about going to Korea now. I want to work in Korea...hmm...maybe for six months or so? I think it's a good idea to go and work in Korea, when I miss Korea's beautiful weather. I could also eat delicious Korean food there. However, I don't want to stay longer than one year in Korea. (...) Anyway, I don't plan to go back to Korea for some time. I could maybe go later than my early forties. Well...I might change my mind, because forty-something is not a proper time [to look for work in Korea], and there will be nothing to do. It's not easy to go back to Korea once you settle down in a foreign country. (...) Maybe we could go back after retirement. (Na-Ra)

As seen in the latter half of this speech, a reason that Na-Ra hesitates to return to Korea is her fear that people of her age (thirties and forties), as well as others generally, are not guaranteed job security in Korea.

Ja-Yoon, having a Korean husband, also alludes to this problem, citing the difficulty, were they to return to Korea, of getting job in middle age:

I am not sure I will live here forever. I could go to Korea. Well...there's a better possibility of living here than moving back to Korea. This is because my husband could have a problem finding a job there. It is hard for older people to get a job in Korea. (Ja-Yoon)

Similarly, Hyo-Jin shows her concern about returning to Korea. Along with her preference for living in the UK due to her and her husband's favorable employment conditions (her as a hair dresser) and the environment for caring for their baby, the prospect of beginning all over again in Korea was an important reason to stay in the UK. Even though she had no intention of living permanently in the UK, returning to Korea without a guaranteed position was a reason for anxiety.

As you know, I moved just after my marriage. That makes me feel scared about going to Korea. Actually, I had a chance to seriously think about whether to go back to Korea or stay here, before I applied for a work permit. My husband and I came here just after we were married, and spent all the money we had saved. If we went to Korea, we would have to start from scratch. While my friends and peers [who stayed in Korea] have already settled [in their careers and lives], we would be at the starting line. It would have been difficult. At the same time, we were keen to live in the UK. So... (Hyo-Jin)

As exhibited by Hyo-Jin's anxiety, concerns about career and re-settling in Korea are linked to the matter of the dominant norms of life in Korea, including expectations about savings, property, and career advancement for each age. Su-Min talks about her anxiety of being left behind in her career:

When I call my friends in Korea and talk about how they are doing, I find that they are developing their careers. When I hear from my friends achieving something in their careers, I'm scared that I'm not doing it like them. (Su-Min)

Jee-Won, who moved to the UK with her husband pursuing a PhD, says:

Jee-Won: When I chat on the internet with my friends living in Korea, they usually talk about such practical things as moving to a bigger house. When I listen to their story...Oh, I'm afraid of returning to Korea. I would be the only one [who does not have such property].

Young: What is your plan, then?

Jee-Won: The best option is...well, maybe all students have the same plan...is to become a professor after returning to Korea. (...) But, it's not easy because there is serious inflation [in the numbers of people who got PhDs abroad] these days.

Young: Right. So many PhDs who studied in a foreign country...

Jee-Won: I'm worried about it. Is this worth such a huge effort? My husband doesn't like me talking about this. But, to be realistic, it's a big deal. It would be horrible if other people had already bought apartments but we hadn't even got jobs.

(...)

Jee-Won: Some [Korean] people say that they hesitate to go back to Korea because the gap between them and their friends in Korea would be too wide...because they would feel shame. Most women, who have strong self-pride, talk like that. I've seen many cases.

Young: Why do they feel shame?

Jee-Won: Well, if they go back to Korea, they can't bear the gap in economic status between them and others in their age. Suppose that, for example, your friends have a good house, while you are just starting your business. (...) I do understand those women.

This anxiety makes these migrants feel having "no home" and feel the need to carefully think their location –whether to return or stay.<sup>86</sup>

Jae-Eun also exemplifies what home in Korea means for many migrants and why they are anxious of losing their home. Like others, Jae-Eun criticises the unsatisfactory aspects of Korean society, especially its patriarchy and authoritarianism (as I discussed in Chapter 3), but she is worried about losing her base in her home country. For her, home in Korea is a place where her identity has been formed, and the place to which she returns, so she is worried about losing her home in Korea.

My home is definitely Korea. Of course! Actually, I have pondered what home is. My thought is that home is where I can return to when I fail here. My parents are there, and I was there until the age of twenty-four. My mother language is Korean. Of course my home is Korea. But I am thinking that if I give birth to a baby in the UK or US, then my child could not say his/her home is Korea. Plus, my home there will disappear when my parents pass away. From then on, my home will be ambiguous. (...) *If I have to sleep at a hotel in Korea, that means I have lost my home.* (...) If I marry and settle down here, I should say that I have a home here. However, *I am afraid of losing my home in Korea.* I am worried that my child's home will not be Korea. (Jae-Eun)

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<sup>86</sup> This makes a difference between these migrants and *chuchewŏn* (resident workers of Korean companies), given that *chuchewŏn* have a guaranteed job when they return to Korea and have even benefit in their earnings during their staying in the UK. The issues of differences among Korean migrants in the UK was discussed in Chapter 5.

For Jae-Eun, home is related to her identity formation, memory, and familial relations, while also serving as a “shelter.” The reason why Jae-Eun considers Korea as her home is not simply because she was born there, but because she had concrete experiences and parents there. Home is not just an idea in a vacuum, but has material conditions, built on the basis of specific facts such as family, networks and lived experience.

Living away from Korea, she needs a place to which to return because she might fail to achieve her goals of going abroad. Life in a foreign country, for Jae-Eun, requires the guarantee of a home in Korea. While the UK was expected as an alternative home before migration, Korea ironically becomes an alternative place after migration.

This anxiety over lacking a home, however, does not necessarily mean that the situation can be equated with homelessness. Their concern is not about survival itself, nor about the extreme poverty and persecution that some forced migrants face. Rather, the difficulty of living in the UK, for these women, actually means something closer to “it’s hard to reach the upper middle class here” (Jae-Eun), and the fear of returning to Korea is over something other than survival. Here is Hee-Sun’s account of her worst fear:

What I really, really don’t want...the worst case...would be that after I finish master’s degree [in Britain], and work at an English language kindergarten [in Korea], I am unable to save enough money to do a PhD...and I would just marry in Korea, work as a teacher in a language school, and bring up a child....I could never accept that scenario. Because for me, a career is the most important thing in life...It would be horrible if I couldn’t do what I want.

In fact, for some Korean migrants, having an uncertain future actually means having an open future, full of possibilities, because of the extended resources and opportunities available in the UK.

Actually, I want to go to Mongolia. Africa as well. My husband and I intend to go there. Sweden too. Well, it’s a bit too cold there though. (...) I don’t mind [where I go], but the most important thing is what I do. (...) Anyway, for example, if I were to go and work in Bangkok or Ulaanbaatar, I don’t think I would work there longer than three years...because that would not be a job to keep for life. Usually, people seem to move their job every three years, or five years in the longest case, when they work on a particular project. The thing is to

develop my career in a specific field. My priority is occupation, not a particular place. So...from some point of view, I haven't got a plan. (Na-Ra)

Here, uncertainty about future plans not only means an insecure status but also a wide range of possibilities. After she has finished her master's course and built her career in the UK, Na-Ra may widen her geographical mobility even further. Jae-Eun also exhibits this sense of geographical possibility, saying that her dream is to live in California. Jee-Soo also says that she hopes to get a job in Europe or Asia, using her educational background in both China and the UK, and her British fiancé's knowledge of Japanese companies. She says they could open their future career together in another area entirely, neither in the UK nor in Korea. Thus they feel both anxiety and a great sense of opportunity. Home for them is thus a complex feeling, arising out of this coexistence of possibility and fear of failure. Given that many of these migrant women long for home in Korea and have no fixed future plans in their careers and lives, ties to people in Korea remain important. This is the feature of those who have material and cultural advantages: they are seemingly close to cosmopolitan identity and life style, but they have to worry about uncertainty in their future depending on job appointment and have to deal with problem of social networks and emotional support (Thomson & Tambyah 1999). In the following section, I will examine several aspects of these ties to Korea.

### **7. 3. Transnational Family Ties**

Korean migrant women in the study often evince a nostalgia for home. The absence of family and friends, which means a lack of intimacy and (usually moderate) sense of alienation, gives them a feeling of loss.

I feel lonely. In Korea, I can enjoy meeting my friends...Here, I'm alone. I will even miss my best friend's upcoming wedding. (Mee-Ran)

One of the disadvantages of living here is that I don't have many friends and am away from my family. That means my everyday life is simple and there is nothing exciting. (Min-Ju)

I don't feel supported by others here. I have people whom I can rely on in Korea, such as friends and family, but I don't have such people here. That's why I often feel small here. (Soo-Hee)

While many of these migrant women enjoy the advantage of freedom from the interference of family and other people (as discussed in Chapter 3), they often miss this camaraderie after moving to the UK. They miss the close relationships and emotional support they used to find in family and friends. That is, their migration results in "trading intimacy for liberty" (O'Reilly 2000). As many participants mention family as an important factor in what constitutes home, their lack of intimacy is a barrier to feeling at home in the UK because it feels so unlikely that they will be able to extend their network.

In addition to liberty, they also trade intimacy for achievement in education and career. Often this feels like an explicit tradeoff: they cannot complain of loneliness because their migration was voluntary and they are in the UK in order to achieve important ambitions. Intimacy is considered as something to be set aside for a while.

At first, I missed home so much and really wanted to go back home, because of my boyfriend staying in Korea. I was such an idiot. I am here to study [not miss my boyfriend]. It's a bit shameful. (Ha-Jung)

Though I had been confident before coming here, I suffered from serious homesickness [once I arrived]. You know, at such a young age...I really missed my family and often felt sad. Even living in another's home in Korea would be a sad thing. So can you imagine how depressing it is living in another's country? I felt small because I was alone. (...) Because I had broken my parents' hearts [when I decided to study abroad]... I had been really stubborn, and argued a lot about it, so...I could not turn around and say I wanted to go back home. It would have been shameless behavior. My parents also never asked me if I wanted to come home. Instead, they visited me every break. That's also because I had to study and go to language school during breaks. So, before I went on to university, I just went to Korea once a year, there was too much to study and do during secondary school. It is hard to enter a good university not only in Korea but also all other countries. So, I had to stay here till I finished secondary school. Then, after entering university, I went to Korea more often. (Hae-Rim)

Both of these women feel that missing relatives is shameful, and view their emotional vulnerability in this regard as a kind of weakness.

In this situation, they often try to make up for their loneliness by keeping in touch with family and friends in Korea. Indeed, regular communication with sending communities, especially empowered by new technologies, has become a part of many migrants' everyday lives in contemporary migration (Levitt 2001; Parrenas 2005). Such familial ties make it possible for families to maintain intimacy across long distances, including care between parents and children living apart (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila 1997; Parrenas 2005; Baldassar 2007). Transnational ties of family have, thus, challenged a traditional condition of family, co-residency, by keeping up familial bonds despite great geographical separation (Zontini 2004). Of course, there are many different ways to manage/use geographic distance and mobility in transnational families. Landolt and Da (2005) argue, "there is not only one type of transnational families, but rather a continuum of familial arrangements"(p. 647). There are differences in transnational families such as access to mobility, resources, various types of capital and lifestyles, and individuals show different ways of maintaining or establishing ties with their family members (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002).

The migrant women in the study frequently contact their family and friends by telephone and the Internet, as well as through regular visits. For example, So-Ra frequently speaks on the internet with her father in Korea. Her father learnt how to talk over the internet specifically for the purpose, and sent his daughter a web-cam so they could see each other as well. Yu-Jung also has a regular chat with her parents, using the web-cam three evenings (Korean time) per week. Most of the participants also have their own blogs and use an instant messaging service. Posting about their lives in the UK on their personal websites and contacting their family and friends, they communicate about their everyday lives and feelings in Britain. This runs contrary to the typical assumption about transnational familial practices in that these family connections almost never include monetary remittance: the direction of support is from the sending country to the host country, and it is more emotional than economic.

Traditionally, remittance has been considered a key factor of transnationalism (Portes et al., 1999). The importance of remittance has received much attention in recent years due to its economic impact on the families, communities and sending countries in diverse respects such as development and consumption (Vertovec 2000; Orozco 2002; Caglar 2006). This is also significant in terms of gender relations

(Malhler & Pessar 2006). In the case of many female migrant workers, their monetary remittance and investment in their hometowns and families can enhance their power within the family unit and transform their roles in the nation. That is, the opportunity for women to move to an urban/developed area and their ability to support a family make women independent and enhance their decision-making power. In addition, the economic impact of this remittance is visible in the changes made to their material reality, such as housing and consumer goods, and their contributions to family can include the education of siblings as well as communities. This often challenges traditional notions of class and gender in their home community or country (Silvey 2006; Barber 2000). For example, Filipino migrant mothers, who left children and husbands behind, confront the traditional notion of the male breadwinner (Parrenas 2005). However, the effect of women's remittance on gender relations is also somewhat limited: "The dutiful daughter/good mother image (...) is clearly embedded in familial relations –and it is these relations which justify and legitimise these women's migration." (Huang et al. 2000 p. 395) That is, female migrants exist within a patriarchal framework of familial obligation, and as such may not always challenge this patriarchal framework. Indeed, migrant women, who work as domestic carers, provide their labour based on fixed gender role: they take a role of carer for other families in order to support their own family (Knowles 2006). Also, it has been found that the domestic division of labour generally remains unchanged, with female breadwinners still responsible for homemaking activities (Parrenas 2005).

Korean women in the present study, however, rarely send money to Korea. Some of the participants (Mee-Ran and Jin-Ju) intend to invest in Korean property, but their plan does not include helping with their family's living costs. This stems from the difference in migration purpose and the role of family in migration motivation between Korean women's and other cases. Rather than being a household strategy, their migration is regarded as a personal investment to guarantee their own future and financial security.

Currently, some studies argue that remittance is not limited to money, but includes what Levitt (2001) calls "social remittance": that is, "ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that flow from host- to sending-country community" (p. 54; see also Goldring 2003). However, even this extended notion of remittance still does not apply to most Korean migrant women in the UK. The flow of social and

monetary remittance is, for the vast majority of these women, going from home country to host country: Korean migrant women are supported by their families in Korea, and even after they finish their studies and take jobs, they still typically do not take on the role of breadwinner in their family living in Korea. While remittance is generally conceptualized as a transfer back to the country of origin, the actual direction of remittance for the women in this study—including money, many forms of social capital and emotional support—are either bi-directional or run solely toward the host country. The participants in this study do bring gifts to their communities in Korea, such as English tea, bone-China, cosmetics and clothes, but they receive more essentials for living and food *from* their family and friends. They may bring new ideas, qualifications, and new networks that can become social capital, but they almost always receive money for living and tuition costs. That is, the flow of resources seems to consist of a kind of exchange: parents pay for the trip, and children increase their own and their parents' social and educational capital.

While Korean migrant women show such differences, these women's bonds with their families in Korea show a commonality with other female migrants' cases in terms of gender relations. These women reveal emotional issues with their families regarding the traditional notions of a daughter's duty. What these women missed by migrating is not just emotional support from the family but also the fulfilment of their duty towards them. Some interviewees mention that they feel guilty because of being away from their parents.

I really feel the lack of filial piety for my parents, because I am far away from them and can't often see them. That's the biggest thing. (...) Well, I don't know because nothing serious has happened yet...but, I am worried [about whether my parents are well]. Even if they are unwell, it's hard to go and see them. I think if they were to become ill for a long time, I would have to return. [Jae-Eun]

I have such a good relationship with my mum. We are like friends. I know, my mum has suffered a lot and worked very hard for me. So...I'm sorry I am away from her. Thankfully, she understands. But that just makes me feel even more sorry. While I can go out for whatever I want to do, mum...you know, most mums haven't got anywhere to go... (...) So, she could be disappointed about this, but she still understands. I've got a big sense of responsibility because I'm the eldest child and the only daughter...I'm sorry that I can't often see mum and dad. (Jee-Soo)

While their feelings of obligation towards their family are not financial, they still care deeply about it; their commitment is primarily emotional. Because of this feeling of guilt that they are not physically there for them in fulfilment of their duty as children, they try to sustain routine conversations with their parents in Korea.

In her regular on-line chatting using the web-cam, Yu-Jung lets her little daughter sing to her parents and inlaws, who often make clear how much they miss their children. Na-Ra also tries to stay in touch with her parents and inlaws:

[When I first got here] I was very lazy about getting in touch with family and friends. My mother nearly gave up on me. Even in Korea, when I lived away from my family, I would often not ring my parents for one-and-a-half or even two months. (...) But as time went by and my parents got older, I realized that I have been bad daughter. So now I try to call them at least once every three weeks. (...) Because my mother knows that I don't call others, she says to me, "You mustn't do to your inlaws what you do to me. You should phone them more often. Why don't you call them right now?" [laugh] Actually, a married woman, even one like me, tends to try to call her inlaws...to avoid disappointing them... What's more, my inlaws are not familiar with having children who don't call. So, I phoned them once a week at first, though now I call every two weeks. (Na-Ra)

It seems clear that rather than fiscal support, the sense of familial duty primarily has to do with emotional and moral care-giving, such as asking after family's well-being on the telephone and cultivating relations between their children and their parents.<sup>87</sup>

In fact, some participants show pride in their family relationships, even though they do not send economic support and do not live near to their family. For these women, settling down in a foreign country is a thing for family to feel proud of. Some of these daughters' stories seem related to a deep-rooted preference for sons over daughters in Korea.

My grandmother was so disappointed when I was born, because I am a girl. My mum said that my grandmother was so unhappy that she left her side just after seeing me. What's more, the second was a girl, and the third was a girl. (...) My mum still feels bad sometimes because she hasn't got a son. (...) So, I think I have to do well, because I'm the first daughter. (...) Because my family hasn't

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<sup>87</sup> Although there is no big difference between their own parents and parents in law in their efforts of caring, some interviewees show their different feeling to their parents-in-law, which is more based on "duty". Jee-Won tells me her colleague's story: "She talks with her mother-in-law on web-cam. She told me that it's embarrassing and tough job for both her and her inlaw."

got a son, I feel that I have to look after my parents. I feel responsible for many things in my family, because I am the first child, even though I am a woman.  
(Ja-Yoon)

Later in her narrative, Ja-Yoon insists that she is able to fulfil the role of first daughter. Although she does not provide any economic support to her family, she is going to be able to help her sister come to study in the UK.

My youngest sister is nine years younger than me. She's now twenty. She's coming here for language training next year, or maybe the year after next. Look! How great! Mum said, "There is nothing to worry about. I'll send her, and you'll receive her." (Ja-Yoon)

Even if her role is not financial support, she feels pride at her ability to help out her family by caring for her sister in Britain. This pride is closely related to her sense of responsibility as the oldest child, as well as to her mother's old feelings of guilt about having no son. Therefore, her emotional remittance through being believed as a safe guardian for her sister is, on the one hand, still shaped within the role of "good daughter", but on the other hand, gives her chance for pride of overcoming social preference for son in Korea.

Seo-Yeon shows a similar sort of pride. She described herself as a teenager who is mature for her age. Because she cares so much about her parents' financial burdens—they support both her brother and herself—she chose to get a job instead of going to university. In her narrative, she remembered herself as the second child, sandwiched between older brother who was favoured by her grandmother and a younger sister who was adored by her mother. She believes that her personality, both independent and thoughtful of others, came from this childhood.

My older brother went to the US but returned in about two years. I was really disappointed when he returned. [I thought,] how could he do a thing like that? If I had the chance to go abroad, I should have really done well...I told my dad, "You should have supported me, you know. I'm the person who deserves to be supported. You didn't make a good choice." Yes, look at me. I've settled down here. I can bring my parents [for sightseeing]. So, the conclusion is, *the daughter is the best!* (Seo-Yeon)

On the one hand, she feels sorry that she does not live closer to her parents, but on the other hand, she proudly positions herself as the good daughter, one who is strong

enough to settle down in a foreign country and even give her parents the opportunity for sightseeing abroad, both of which are related to notions of filial piety. Here, ironically, being a good daughter is conceived as succeeding in a male-centred society.

#### **7. 4. Strategic Ties**

In addition to keeping up their close personal and familial relationships, these migrant women also often get in touch with old acquaintances as well as trying to follow Korean current affairs and cultural trends. This effort to keep in touch is often strategically connected to their career development. Su-Min, who was a photographer in Korea, discusses the importance of women following Korean trends in their respective fields:

We need to see Korean news. I know a hair-stylist who was trained here and went back to Korea. Hair-stylists are generally required to follow trends. You know, trends in Korea change very quickly. She rarely visited Korea during her study abroad. For seven years, she hardly ever visited home. So, she was not able to follow the trends in Korea. She said that this made it difficult to adapt to her work in Korea. She advised that it's better to visit Korea often if you intend to work in the field of art and culture in Korea later. (Su-Min)

Yun-Jee, who started her first job at a British company as an interior designer, has decided to go back to Korea to work in the near future. Although her job experience will probably be an advantage for getting a job in Korea, she feels the need to have work experience in Korea.

Young: Why do you plan to go to, and stay in, Korea for about four years?

Yun-Jee: I cannot give up working in Korea, because in order to get a good position there it's a requirement to have work experience there. I suppose this is on the assumption that I will live in Korea someday in the future. I need to have experience in Korea. If I work only in the UK, I cannot get a job in Korea. I'm a bit worried about this, even though I am not sure whether I will settle down in Korea or not.

Because she has no set future plans and does not know where she will permanently settle, she is preparing for two options—one in the UK and the other in Korea.

Besides having job experience in Korea, she will use her personal relationship with a Korean designer who could influence her career.

I met a famous Korean professor by chance. His architect agent is very well-known in Korea. I have to be nice to his son who is coming tomorrow. [laugh] (...) The professor could help me to get a job later, so I visit him whenever I go to Korea. (Yun-Jee)

Similarly, So-Ra, who has job experience in Korea and plans to return to Korea, stays in contact with her previous colleagues.

A little bit strategically, I make calls to people who regularly cared for me [senior colleagues], in order to make sure they remember me. (So-Ra)

Hae-Rim also tried to obtain job experience in Korea before she decided to go to law school in the UK. She took an internship in Korea every vacation during her undergraduate studies. Talking about her internship at a Korean newspaper, she says that there are great opportunities for internships and volunteer work because newspapers often desire the unique perspectives of interns studying abroad. Using this position as a student living in the UK, she built up her career in Korea.

Continuing ties with the home country has strategic importance for these women. Such relationships are intentionally cultivated in the present—they are not a continuation of existing ties, but a creation of them. Migrant women use these connections to maximise their potential for the future, and this effort often arises from the judgement of these women that neither sending country nor host country is yet their perfect home. As Levitt and Glick-Schiller argue, migrants' transnational experiences are "a kind of gauge which, while anchored, pivot between host land and transnational connections" (2004, p. 1003). As seen in Korean women's cases in this chapter, connecting to Korea is an investment in the future as well as a way to complement what they miss in the present, giving them a feeling of intimacy that they often miss in their daily lives abroad.

## Conclusion

The relationship between belonging and location for many migrants is re-imagined in the new circumstances offered by the host society, and reshaped through a process of transnational connections (Ahmed et al. 2003). In terms of the concept of home, these women show a sense of home in transition, and discuss a shift in home—a comfortable place—from Korea to the UK, as their routine lives have moved. They also reveal the concept of home on the move: dwelling, settling, and home all overlap but can still be distinguished from one other. Regarding the reconstruction of home, their setting up of a new home is a process of back-and-forth movement between the country of origin and the destination country. Korea, the home society, is thought of as a place in which a new home would need to be constructed, rather than a stable place left behind. Through keeping in touch with their family, friends, and colleagues in various ways and following cultural trends and current affairs, they measure their positions and try to maximise their career prospects as well as complementing what they miss in the host country.

Young Korean migrant women in the UK have opportunities to work and live in their country of origin, host country, or even another area, because they have obtained prestigious education and valuable experience. However, these women are anxious that they have “no home anywhere”: their adaptation to the UK is often imperfect, and they also perceive a low possibility of settling successfully in Korea when they return. Although they respect British culture and there are advantages to living in the UK, they are not sure that this is their permanent home. Thus, neither the sending nor receiving country is considered to be a perfect home. For these women who are neither perfectly privileged people of globalisation (Tomlinson 1999) nor disadvantaged people such as forced migrants, they could have the opportunity to have more than two homes, but are more likely to feel that they have no home.

In this situation, perfectly settling down in the UK seems to be impossible, and that migrant women miss intimacy and familial ties is significant in their everyday lives. While they perceive this lack of intimacy as a trade-off for liberty and career/educational achievement, they still miss emotional support and try to remain connected to family. In transnational familial ties, the Korean case departs from the traditional notion of remittance. These transnational family connections do

not include monetary remittance; rather, financial support tends to move in the opposite direction, from sending country to host country, and emotional and social support is mutual. Emotionally, these women often think of their duty as daughters. This duty does not always fit the traditional model of the devotional daughter who financially supports her family, but these women nevertheless become *proud daughters* by settling in a foreign country.

These issues of duty, gender role, maintaining transnational ties in personal and familial dimension, provide a hint of a condition of having home—obtaining a membership fully accepted/respected by others. In the following chapter, I will discuss the larger sense of home —nation— and these women’s sense of duty and pride.

## CHAPTER 8

### BECOMING A PROPER KOREAN

Throughout the trajectory of leaving Korea and settling in the UK, what Korean migrant women gain is not only a wider view of the world with their experiences of a new setting in the host country. They also acquire new perspectives on their homeland. This chapter questions these women's *returning home* (of course, not in physical meaning of returning). While Chapter 3 examined their reflection on the home country focusing on leaving Korea, this chapter will explore their attitudes toward the home country focusing on the intention to contribute to Korea.

While personal homes are related to one's familial and communal associations, collective homes are articulated by ethnic and nationalistic factors (Terkenli 1995). This chapter is concerned with the extended scale of home, focusing on the relationship between nation and women. The previous chapters have documented how Korean women criticise their home country for its oppressive, patriarchal environment. However, as they do not easily leave behind their home country, their attitudes towards Korea cannot be reduced to simple hostility. With particular attention to their location outside the national territory, this chapter explores Korean migrant women's understanding of their national identity and their practices as Korean women beyond their images as victims of national conflict and reproducers for the nation. By tracing these practices, the chapter will show the ironic relationship between women's becoming desirable citizens and leaving their country of origin.

The first section discusses the conditions for being considered a respectable national citizen; this serves as a background for understanding how the relationship between women's active citizenship and migration can be shaped in the specific Korean context.<sup>88</sup> After looking at the ways in which women become national

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<sup>88</sup> Citizenship is defined in different ways. Rather than formal definition referring to a juridical status granting rights and duties as a member of a state, citizenship in this thesis refers to "a set of moral qualities thought to be crucial for the existence of the good citizen (Martiniello 2002, p. 116)".

citizens—theoretical issues of the relationship between gender and nation as well as Korea's specific, gendered process for the creation of national citizens—I deal with how national membership is defined in contemporary Korean attitudes towards overseas Koreans. I then examine how Korean migrant women in the UK understand and practice their role as Koreans. By looking at their ideas and desires regarding rights, obligations, and their sense of belonging as Koreans, this chapter examines the meaning of migration in their re-formation of their relationship with Korea.

## **8. 1. Who is a Proper Korean?**

### **Nation and Women**

As discussed in Chapter 2, the way in which women belong to a given nation is never the same as men, and nationalism does not guarantee the same rights for women as men because women are not typically considered active players or representatives (McClintock 1993; Iveković & Mostov 2002). Women are considered to be territorial markers and property of the nation, requiring men's protection (Iveković & Mostov 2002). As Radcliff and Westwood (1996) argue, "Men appear in the histories of battles, governments and monarchs, whereas women appear as icons of national domesticity, morals and 'private' sociality." (p.147) Women are thought of as "embodiments of male honour, and as such become a site of contestation for this honour" in nationalist discourse; this is often evident in the facts that men go to war in the name of defending women and children, and raping the enemy's women is considered a dishonour to the male opponents (Brah 1993b, p.16).

Based on the supposition of women as reproducers for the nation, women are described as a symbolic collectivity in the national imagery. However, women's role is not limited to a symbolic dimension. In addition to their role as ideological

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Instead of seeing citizenship as simply legal/formal rights and membership, this discussion on nation-women relationship will use a broader meaning of citizenship (Lister 1997): "total relationship, inflected by identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions, institutional practices and a sense of belonging" (Werbner & Yuval-Davis 1999, p.4).

reproducers of national collectivity and signifiers of ethnic/national differences, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989, p.7) include women's actual roles as "biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities" and "participants in national, economic, political and military struggles" in the ways in which women have participated in ethnic and national processes (see Chapter 2).

Although women are considered as the object of exploitation in nationalist discourse, being reproducers rather than subjects (McClintock 1995; Kandiyoti 1994), the relationship between women and nationalism is complex. This is especially true of women who actively participate in nationalist movements which may serve to empower women (Bystydzienski 1992). As seen throughout the history of Third World feminists, participation in national movements for independence from colonialism can be perceived as an emancipatory movement for autonomy. Women's activism—even using conventional female characteristics, such as motherhood—provide a stepping stone towards transformation of the public sphere, which is structured as authoritarian and controlled by men (Werbner 1999). That is, by such political activities, women have created "opportunity spaces" that changed the pattern of gender relations and transformed women's sphere of activities as domestic by giving their voices in political activities (Radcliffe & Westwood 1996; Waylen 1996). However, contradictions are also evident. After national independence or social reform, women are not guaranteed the ability to enter the public sphere (Werbner & Yuval-Davis 1999). Indeed, women are often mobilised for independent movements and modernisation projects. From the Orientalist point of view, their status is used as a criterion of a nation's development, while from the nationalist point of view, it is considered a standard of the failure or success of modernisation in the nationalist project.<sup>89</sup> For this reason, women's political activities and education are encouraged. However, they remain caught up in women's domestic roles, such as those of educator and mother (Yuval-Davis 1997a; Kandiyoti 1994; Chatterjee 1989; Boehmer 2005).

Throughout these debates on the nation-women relationship, it is noticed that the discussion of women's agency and the possibility of women's empowerment

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<sup>89</sup> See Kandiyoti (1991) for discussion in the context of Muslim societies, Radcliffe and Westwood (1996) for Latin America, and Choo (2006) for North and South Korea.

through national discourse is narrowly focused on women's political activities such as participating in movements for independence or democratization.

As women's sphere of activities and their social interactions changed during periods of economic crisis and political repression, so the ways that they imagined themselves – and the ways in which others imagined them – were subtly yet powerfully transformed. (Radcliffe & Westwood 1996, p.159)

That is, only in economic or political crisis situations, women are less likely to be considered primarily domestic and maternal. Moreover, women's "opportunity spaces" to place a culture of resistance and a gender agenda into nationalist movements tend to be discussed within a relatively narrow definition of political action. For these reasons, the attitudes surrounding national identity and nationalist discourse amongst women who are not activists in political movements have hardly been explored. Important questions remain: if women are not facing a major national calamity such as war, a colonial situation, or economic disaster, and they are not directly involved in political activism, what are their agency and capability for self-empowerment like? How do women deal with their sense of belonging to their nation, with their sense of national citizenship, in their everyday lives?

The discussions on the nation-women relationship in Korea and rhetoric and self-perceptions of Korean women in contemporary national discourse also show similar patterns above. In Korea, the formation of nationalism and its relationship with women have been intimately connected to Korea's colonial history—namely, the Japanese occupation from 1910 to 1945 and the US's so-called neo-colonial domination (Kim & Choi 1997). The formation of Korean nationalism has been the outcome of external threats and resistance to these threats. Enhancing internal solidarity by cultivating a sense of nation has served as an effective resistance to external threats (G Shin 2006). Because of this need to resist Japanese colonialism, an ethnic, organic conception of nation has been dominant in the formation of nationalism—a nationalism which has been accepted by both ends of the political spectrum in South Korea (G Shin 2006). At one end, male elite nationalists have formed an androcentric nationalism. At the other end, struggles with the vestiges of Japanese imperialism and US hegemony over political, military, and social structures as well as a pro-US South Korean government have resulted in resistant nationalist movements driven by the left (Kim & Choi 1997). Korean feminists have also

become entwined in this national liberation movement, although sometimes this relationship has been tense because of different points of views on political agendas (K Kim 1996).

In Korea, mass mobilisation for the national modernisation project of the 1960s and 1970s focused on the creation of dutiful nationals—국민 *KukMin* (literally meaning national citizen (S Moon 2005). The cultivation of *kukmin* was conducted in a gendered way. By titling men as the head of family, harsh labour conditions, such as long hours of hard labour, were justified under the guise of survival of the family and the nation (see Chapter 3). Meanwhile, this nationalist discourse titled women based on traditional gender roles. For example, house wives were called 알뜰주부 *Altteul-Jubu*, meaning a wife who economically and effectively organises the household, thereby connoting that their duties ultimately contribute to the national economy. This titling process was not the same for all women, but varied based on their status. For example, unmarried female workers had a different title—산업역군 *Sanup Yökkun*, literally meaning the military for industrialisation, and 수출역군 *Suchul Yökkun*, meaning the military for export. Such titles stemmed from the key role played by young female workers in economic growth stimulated by industrialisation, particularly light industry (K Chun 2005). Despite these variations in titling, all these women were conceived and identified primarily as daughters supporting their families, especially their brothers' educations—all essentially gendered identifications.

The relative entitlement given to women who worked did not always match women's wishes for gaining full citizenship as proper nationals. Even as *Sanup Yökkun* and *Suchul Yökkun* rhetoric were used in relation to female workers' contributions to the national economy, working women were also called by another name, 공순이 *gongsuni*, a vaguely derogatory term meaning factory woman; this name indicates the systematic social undervaluation of these women as uneducated and poor girls. Korean female workers' strong labour movements in the 1970s grew out of resistance to this unfair treatment (S Chun 2003; Matsui 1998).

Another example of women's self-empowerment was the large number of women participating in student activism in the 1980s and 1990s; such activities were characterised as national liberation–democracy movements (H Cho 2002). By participating in such movements, women gained the opportunity to become active

subjects of political activism, to appear in the public sphere, and to speak out about their gender-sensitive agendas.

More recently, during the IMF crisis, the “Gold Collecting Campaign (1998)” aimed to compensate for the shortage of foreign currency. This public campaign mobilised Koreans to donate their gold, and women’s participation was encouraged and praised by the Korean media. Women brought their gold rings from home, many of which held sentimental or personal value—engagement rings, marriage rings, mother’s gifts, babies’ first birthday presents. These were portrayed as symbols of women’s self-sacrifice and devotion to help ending the national crisis. Through this, “Korean women’s status was changed from ‘ignorant housewives’ without political consciousness to ‘patriot mothers’ of the nation” (H Kim 2001, p. 59).

The construction of women’s roles in the national project in Korea could be characterised as based on “sacrifice,” depicting a mother sacrificing her own ambitions in exchange for her family, or a daughter working in a factory instead of seeking higher education. Meanwhile, women’s own activities in claiming their rights are primarily evident in their participation in political movements. Again the same question remains: in the relatively stable political and economic situation of contemporary Korea, how do Korean migrant women establish their relationship with the nation, and what shapes these women’s activities for the achievement of full citizenship? Especially in the case of migrant women, the fact that the global media and international travel have become more and more prominent in people’s lives is of great interest in exploring these questions.

### **Attitudes to Overseas Koreans**

Alongside the aspect of gender, public attitudes toward overseas Koreans and Korean descendents can help us understand Korean migrant women’s practices of national citizenship. This is because such attitudes show which factor most influences people’s perceptions about who qualifies as an exemplary member of a specific ethnic/national group. From a couple of examples of so called “global Korean networks”—재외동포 *Chaeoe Dongpo* (overseas Koreans) and Koreans who have been adopted by foreign families—many of the features of Korean policies and discourses in relation to overseas Koreans can be gleaned. These cases can be an

example of a governmental attempt to use co-ethnics and emigrants for the national project, which is one side of long-distance nationalism, as I argued in Chapter 2.

Despite a long history of emigration and Korean diasporas (see Chapter 1), the issue of overseas Koreans has only recently gained attention inside Korea. In the governmental dimension, a policy of enhancing global competitive power has raised public attention to overseas Koreans since the late 1990s. For example, the Overseas Koreans Foundation was established in 1997 with the purpose of “helping overseas Koreans share our national spirit and become respectable citizens of the host states.”<sup>90</sup> Korean policies on overseas co-ethnics are based on two characteristics of Korean national discourse: ethno-nationalism and deterritorialisation of nation (E Kim 2007). Korea has, of course, “long maintained a coherent political community within a stable territorial boundary with a well-established agrarian bureaucracy” and a fairly homogenous ethnicity (G Shin 2006, p. 18). Because of these historical conditions, Korea has developed a nationalism emphasising “blood/kinship.” In this sense, recent Korean policies, media and public attention have sought to reach overseas Koreans and Korean descendents as members of the Korean community.

However, rather than mere sympathy for people who share an ethnic background, the approach to overseas Koreans often focuses on how to strategically use these perceived national assets by developing Korean overseas networks (Im & Chun 2006). C Im et al. (2005), for example, have undertaken research on the socio-economics of overseas Korean towns, investigating the four countries with the largest overseas Korean populations as the bases for constructing a 한민족 네트워크 *hanminjok* network (ethnic Korean network). The objective of building this network is, according to C Im et al., to enhance the international competitive power of Korea by connecting ethnic Koreans throughout the world to one community based on ethnic commonality (p. 5). In other words, as an outcome of the interplay between globalism and nationalism, Korean governmental practices have aimed to create and strengthen the global Korean community (G Shin 2006), also known as a “pan-Korean economy” (C Lee 2002).

Evidently this desire to embrace ethnic Koreans is selectively adapted to certain groups of overseas Koreans rather than paying equal attention to all Koreans

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<sup>90</sup> Overseas Koreans Foundation (<http://www.okf.or.kr>)

throughout the world. An example showing this attitude is the “Act on the Immigration and Legal Status of Overseas Koreans” (1999), as I mentioned in Chapter 2. The purpose of this act was to promote economic benefits from overseas Koreans by giving them the right to participate in economic activities such as foreign exchange transactions and real estate, as well as the right to pension and insurance benefits almost equalling those of Korean citizens (Skrentny et al. 2007). In relation to this law, there was a controversy over the definition of 재외동포 *Chaeoe Dongpo* (overseas compatriots), which was given as “a national of the Republic of Korea who obtains the right of permanent residence in a foreign country or is residing in a foreign country with a view to living permanently there” or “a person prescribed by the Presidential Decree of those who have held the nationality of the Republic of Korea or their lineal descendants.”<sup>91</sup> According to this definition, ethnic Koreans who emigrated before 1948, when the Republic of Korea was established, are not entitled as *Chaeoe Dongpo*. This means many Korean descendants in China, the former Soviet Union and Japan are excluded, while many Koreans in the US and other countries receive full benefits. For this reason, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Korea decreed "Constitutional nonconformity" on this the act on 29 Nov. 2001. From the controversy surrounding this Act, it can be gleaned that there are different interests and rationales in defining what it is to be a Korean. While overseas Koreans residing in North America are considered as assets having possible economic benefits for Korea, 조선족 *Choseonchok* and 고려인 *Goryoin* (Korean descendants in China and the former Soviet Union) are less desirable, posing the threat of a mass influx of unskilled workers (Skrentny et al. 2007; G Shin 2006; C Lee 2002).

Another example demonstrating attitudes towards Koreans overseas is the sympathetic attention given to adoptees. Since 1953, when the Korean War ended, an estimated 200,000 Korean children have been adopted by families outside Korea, with approximately three fourths going to the US and the rest to Western Europe and Australia (E Kim 2007). Korean governmental regulations have opened up the opportunity for these adoptees to visit Korea and even to stay for extended periods (E Kim 2007); events intended to attract them have been organised. While Korean

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<sup>91</sup> Korea Ministry of Government Legislation (<http://www.moleg.go.kr>)

people's sympathy for people having "the same blood" and history has led to this compassion, adoptees are also regarded as a bridge between Korea and the West. In other words, the public view of these adoptees has shifted "from abandoned children to valuable assets" on the belief that they can play an important role as "ambassadors and bridges connecting Korea to the West" (E Kim 2007, pp. 506-507).

The potentially significant role of transnational membership in the nation can be more clearly seen in the recent spotlighting of some actors, sports players, and businesspeople, who have helped to *introduce Korea to the world*. Their contribution is part of the globalisation discourse in Korea, which has predominated since the late 1990s. Particular stress on economic survival amidst international competition and a discourse, which pushed people to become cosmopolitan, as stated in Chapter 3, promotes more than just a global mindset and respect for other cultures. Taking a line from the past national modernisation agenda—to "catch up with advanced countries"—it cultivates respectable Koreans who compete successfully on the world stage. Stories of Koreans/Korean descendents who have attained world renown, such as sports stars (e.g. American football player Hines Ward and golfer Michelle Wie), have been celebrated. Being known on the world stage is praised as a personal achievement as well as a national one, and such stars are considered Korean regardless of their legal citizenship or place of birth.<sup>92</sup>

## 8. 2. "I will contribute to Korea."

### National Identity, Rights, and Duties

Korean migrant women in the study often seem to be rethinking their national identity, their affection for their home country, and their intentions to contribute to Korea. Eun-Sook says that reassessing her national identity was possible only after

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<sup>92</sup> These celebrities and adoptees' own feelings of identity as a Korean is a different issue. In the case of Korean descendent celebrities in particular, media emphasise their relevant characteristics of Korea such as taste of food and interests in Korean culture rather than their formal citizenship. For these celebrities being a Korean is rather a business issue.

moving to the UK. For her, being in a foreign place gave her the opportunity to consolidate her identity as Korean.

Hmm...Seriously, I didn't feel [my Korean identity] before emigrating. Though I was interested in social issues, I didn't really love my country and wasn't very proud of being a Korean. I didn't think about it much. But after I came here...it is my identity and will never change even if I wanted it to, right? Korean. Woman. That's my identity. A Korean woman. A Korean woman who is studying in the UK. Well...when someone who doesn't know me well first meets me, the standard for judging me was only my nationality and gender. So, I realised, Ah! The standard for identifying me is Korean and woman! That's the story. And, as you know, the North Korean Nuclear issue and Minister Ban being elected [as UN secretary general] came out at almost the same time. Though I wanted to hear more about Ban, people only talked about the North Korean nuclear situation instead of asking me about Ban. And they disregarded Korea...In such situations, I feel my [Korean] identity strongly. (Eun-Sook)

Experience outside the home territory makes migrants rethink their identity in relation with other people as well as giving them the opportunity to reflect on their home and identity. As Davies puts it, "re-negotiating of identities is fundamental to migration" (1994, p.3), especially given that inside the host country, nationality is one of the questions most frequently asked by people wishing to identify someone (Gray 1996).

In fact, most interviewees say that when they are in the UK, they identify themselves primarily with Korea as they navigate relationships with people from various backgrounds. Bo-Ram says that the main activities in her language class consist of speaking to others about one's own home country and comparing it to others. Students exchange and compare different countries' customs and social features, and each student is initially defined by his/her national identity. What is more, So-Ra and her Korean classmate frequently work together, cajoling each other by saying things like "We should study harder. As Koreans, we should not be bad students," and criticising other Korean students who do not work hard enough. Yet all this does not mean that their identity suddenly flourishes and they immediately have pride in their being Korean. On the one hand, this stems from the Korean environment, which formed in them a collective identity over a long period of time. Meanwhile, personal reflection is inspired by their new setting, which makes them explore relationships with others while reconsidering Korea's history and position in the world.

Eun-Sook, who describes herself as the sort of person who has a strong national identity, expressed her wish to contribute to Korean society in the future.

I am not content and I think there are a lot of things to change in Korea...but I think, what made it possible for me to grow up and study abroad is not just my parents' support, but rather my entire background, Korea, my mother country, which are represented as parents. I think I ought to contribute to Korea in any way I can once I complete my studies and go back to Korea, because I have benefited [from Korea] and because our country is wealthy enough [to send me to study abroad]. (...) I am not so happy that our country is not good enough in social aspects, comparing its economic status...but, it's my mother country anyway, people I love are there, and it's where I grew up... Yeah, I have quite a strong [Korean] identity. (Eun-Sook)

The primary reason for her desire to contribute to Korea stems from her reconsideration of the relationship between herself and her country. Expanding her family's support to mean Korean support, she identifies her relationship with Korea as one of supporter to supported. In Eun-Sook's case, she considers Korea's economic growth a condition enabling her movement abroad. Her strong belief that she ought to return such benefits to society stems from her idea that Korea is her supportive background.

Su-Min shows a similar set of beliefs. She hopes to improve aspects of Korean culture that she once perceived as a problem.

I hated Korean culture, which is full of phoniness and hypocrisy. When I talked about the problem with my friends, we concluded that it was inevitable because our country had not had enough time to develop a mature culture. There was the colonial period under Japan and the Korean War, and the country achieved only economic growth without cultural development. So we cannot simply blame everything on this. But anyway, I hated such things. However, I have changed my mind since I came here. One of my acquaintances told me, "You should see how lucky you are because you are among the one percent of Koreans who can study abroad. And you should never forget you are a Korean. You could not come here by yourself, Korea let you come here." (...) If I work hard so that I will be able to do something, I can contribute to making Korean culture better and changing the problems I hated in Korea. (Su-Min)

Su-Min tries to understand the source of her discontent with Korea in the context of Korea's contemporary history. Her intention to contribute to Korea is based on her sense of responsibility as a privileged person who was fortunate enough to go abroad. Education in a foreign country is seemingly an individual project, but getting

the opportunity for higher education in the UK is understood within the framework of nation. If Korean women's dissatisfaction with the negative aspects of Korean society—such as its authoritarianism and gender discrimination (see chapter 3)—implies a claim to certain “rights” as Korean, their intention to contribute is related to their “duties” as a Korean.<sup>93</sup>

Further more, Na-Ra and Jee-Soo extend their national identity to their identity as Asians, identifying Asia as another recipient of their contributions.

When it came to writing my dissertation during the summer term, I thought about going back to Asia. Well...I've got such an ambitious idea. I was keen to return and do something to contribute to Asia, it was vague though. (Na-Ra)

Jee-Soo, who completed her undergraduate studies in China, also had a wish to contribute to East Asia in her post-graduation future.

I thought that the countries in Europe have much interchange of people, and they do well [keep power], as we can see from the EU. But China, Korea and Japan don't do it that way, although they have a lot in common. I thought Korea, China, and Japan should step forward. I imagined how I could help such a process...Because I'm interested in Japan as well, I can speak basic Japanese. So...I wish to contribute to exchange between Korea, China and Japan...north-east Asia, whether cultural or economic. Is this too ambitious? (Jee-Soo)

In addition to their deep considerations of Korea and Asia as points of origin and their sense of belonging to their home society, they are concerned about another aspect that makes them wish to contribute to Korea/Asia: Korea/Asia's marginalised position in the world. The generally undervalued and subordinate status of this area motivates their need to contribute to Korea/Asia. This resistant quality of their viewpoint—they regard themselves as underprivileged—justifies their speaking of

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<sup>93</sup> Given that many women living in the UK are willing to pursue a British higher education, the notion of returning their knowledge to society can be a significant feature of Korean migrants in the UK. To some extent, their feelings of duty—as seen in Eun-Sook and Su-Min's two examples—is also related to the Confucian virtue of lifelong learning and social responsibility. In fact, donating or giving back one's property to society is often closely related to ideas about education. For instance, a popular folk story tells of a poor elderly woman who donates all the money she has saved throughout her life of hard work to a university. Indeed, missing the opportunity for education is a lifelong regret for many people, and many believe that donation to a scholarship fund is an effective way to contribute to society as a whole. In addition, it is still believed that intellectuals who have had the opportunity to learn have an obligation to use their knowledge to benefit society, although nowadays learning is also considered a means to acquire personal property.

nation without any sense of guilt about their nationalism, which they distinguish from European-based nationalism.

Although some Korean women demonstrate their desire to contribute to Korea, they deny any reckless patriotism or illiberal nationalism. While resistant nationalism and illiberal nationalism certainly do coexist, the term nationalism is confusedly used to refer to both in Korea. In this situation, these women often need to show their attachment to the nation in a very sensitive manner in order to avoid being misunderstood. Moreover, because of the emphasis on a “global citizen” mindset, being a nationalist is sometimes considered shameful and outdated. Soo-Hee says “I’ve got another long-term future plan. I will translate and publish Korean books in English or French.” However, after vocalising this plan, she stresses that her hope to introduce good Korean novels is not about nationalism.

However, there is no intention to enhance national glory in my plan. It’s not for Korea at all. Rather, I just want to introduce some good books that I appreciate but that have not been published here yet. I think it could provide diversity for people here. I don’t like that kind of thing, you know, nationalism. (Soo-Hee)

For a similar reason, some women criticise other people’s excessive attachment to Korea.

I came to realise how important national background is, as I live in a foreign country. It is sometimes helpful to live here if you are from a rich country. But if someone takes that [their home country] too seriously...let’s say he/she thinks that it determines more than half of her/his condition [laugh]...his/her foreign life may be tough. (Jae-Eun)

Jae-Eun’s statement shows the situation that migrant women face: they realise the importance of nationality as their background, an indispensable resource, and a primary factor determining their impression on others, but still do not want to be stuck within their national identity. Although Bo-Ram feels “I am a Korean” when watching Korean footballers in England’s premier league, she also says,

My husband said that a player like Park Ji-Sung in such a famous football club can make more people learn about and get a positive image of Korea. But I said “There are a lot of black players in basketball teams in Korea. But, do we know about their countries?” Of course not. It’s probably the same here. I don’t think

that Korea and the Korean image are getting better because of them [sports players]. (Bo-Ram)

While they embrace their identity as Korean and want to contribute to Korea, these women criticise having too much pride in Korea or overstatements made by people or the media, cautioning against a narrow nationalist mindset.

Meanwhile, some participants of this study demonstrated a determination to preserve their own Korean cultural values within an inter-ethnic marriage in particular. Yoon-Ja's friend indicated her ambition to introduce and maintain Korean lifestyle and values. When the members of a singles Bible study group held an informal meeting in Yoon-Ja's home (12 March 2006), Yoon-Ja shared her friend's story. Her friend had come to the UK to study and married an English man that she had met at university. According to Yoon-Ja, her friend tried to study and work hard in order not to fall behind her husband. It became a competition. Her hard work resulted in great success, leading her British parents-in-law to be surprised and exclaim, "How can an Asian woman earn such a large amount of money!" Her position as a brilliant student and successful professional brought her power within her new family. Moreover, her success and the reaction of her parents in laws were understood as successful resistance to the image of Asian women as powerless. Yet she simultaneously encouraged her husband to observe Korean etiquette. For example, when Yoon-Ja was leaving after visiting her home, she urged her husband to go to the front door to see her off. She said, "Why are you sitting in the living room now? That's not Korean etiquette. To see off a guest in Korea, we go out the gate with the guest when they go back home. Get up!" Yoon-Ja's story, in which she emphasises her friend's efforts to assert power in her family even as she preserves Korean values, illustrates how much these women desire to match their personal success with their ability to maintain Korean values away from home.

What this case demonstrates is not only a Korean woman's effort to preserve Korean values in her new family. It shows that even family becomes a site in which migrant women's national identity and power relations intermingle. For women living outside her country of origin, the role of preserving culture, I discussed earlier in this chapter, includes their special efforts, including power dynamics.

Jae-Eun: Anyway, I will teach my child Korean when I give birth.

Young: Even if you marry a non-Korean?

Jae-Eun: Sure. Because my parents have to see their grandchildren...If I marry a non-Korean, well... I would go and live in Korea for at least one or two years. I know that will not be easy, but anyway... Also, I will teach my husband Korean. Yes. That's what I wish. I actually have seen a person who did that. (...) In the past, Korean women who intermarried [tended not to be involved in Korea much], and people would say *출가외인* *ChulGaWeoIn* [a Confucian phrase meaning that a married daughter is no longer a member of the family]. But I will definitely teach them Korean. My child has to speak Korean and live in Korea because my parents want to think of the child as their grandchild and they should be able to communicate with each other. Even if I argue with my husband because of this, I will never give up. Because...if I give up on that, I would be the only member of my family who cannot speak English well and I would be driven into the corner at some point in the future, say in my 50s. [laugh] (Jae-Eun)

Jae-Eun's strong intention to teach her new family Korean is not merely a matter of obligation as a Korean, or her attachment to her parents in Korea. It reflects her anxiety about remaining in a position as a foreigner. Her position in the new family will be determined by her roles not only as a wife/mother, but also as a Korean woman.

### **Beyond Domesticity**

In the nation-women relationship, a key factor in the positions of women can be found in the concept of "domesticity." As Radcliffe and Westwood put it, despite the symbolic importance of nation, women's position is considered to belong in the realm of home: "female subjects remain associated with maternal attachments and private spaces" instead of the public realm (Radcliffe & Westwood 1996, p. 158-159). The division between private and public spheres which assumes that only the public sphere is political further contributes to the division between men and women: the political aspect is considered masculine. The assumption that the public sphere is masculine, respectable, and rational leads to the exclusion of women from full citizenship (Canning & Rose 2001; Webner & Yuval-Davis 1999). The relationship between nation and gender parallels this public/private division of gender within the nation, given that domesticity is a key word in relation to the position of women. Women are considered the bearers of national collectivity but not representative of the nation; this runs parallel to the conventional idea that a woman is the reproducer

of the family but not the head of it. Also, women's role as biological reproducer and cultural reproducer of the nation is generally defined through their role in the family, evident in such activities for the transmittance of cultural traditions as passing down traditional recipes or nurturing the next generation of citizens (Webner & Yuval-Davis 1999). As such, the limited position of women inside the family is repeated in the national discourse—that is, the public/private division of gender remains, emphasising women's domesticity in the nation.

Some participants show that their ambition goes beyond the conventional notion of women as symbols of national domesticity. Their feelings of being Korean and intentions to contribute to Korea go against the traditionally considered location of women. In Korea, the Confucian version of the public/private division of gender persists. Notably, “내외법” *Nae Oe Bŏb* (Women's place is the domestic sphere but men's place is the public sphere) shows the divided gender roles emphasising women's duty to family and the home (Y Kim 2005). Korean migrant women's desire for career development is a reaction to this division and a reflection of the challenges facing a younger generation of Korean women: no longer identifying themselves as mothers and wives, they want to be independent and self-sufficient women, unlike their mothers' and grandmothers' generations (H Cho 2002). In other words, migrant women's desire to contribute to Korea can be seen as a way of entering the public sphere and becoming an active citizen. This is because such a contribution will be achieved mainly through professional success.

By focusing on getting a job and pursuing higher education, they try to extricate themselves from the domestic position in the family. At the same time, in becoming a contributor to Korea/Asia, they resist their traditional national domestic role. These women want an unlimited position beyond Korea and desire to become truly representative of Korea. Korean women's contributions to Korea, therefore, serve to challenge the public/private split and the conventional representations of domesticity in both family and nation.

Again, this contribution comes primarily via their professional lives. In their narratives, these women pursue a successful career and contribute to Korea at the same time. Hae-Rim, who works at a British law firm, describes how she will use her abilities to help Korea—one of her ultimate goals of study abroad.

I hoped to contribute to the relationship between Korea and Europe. I cannot say whether I have achieved the goal yet. It's too early to say that. However, I think I am on the road to reaching it. I am doing some work related to Korean companies. If I continue to work in this way, I could get the chance to do more work for Korea. Then, I may achieve what I dreamt of when I first came here. The dream was to broaden my view, to improve my English, to study in a more advanced educational system, and eventually to do something useful for Korea. (Hae-Rim)

Su-Min also indicates her intention to contribute to Korea. She explains how she intends to adopt aspects of an innovative art project in Europe for her artwork in Korea.

[The art project] is wonderful. I recommend it to you. I thought, this kind of project could be possible in Korea as well. One acquaintance of mine is very open-minded. She/he wants to support young artists and improve culture, though she/he is not an artist him/herself. So, if I complete my study well and improve my ability...I would like to participate in such a project. (Su-Min)

Some women demonstrate their hope of becoming an active citizen through their role as a representative of Korea. Their desire is to be more than a member of Korea. They demonstrate the pleasure they get out of communicating with people in the world and take pride in introducing Korea on the global stage. Jee-Soo is about to get married to a British man and is currently preparing job applications. Although she is going to stay in the UK, she wants a job that will link her to Korea, which relates to her hope of being a representative of Korea.

I am interested in a job in an airline company. This is because it would be easy to meet people from other countries. And an airline is a representative company of the country, isn't it? Like Korean Air...there are only one or two big airlines in a country. So...well...there is maybe something I can do...If I have a job related to tourism, it could be helpful [for Korea]. Though I haven't got a detailed plan for the job, I am thinking about going to an airline. (...) I don't know. But, I suppose, if someone works at an airline, he/she would be working as a representative of the country. Also, the person probably can meet many foreigners and can think from foreigners' point of view. (Jee-Soo)

The desire to become a representative of Korea is seen not only in career plans, but also everyday life. Seo-Yeon says she takes pride in introducing Korea to other people.

When I introduce Korea, they [classmates in the language school] say “Oh! I didn’t know that.” I was keen to express how nice my country is, even in my poor English. I thought that though Korea is small and unknown, perhaps other Koreans go abroad and talk about Korea in many places around the world, just like me. I felt proud of my efforts. (Seo-Yeon)

As mentioned earlier, the women’s hope to contribute to Korea through successful studies and careers abroad is also related to the type of national citizenship expected in contemporary Korea. In accordance with this phenomenon, working at international institutions is preferred and desired by graduates looking for jobs. Eun-Sook’s future plan is to work at the UN. She says that this kind of job is attractive to young Koreans and she is one of those preparing to work at an international institution.

Eun-Sook: I particularly want to work at the UNDP [United Nations Development Programme] among others. I would like to work on issues related to women and development, the relationships between women’s human resources and the economy, those kinds of things.

Young: Ah...there seem to be a lot of people to want to work at the UNDP.

Eun-Sook: A lot! That’s a boom in Korea now. Seriously, among young people, it seems to be cool. I mean, [it is preferable] over other jobs which guarantee high pay.(...)

Young: Is there any special reason that that kind of job is popular among young people?

Eun-Sook: It’s quite a new trend. I think it’s been just a few years [since it gained in popularity]. The media have dealt with this, for example, [through] the documentary of a native Korean’s entering the UN or something like that. And *Newsweek* and others published special issues on this, which I’ve even got, like “how to become an international officer,” and there were many relevant articles. Reading and watching these things, I could dream. And what’s more... Women have an advantage [in getting these jobs]. (...) To be honest, I think I’m a bit vain. It seems to be fancy, the title of international officer. That makes me prefer the job over working within Korea. Yes, I cannot say I am absolutely free of [vanity] and the desire to have a UN passport. (Eun-Sook)

As seen so far, the case of Korean migrant women in the UK is distinguished from previous generations’ participating in national projects and other cases of female Korean migration such as nurses’ migration to Germany (see Chapter 1), by the fact that their contributions to Korea are neither financial nor sacrificial. Instead of being self-sacrificial saviours in a national crisis, they have chosen to realise their personal desires and maintain their status as middle-class professionals. They have

freed themselves from the “sacrifice” that has been the predominant image of Korean women’s contributions to the nation.

However, because of this emphasis on personal desires and a more intangible contribution to the nation, their activities are often undervalued by the male-centred discourse. Moreover, they have to deal with the burden of success in the UK—that is, if they fail to have an outstanding career or other achievement in the UK then they must bear the shame of an unsuccessful migration.

I think women have limitations in our country. I think many women who come here wanted to get out of that environment or have another way of life. But we can hardly see women who got a good position and settled down well. Almost 99 percent of women just intermarry [with host country nationals]. That’s all. Only really firm and constant people can achieve success. If not, there is no way but just passing time aimlessly, learning only English, and then marrying a local man and staying. That’s all. If a woman is really clever and has the potential to succeed, she’s already got on in life in Korea without coming here. (Mee-Hwa)

Although Mee-Hwa’s pessimistic opinion may stem from her very limited network of Korean contacts in the UK, her negative feelings towards Korean women who do not have visible achievements shows how difficult it is for a woman to gain approval. Success in the host country means becoming a proud Korean, but this in turn requires professional success. In other words, women are caught between being a proud Korean or nothing.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed how Korean women living in the UK recognise and shape their relationship to the nation. In the gendered discourse of nationalism, migrant women have complex attitudes toward their country of origin. These women’s efforts to preserve Korean values and culture basically stem from their desire to maintain their Korean identities, which is newly conceived through their reflections on Korea and their interactions with other people. At the same time, such efforts serve as a reflection of their status as aliens and aim to strengthen their position in terms of power relations, even within the family.

Korean migrant women's attitudes toward the nation show that their desire to become active contributors to their nation beyond the traditional, narrowly defined role of women in nationalist discourse as the saviour of the nation in times of crisis but generally belonging solely in the domestic sphere. The participants' recognition of their Korean identity and the establishment of their relationships to Korea are more focused on intended contributions to Korea through career achievement. Based on a recognition of the importance of national background and the benefits gained from higher education, these women intend to contribute to Korea using their knowledge and to connect Korea to other countries. They challenge traditional Korean ideas about the domesticity of women even as they consciously serve as representatives of Korea. Meanwhile, corresponding to the Korean tendency to value activities on the global stage, their pursuit extends their sphere of activity outside Korea. This shows how women's agency is shaped in contemporary Korea, where desire to be global is dominant and shows how women try to become agents for the nation in their daily lives, totally apart from participation in political activism.

In place of simple patriotism, these women are motivated by the desire to realise their individual desires. However, their personal success is not always separate from their contributions to Korea. Being a global citizen means becoming an exemplary Korean; consequently, migration is a way of simultaneously fulfilling their individual desires to enjoy freedom and be "modern women," even as they act as proper Korean citizens. Therefore, ironically, these women become proper members of Korean society by leaving Korea. However, given that their success is acknowledged only when they settle down and get a good position in the host country, they stand at a crossroads between being a desirable and an undesirable Korean. In this regard, citizenship in the host country and that in the home country are deeply connected.

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **CONCLUSION**

The thesis has examined the trajectory of Korean women's migrant experiences and identity formation in the UK, from their decision to migrate, organising their life in the UK, and reconsidering their position in various relationships across the UK and Korea. The study proposed a gendered desire approach to understand young women's migration: rather than a single motivating factor of economic purpose, desire for new way of life, including expectation for better social circumstance as well as realistic needs for future career, triggers women's migration. Regarding the meaning of place, travelling, and settling for their life and identity, the study focuses on these migrant women's relationship with non-Korean residents whom they meet, Korean communities in the UK, and their family and acquaintances in Korea, with the attention to transnationality.

This chapter reviews the key findings of the research and the theoretical implications of these findings. Echoing the research questions, which I raised in the introductory chapter, the first section answers the research question about the motivation of women's migration in their social context. The second section gives answers to the question about the influence of migration on women's gender/ethnic identity. The third section highlights the special meanings of "home" for these migrants, which was the central concept that motivated the whole thesis. Finally, the thesis concludes with some remarks about what the Korean migrant women's case instructs in understanding new forms of migrations and diverse ethnic communities.

#### **9. 1. Gendered Desire to Become Cosmopolitan**

The migration motivation of Korean women in my study, as discussed especially in Chapters 3, can be found in the individual women's desire that is rooted in their life story and shaped within the social circumstances of contemporary Korea. The

participants show that their wish to migrate stems from imagination and desire. Through various experiences in their schools and families in Korea, they reveal that going abroad means escaping from tiring, routine lives. As a counterpoint to staying in Korea, their expectation of living in Britain (outside Korea) is constructed by indirect experiences and the media. Besides this, their reason to go abroad is related to career development (including refreshment). They tend to consider that not only better qualifications and English language skills but also experience in a foreign country could help enhance one's career prospects and "upgrade" one's life. As such, there are certain economic motivations to migration. However, given that their movement to the UK does not bring them direct or immediate economic benefits (e.g., better job opportunities and higher salaries), but only *potential* career development, this new economic motivation for migration challenges traditional accounts of migration as moving for direct economic benefits.

The women's desire is constructed within the discourse of uneven globalisation containing the dichotomy of the West and the rest. The expectation of foreign life is based on hierarchical images of "global" and "local," which are also identified as "Western" and "Korean." Widening one's view by the experience of a foreign life actually means getting out of a "small world," or to use an interviewee's expression, "a frog in the well." This desire to go abroad is justified given the dominant discourse in contemporary Korea, which emphasises a nation's survival in global competition and highlights individuals' achievements on a global stage.

As some women mentioned, for example, Western schools are the subject of desire not only because they offer well-regarded qualifications for the future but also because they are the symbol of freedom. While the motivation to go to the UK is related to expectations for learning and living in the centre of a global world, as mentioned by women studying such subjects as finance, arts/design, and beauty, these women show their expectation of relaxation by escaping from a stressful life in Korea. The image of Britain, especially, leads these women to expect they will be "taking a rest" in a cool-looking, cosmopolitan way of life. In addition to general advantages of Western values, Britain's image contains both the classic and progressive, for example historical and cultural opportunities, tranquil life, low-story residential buildings with gardens, relative ease of travel to other European countries, and alternative culture to America.

Considering Britain as a place to take a rest seems to be a reflection on Korean urbanism and quick industrialisation, as seen in the women's self-portrait of the workaholic/stressful urban life of Korea. Yet, rather than simply overturning the image of Western as more developed, industrialised, and modern than Korea/Asia, they assess the "maturity" of British society positively, applying a cultural standard, beyond the economic standard, as the condition of an advanced society. This stems from their "sudden rich" complex, seeing that Korea could not meet a proper cultural standard, something imbedded in many Koreans' reflections about their home country.

The study was concerned particularly with the ways in which the fantasy of foreign life is shaped in a gendered way. Women's travelling for the purpose of seeking an alternative home or making a home better can be addressed within the gender politics of a specific society and time. In the Korean case, women's motivation to go abroad is related to the gap between the reminiscence of patriarchal Confucian gender ideology and women's raised gender consciousness. These women's memory of pre-migration as a stressful life is related to gender norms and inequality. Basically, as some participants said, migration for education and training may serve for these women as a practical tool to overcome their limitation as women and enhance their competitive power in an unequal job market.

More importantly, these women's belief that moving abroad is a worthwhile adventure to widen a woman's view of the world beyond a small home shows the linkage between migration and some values for modern women. Britain/the West is considered a place to acquire such positive and progressive values as activeness, adventure, openness, and freedom, which equate to superiority. The migrant women consider such characteristics as necessary virtues for women. Accordingly, they consider Britain/the West as a more suitable place for progressive women than Korea. This consideration is not simply about another place to make these women free from a stressful life in their home country, but is about "global" (Britain/the West) being superior to Korea in terms of women's realisation of their ambitions. The ideology of cosmopolitans privileged over local (Tomlinson 1999; Brennan 1997; Thomson & Tambyah 1999), therefore, is easily matched to Korean women's desire.

## **9. 2. Repositioning Oneself in the Transnational Place**

### **Being Minority, Rethinking Korean/Asianness, and Evolving Diaspora**

As I discussed in Chapter 4, the experiences in the UK are not always what Korean migrants expected. Although most women I interviewed assessed their overall experiences in the UK positively and admitted benefits from new cultural experiences and education, they talked about unhappy experiences, based mostly on their status as an ethnic minority. They recognise their minority position throughout their experiences in preparing to migrate and living in the UK.

These women recognise the gap between their Korean self-image and others' presumptions based on racial prejudice. Despite their own image of Korea as a country that achieved a so-called miracle of economic growth, they face the reality of being an ethnic minority in the UK and experiencing covert and overt discrimination and isolation. Most of all, the unfamiliarity and invisibility of Korea and East Asians in the UK is particularly important in their measuring of their own position in British society. In terms of introducing and representing Korea to other people, high technology and economic power are key factors to construct a Korean image, contesting the homogenous Asian image as being powerless and less modern, which not only is constructed by the Western point of view but also by Koreans' view of other Asians, based on their notion of "racial hierarchy" (M Song 2004).

Introducing and representing Korean identity and culture is, as indicated in Chapter 5, conducted in a collective dimension as well. As some institutional activities in Korean communities aim for the coherence of Koreans as well as acting in the role of representative to other people in the host society, such activities often display Korean culture. The cultural images represented by such activities as cultural events and the press often are abstract and traditional. Looking carefully at the mechanism inside these activities, however, shows they are not simple. These identity-related activities are linked to various groups' and individuals' interests rather than simply preserving their identity and cultural heritages. Teaching Korean language to pupils in Korean weekend school is not only about Korean identity but also about the practical needs for the children's following a Korean curriculum and future career; diasporic images of Korea as one's missing home are employed by

Korean businesses for use in their commercial advertisements; and community newspapers never are free from their sponsors' interests.

As seen in Korean communities in the UK, ethnic migrant communities have, on one hand, institutional and formal abstract communities that reproduce a manifested cultural identity, but on the other hand, various personal communities (Alexander et al. 2007). More and more diverse communities have been organised by individuals according to interests. In addition, while Korean migrants share the common goal of successful settlement in the host country, there are many differences among these people, which may cause antagonistic relationships. As they have a high proportion of temporary migrants, tension and harmony between permanent settlers and temporary settlers can be important factors to characterise Korean communities especially.

From these dynamics within Korean communities, we can find its implication in theoretical discussions on diasporas. That is, diaspora communities are evolving. Increasing movements of population and widening ranges of migration channel leads that an ethnic migrant group comprises people from different backgrounds and causes of migration; and these phenomena make diasporas ever changing. Beyond the confirmation of differences in a diaspora group, as discussed in Chapter 2, the influence of changing members and continuous arrivals of newcomers to the communities should be taken into account to understand diaspora communities. In the Korean case, as I argued in Chapter 5 and 6, the coexistence of people with different conditions and interests, such as permanent and temporary settlers, family and single migrants, and old and new generations, shows various patterns of living together under the same title of "Korean": mutual support, tensions, and creating alternative small communities.<sup>94</sup>

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1. In this study, I did not deal with the issues of Korean-Chinese residents, who have quite close relationships with Korean communities, and North Koreans, who have recently started to move to the UK. I expect that further studies will investigate the issue of the relationships among ethnic Koreans who encounter each other outside Korea.

## **Gendering Korean Women's Migration**

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, these women's migration motivation is related to gendered desire. Their migration experiences also include gender issues in many aspects. These women's trials to create a home involve negotiations with these gender norms across two countries. The complexity came from their different relationships with others, which were made by migration. They feel the need to manage the situations both from Korean ethnic communities and non-Korean people in Britain. The former is related to traditional gender ideology and the latter is related to the stereotyped image of Asian/Korean women. This study found gender issues in the following four categorised relationships of Korean migrant women: non-Koreans (especially in Chapter 4), Korean networks (Chapter 5 and 6), transnational familial ties (Chapter 7), and the home nation (Chapter 8).

First of all, for these women, the passive and sexually exotic image of Asian women from a Western point of view is the subject of contradictory feelings. While this hyper-feminine image is considered as unpleasant stereotype, it also is a source of pleasure and advantage for acceptance into the host society. Here, while keeping self-pride as a Korean woman by not allowing Western men's presumption of an easy woman, they enjoy being attractive.

Regarding Korean networks in the UK, these women's attitudes of Korean communities and their own networking patterns can be understood in a gender framework. They consider that Korean communities, especially New Malden, control women's freedom by gossips and rumours. Women's relationships with people in their own ethnic group should not be a limited issue of whether their communities are supportive or not, as the previous studies have suggested (see Clifford 1997). The case of Korean women in this study show women's agency in the existing migrant communities. They are not powerless victims under an oppressive circumstance. Rather, they criticise some Korean men's chauvinistic behaviours and sticking to Korean communities as negative as well as inferior, compared to women. Furthermore, they can use a strategy to keep their distance from Korean networks. Korean communities therefore are not terrifying oppressors but annoying interferers for these women.

Meanwhile, women's networking in Korean communities (especially New Malden residents and house wives) often is based on their traditional gender roles,

such as caring and shopping. At the same time, however, their networks and activities become important in Korean communities. This is because such basic needs of caring and shopping are not trivial but significant issues in migrants' communities, and sharing such information is a key part of networking. Moreover, as seen in the case of the women's department of the Korean Residents Society, women's activities in migrant communities make it possible to bridge formal and informal community activities.

Their transnational familial ties also show the ambiguity of women's migration, in terms of gender aspects. While their familial ties and positioning in their family still is shaped within the framework of "being a good daughter," they challenge the traditional notion of this role as self-sacrifice or economic support for their family. Just as settlement in a foreign country or successful achievement in education/career become a source of pride, emotional remittance by being proud daughters replaces the monetary remittance in these women's cases.

Furthermore, their relationship with nation shows a similar complexity in terms of gendered discourse of nationalism. Some participants show their intention to preserve their Korean value and contribution to Korea. As Glick-Schiller and Fouron (2001) put it, long-distance nationalism is linked to migrants' responding to racial discrimination and minority position in their power relations in the host society. Keeping Korean identity and continuing ties to Korea, as some interviewees said, is the result of recognition of their unsettled position as foreigner in the UK. Here, their affection to their country of origin is not only from emotional attachment. Rather, having a proud country of origin as their national background can be a resource to give them confidence in the host country. In addition, their intention goes beyond the traditionally defined woman's role in nationalist discourse—mother as well as saver. Instead of being self-sacrificed mothers/daughters, they challenge such traditional ideas of women. Their contribution to Korea by introducing Korea to the world is identified with individual success. Given that becoming a cosmopolitan identified as a proud Korean, it is noticed that there is close relationship between (long distance) nationalism and cosmopolitanism. In Korean migrant women's cases, their intention to become the representative of their home country outside Korean territory challenges domesticity, which often is attached to home, as the conceived feature of women.

### 9. 3. Meaning of Home for Migrants

This study employed “home” as the main conceptual framework to examine Korean women’s migration. By looking at their seeking and trying to make a new home, the study has found the special meaning of home for migrants. Given that the concept of “home” traditionally has implied settlement and a place opposite to the outside world, whereas migrants have the experience of geographical movement, migrants’ home can show the paradoxical relationship between home and movement. The participants show diversity in their ideas and practices related to home, as discussed in Chapter 7. In terms of concepts of home, some women think of home as a dwelling with their own things for the everyday routine, some link home to origin, and some identify home as settling down. Also, the women reveal some different patterns in their feelings and practices about their own homes. Some women say their home is in transition; some miss their home; and some endlessly try to achieve a homemaking project.

Although their home concepts and practices are different, the women, in common, do not think that their project of homemaking has finished and they do not think their home is moved completely from Korea to the UK. If an ideal home, which they imagined, needs a certain condition of comfort and being settled down, including achievement in career/education, the actual procedure of homemaking involves many barriers, such as isolation, uncertain career, and lack of intimacy. The barriers make their homemaking an ongoing project, which is hard to complete.

Making a home in the host country is not only about emotion and imagination. It entails material objects at both the individual and collective level (Fortier 2000). As seen in Korean communities in New Malden, their consumption of goods, housing, and neighbourhood show their cultural identity as migrants. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that these expressions of their cultural identity are just keeping their style of country of origin or totally changing their style to adapt to the local neighbourhood. The trends of consumption and housing in New Malden Korean residents depend on what they desired in Korea (e.g., a garden and commercial goods), and their use of Korean stuffs (e.g., Korean-brand gadgets and Korean food) shows their achievement of financial stability in the UK to some extent. Their

consumption habits as well as leisure came not only from their ethnicity but also their taste, which is related to their class background, as evident in a middleclass family purchasing designer-brand goods and playing golf.

Another point to be noted in understanding migrants' "home" is transnationality. Basically, various kinds of transnational ties, such as political action, visits, keeping in touch with families, following up on trends in their jobs, and, of course, transporting materials including money are essential for their lives in the host country. These activities show both material and emotional dimensions of transnationalism, and these practices tend to be based on their feelings of obligation, rights and strategy for their future. Apart from these practices, rethinking both home and host societies are also found in these women's stories. Remembering their lives in the home country is a part of homemaking in the host society. In the meantime, observation of the host country is required in order to make a home in the new setting. As for the participants' thoughts on the UK and Korea, they are very critical and reflective. They realise what Korean society missed (e.g., the rights of the minority) and take living in a foreign country as an opportunity to reflect on their home. Also, through fantasy-broken experiences, they show critical attitudes toward Britain and the Western (e.g., racism).

Finally, a feature of the migrants' home drawn from this study is the anxiety of having no home. Because geographical mobility is not equal for everyone and different types of contemporary migrants show this inequality (Bauman 1998), it can be assumed that some can make multiple homes across the world and some cannot have a proper home. Unlike their expectation of having more than one home or alternative homes outside Korea, migrants also have the possibility of "no home anywhere." While they widen the boundary of possible residence, this open opportunity for the future coincides with the anxiety of no home, because a job is not perfectly guaranteed in Korea or anywhere else. This shows the feature of home for those who have economic and educational resources to some extent but not enough to be transnational elites.

In fact, a migrant's specific purpose of migration, economic status, marital status, and historical background of the host and home countries altogether influence homemaking. What makes it possible initially for the participants to invest in movement to the UK is their parents' or their own economic resources. Independent migration as a single woman, along with social and economic resources, allows them

somehow to keep their distance from Korean networks rather than rely on them desperately. The purpose of migration for education and training influences these women's transnational ties; for example, the form of remittance is different from other migrants. As seen in Korean migrants' mindset of being "consumers in the UK," migration of the emerging East Asian middle class would contest public presumptions of migrants as hard-working people coming to earn money. From this point, we can find the need to look at details of different migrant groups' backgrounds in order to understand a specific group of migrants in the extremely wide range of contemporary migration forms, as mentioned in the introductory chapter.

I conclude with the implication of taking account of home in sociological research. Indeed, speaking about home can be a difficult task for several reasons. For some people, asking about someone's home does not seem to be proper because it sounds nationalist and could be an attempt to emphasise one's origin. For others, referring to home is outdated because of the trend of globalisation. Some may ask: if the meaning of home has shifted and the conventional definition of home is not valid any longer, why still use the term? My answer is that, despite the ambiguity of home, people still seek the values attached to home, such as security, comfort, and intimacy, which many participants of this study say that they miss. In light of increasing mobility and instability, people seek to feel a sense of home in the turbulent world, related to their local and residential places (Savage et al. 2005). Moreover, the reasons why people are not satisfied with their social circumstances and find it hard to make a home are deeply related to political issues. Many aspects of home, as hooks (1990) and Mohanty (2003) hinted (see Chapter 2), contain political matters such as gender and racism, for example. Given that these are significant social issues related to inequality, "home" is a useful lens to see these matters. Through looking at different ways of making home and different types of contemporary migration, we can find different powers in transnational fields, different types of mobility, and settlement, instead of a rosy fantasy of people's mobility.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Participants in Interviews

No	Name*	Age **	Marital Status	Occupation	Residential Status	Length of Stay**	Education
I-1	Su-Min	27	S	Student (language) (Part-time work)	Student visa	14 months	BA
I-2	Jee-Young	21	S	Student (language) (Part-time work)	Student visa	7 months	UG course interruption
I-3	Mee-Ran	26	S	Hairdresser	Student visa	3 years 6 months	College – interruption
I-4	Min-Ju	33	S	Part-time Admin staff	Student visa	3 years 5 months	BA
I-5	Ha-Jung	21	S	Student (language)	Student visa	9 months	UG course interruption
I-6	So-Ra	25	S	Student (UG)	Student visa	13 months	BA
I-7	Hae-Rim	25	S	Trainee lawyer (British Law firm)	Denizen	11 years	Master
I-8	Hyo-Jin	33	M(1) ***	Hairdresser	Work permit	4 years	BA
I-9	Seo-Yeon	33	M(2)	Office worker (Korean company)	Work permit	8 years	High- school
I-10	Na-Ra	35	M	Manager (British institute)	Dependent visa	7 years	Master

I-11	Jee-Won	29	M	Office worker (Korean company)	Dependent visa	13 months	Master
I-12	Ja-Yoon	27	M	Office worker (British company)	Dependent visa	4 years	Diploma
I-13	Yu-Jung	32	M(1)	House-wife	Dependent visa	9 months	BA
I-14	Bo-Ram	27	M	Student (language)	Dependent visa	7 months	BA
I-15	Hee-Sun	24	S	Student (PG)	Student visa	6 + 16 months ****	Master
I-16	Jae-Eun	29	S	Office worker (Korean company)	Work permit	5 years 6 months	Master
I-17	Jee-Soo	24	S	Student (collage)	Student visa	14 months	BA
I-18	Eun-Sook	28	S	Student (pre-master)	Student visa	1 year 6 months + 3 months	BA
I-19	Mee-Hwa	27	S	Part-time work (Korean restaurant)	Student visa	1 year 7 months	BA
I-20	Soo-Hee	25	S	Preparing Postgraduate course	Tourist visa	14 months + 2 months	BA
I-21	Yun-Jee	25	M	Designer (British company)	Residence Permit	5 years	BA

\*All of the participants' names are pseudonyms.

\*\* In this table, age and length of stay are at the time of the first interview.

\*\*\* The number in brackets ( ) is the number of children.

\*\*\*\* Some interviewees had returned and stayed for a while in Korea after their first stay in the UK. To calculate the total amount of time spent living in the UK, I added the length of the first stay to the length of the second stay.

## Appendix 2: Members of the Single's Community in C Korean Church

No.	Name	Age	Marital Status	Occupation	Residential Status	Length of Stay	Education
P-1	Yoon-Ja	Mid 40s	S	Hairdresser (owner of a beauty-salon)	Denizen	8 years	College
P-2	Ok-Ju	42	S	Student (college)	n/a	n/a	BA
P-3	Su-Mee	34	M*	Student (language)	Student visa	2 months	n/a
P-4	Jin-Ju	31	S	Nurse	Work permit	4 years	BA

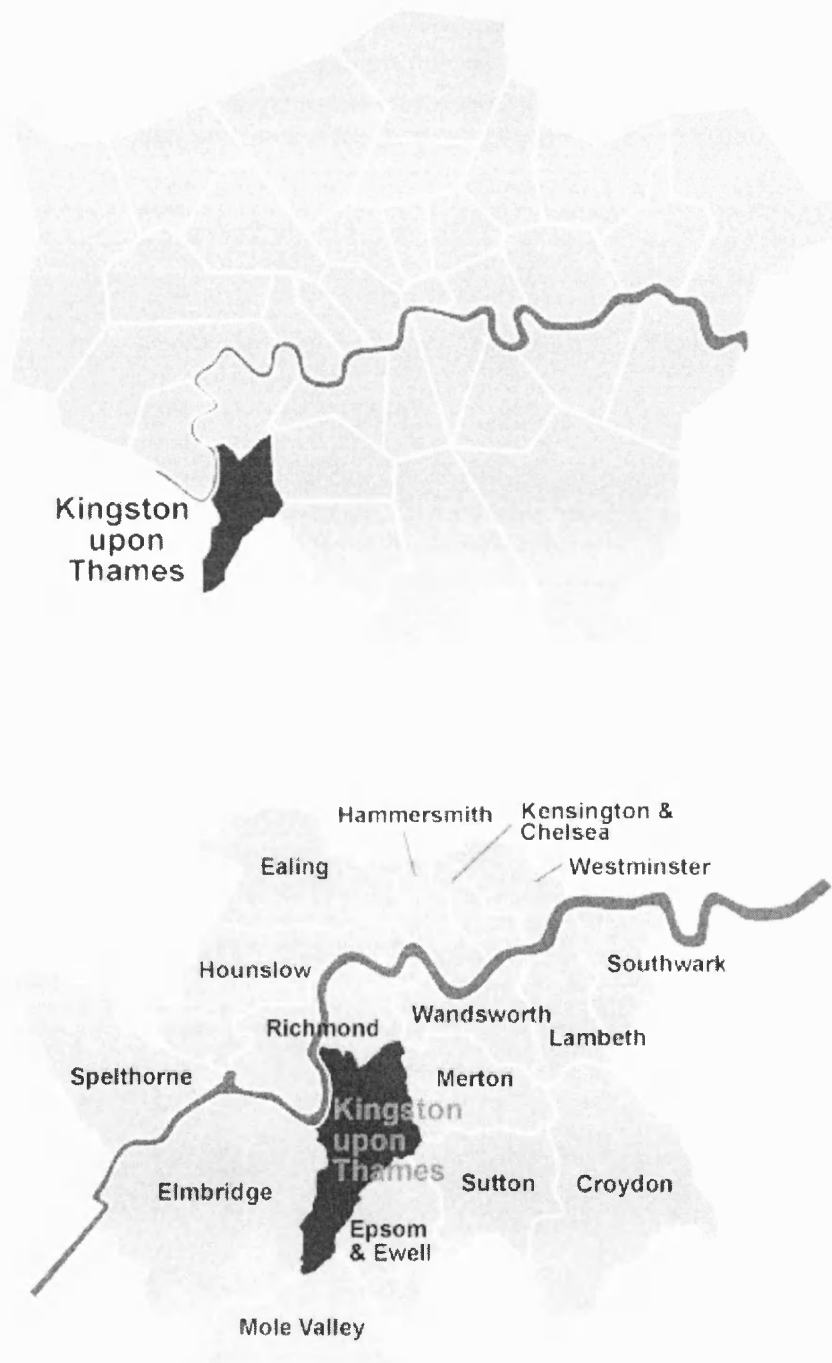
\* Su-Mee joined the singles group because her husband had not yet immigrated to the UK.

### **Appendix 3: The List of Questions for Individual Interviews**

- 1) For what reasons did you decide to go abroad?
- 2) Can you tell me your stories before you came to the UK?
- 3) How was your school life?
- 4) How did you choose your major subject / job?
- 5) How did your family react when you said you wanted to go to the UK?
- 6) What image of the UK did you have before migration?
- 7) What is your school / working place here like?
- 8) What do you usually eat and dress in?
- 9) What do you usually do in leisure time?
- 10) How do you keep in touch with your family and friends in Korea?
- 11) How often do you visit Korea and what do you usually do there?
- 12) Who is your close person here?
- 13) Do you have any relations with Korean communities in the UK?
- 14) What do you like in the UK?
- 15) What do you dislike in the UK?
- 16) Where is your home do you think?
- 17) What is your short term / long term future plan?

## Appendix 4: New Malden

Location of New Malden Area





Downloaded from <http://www.kingston.gov.uk/index.htm>



Downloaded from <http://www.streetmap.co.uk>

The Scene of New Malden Neighbourhood (New Malden High Street)



# A Korean Grocer's Shop and the Window of a Korean Travel Agency



## **Appendix 5: DANO, Korean Sparkling Summer Festival**

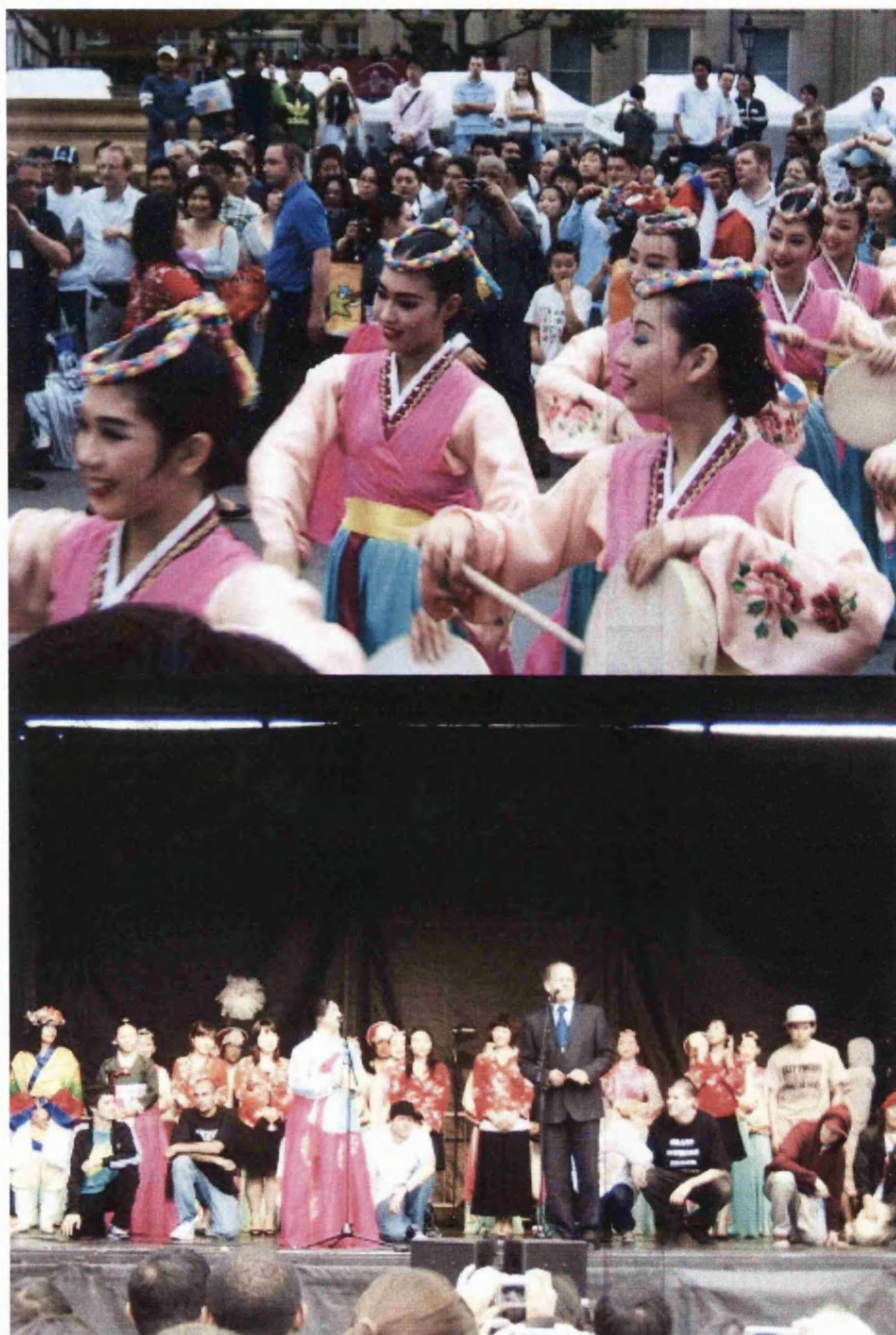
17, June, 2007 (12pm till 6pm), Trafalgar Square

Produced by KCPA (Korean Cultural Promotion Agency) Organized by GLA, The Embassy of Republic of Korea, Korean Cultural Centre, and Korean National Office of Tourism

Programme List (scheduled but slightly changed)

12:00~	Site Open
12:30~13:00	The Grand Parade
13:00~13:30	Opening Ceremony & Launching event of Korea Sparkling
13:30~13:50	Taekwondo (Korean martial art)
13:50~14:10	UK vs. Korean B-Boys Battle
14:10~14:25	SamulNori (Korean traditional music)
14:25~14:40	Minyo (Korean traditional music)
14:40~14:50	Janggochum (Korean traditional dance)
14:50~15:00	Lion Mask Dance (Korean traditional dance)
15:00~15:10	Fan dance (Korean traditional dance)
15:10~15:40	The Grand Parade
15:40~16:00	The UK and Korean B-Boys - Free Style
16:00~16:10	Lion Mask Dance (traditional Korean dance)
16:10~16:20	Sword Dance (traditional Korean dance)
16:20~16:40	Traditional Korean Wind Ensemble (traditional Korean music)
16:40~17:00	Pungmul Daejanchi (Korean traditional music & dance)
18:00	Event Ends

Pictures of the festival



Downloaded from the Euro Journal (eknews.net)

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연구: '아시아' 지역을 홀로 여행하는 20-30 대 여성들의 경험을 중심으로 *The Research on Korean Woman Backpackers' Identity Shift: Focused on Women in 20s-30s Travelling Asia* Paper presented at the Korean Association of Women's Studies Spring Conference Proceedings, Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul.

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