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**Unpacking the Gendered Process of  
International Migration:  
The Case of Migrant Women in South Korea**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

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Finally, I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my loving father.

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is the result of my own individual research. I have followed the Guide to Examinations for Higher Degrees by Research, established by the Graduate School at the University of Warwick. I confirm that the thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the ‘gendered’ process of international migration in Asia. It proposes that gender is one of the principal analytical factors for theoretical conceptualisation in the study of international migration. The study examines the case of Korea, which has been transformed into one of the major labour receiving countries in Asia since the early 1990s, but which has received less attention in the English literature on migration.

The aim of the study is to examine the process of international migration in the historical, social and political contexts of Korea, by way of the integration of theoretical analyses with a critical gendered lens. A theoretical framework for this study is based on the observation that theorising the multifaceted process of international migration – which takes place with various interrelated variables – requires multidisciplinary and multidimensional approaches. The study therefore analyses the social formation of the ‘gendered’ process of international migration by looking closely at the three different migratory stages of women migrants: the migratory journey; employment; and settlement in the country of destination. The primary empirical data used in the study were collected during a six-month period of field research – between April and September 2005. Qualitative data were derived from in-depth interviews with 31 migrant women, as well as employers, government officials and NGO workers.

Based on a feminist standpoint of the outsider-within, the study locates the lives of migrant women from the margin to centre of the analysis. The empirical study shows that migrant women are ‘outsiders’ who exist ‘within’ the very core of international migration system in which they are, nevertheless, marginalised and silenced. The study suggests that the ostensibly gender-neutral process of migration is gender specific, resulting in different migration experiences between women and men. Gendered and racialised social relationships of power are pervasive in the structure of international migration and state institutions. At the same time, the differently ‘sedimented’ practices of women and men – who strategically draw on institutional rules and resources to facilitate migration – become institutionalised in a gendered way. This, in turn, influences the gendered process of international migration that is reproduced and transformed over time.

## ABBREVIATIONS

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| CAQDAS | Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis           |
| CIS    | Commonwealth of Independent States                    |
| EFWA   | Employment of Foreign Workers Act                     |
| EOI    | Export-oriented Industrialisation                     |
| EPS    | Employment Permit System                              |
| EPZ    | Export Processing Zone                                |
| FDI    | Foreign Direct Investment                             |
| FEZ    | Free Economic Zone                                    |
| FKI    | Federation of Korean Industries                       |
| GNP    | Gross Domestic Product                                |
| GSP    | General System of Preference                          |
| HCI    | Heavy and Chemical Industry                           |
| IDL    | International Division of Labour                      |
| IMF    | International Monetary Fund                           |
| IT     | Information Technology                                |
| ITTP   | Industrial and Technical Training Programme           |
| JCMK   | Joint Committee for Migrant Workers in Korea          |
| JITCO  | Japan International Training Cooperation Organisation |
| KACES  | Korean Arts and Culture Education Service             |
| KFSB   | Korea Federation of Small Businesses                  |
| KITCO  | Korea International Training Cooperation Corps        |
| KLI    | Korea Labour Institute                                |
| KOIS   | Korean Overseas Information Service                   |
| MNC    | Multinational Corporation                             |
| MOGEF  | Ministry of Gender Equality and Family                |
| MOU    | Memorandum of Understanding                           |
| NAFTA  | North American Free Trade Agreement                   |
| NEP    | New Economy Policy                                    |
| NGO    | Non-Governmental Organisation                         |
| NIC    | Newly Industrialising Country                         |

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| NIDL  | New International Division of Labour                   |
| OECD  | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OFID  | Overseas Foreign Direct Investment                     |
| OPEC  | Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries          |
| POEA  | The Philippines Overseas Employment Agency             |
| PSPC  | Presidential <i>Segehwa</i> Promotion Committee        |
| R&D   | Research and Development                               |
| TNC   | Transnational Corporation                              |
| WATP  | Working After Training Programme                       |
| WMHRC | Women Migrants Human Rights Centre                     |

## A NOTE ON KOREAN NAMES

The official Korean language romanisation system is used throughout this thesis, with a number of exceptions for well-known place names (e.g. Seoul and Pusan) and personal names (e.g. Park Jung Hee, Kim Young Sam and Park No-Hae), which the family name is followed by the given name without a comma. In order to avoid the confusion, common Korean family names (e.g. Kim and Park) are indicated with initials.

## Introduction

*Seok-Bok* came to South Korea (hereafter Korea) in 1997, a year before the Financial Crisis hit the Korean economy. She is 61 years old and working as a live-in domestic worker for a middle-class Korean family in Seoul. When I first met her one Sunday morning in the summer of 2005, she was looking thin and worn out. She started telling me her story with a sigh, “I have lost ten kilograms within four months, since I started working for this family. I have to take care of a three-month-old baby while doing housework. I am so stressed because the mother of the baby is so demanding.” *Seok-Bok* was born in China to Korean parents who migrated from Japanese occupied Korea to Manchuria in the late 1930s and eventually settled in a small village in China. She and her husband were poor farmers in China. Leaving their newly wedded son and daughter-in-law behind, they decided to come to Korea to have a better life, just like Korean-Chinese neighbours in their village who returned from Korea with their own success stories. However, after working in Korea for ten months her husband was diagnosed with liver cancer and had to return home. Six month later, her husband died, but she could not be at his funeral. Being undocumented, *Seok-Bok* could not take the risk of losing a chance to come back to Korea once she left for China. With her husband gone, she now has to pay off her and her husband’s debts to the broker who helped them to enter Korea. She would have to work three more years in Korea to clear the debt.

*Seok-Bok* is one of the world’s 175 million people who reside outside the country of their birth (United Nations, 2002) and one of over half a million migrant workers in Korea. Castles and Miller (2003:1) identify international migration as one



of the defining features of the post-Cold War era, which constitutes a 'key dynamic within globalisation'. International migration has emerged as a salient global issue that reconfigures socio-economic, political and cultural forms in every corner of the world. The pattern of international migration is continuously taking on new forms. One of the characteristics of today's international migration is the diversity of destinations, origins and types of movements. Most countries are no longer categorised as either destinations or origins, but rather as a combination of the two. This tendency is most pronounced in Asia where the rapid economic development in East Asian countries since the 1970s has stimulated substantial international migration. While there are continuous flows of people from Asia to North America, Europe and Australia, the interregional movement of people is also vigorous within Asia.

While the migratory movement of people varies between countries with specific individual features, there are three prominent general trends of international migration in Asia. First, temporary migration now forms a large component of international migration in Asia. For example, ten times as many Filipino migrants migrate to other Asian countries as move to North America: 582,584 Filipinos migrated to Asian countries as temporary migrants in 2001, whereas only 51,308 migrated to the United States and Canada as permanent immigrants (Oishi, 2005). Many Asian countries adopt temporary migration schemes, which involve the rigid control of low-skilled and manual workers, the prohibition of the settlement of migrant workers and their families. The strict regulatory systems of many Asian states are designed to prevent cultural and social changes that might be brought by the settlement of migrant workers.

Second, international migration in Asia has been increasingly

institutionalised. The role played by migration industries is significant in Asia, and migrant workers tend to rely heavily on recruitment agencies organised by individual agents and public and private brokers. To a large extent, the restrictive immigration control of many labour-receiving countries has accelerated the growth of such intermediaries, which accumulate profits from the migration business by providing legal and clandestine channels for migrant workers.

Third, the feminisation of migration is particularly salient in Asia. The feminisation of migration is not a new trend, but the number of migrant women has already increased significantly since the late 1970s. Asia has become both a major destination for female labour migration and a source of labour to other parts of the world (Oishi, 2005). 'Feminisation' refers not only to the increase in the number of women migrant workers, but also to the social construction of the workers and the types of their jobs. Most women migrant workers are concentrated in 'typical female jobs', such as domestic workers, assembly-line workers in manufacturing factories, restaurant and hotel staff, cleaners and 'entertainers' (a euphemism for sex workers). Also, there has been a significant increase of cross-border marriage migrants who are mostly women from developing countries in Asia. Although cross-border marriage migration of women constitutes a significant part of the feminisation of migration in Asia, it has received less attention apart from the partial studies of 'war brides' (Glenn, 1986; C. B-L. Kim, 1977) or 'mail-order brides' (Cahill, 1990; Chuah, *et al*, 1987; Cooke, 1986; del Rosario, 1994). Despite the smaller scale of movement of marriage migrants in comparison with that of temporary labour migrants, it is, however, important to consider the case of cross-border marriage migration in migration studies. The cross-border marriage migration of Asian women, which has led to permanent settlement mostly in the country of the migrant's husband, has

social, economic, political and cultural implications, all of which illustrate the intertwined relationships of marriage, migration, labour and citizenship (Piper and Roces, 2003; Constable, 2005).

A burgeoning literature has explored the recent phenomenon of international migration in Asia. In particular, more scholars have begun to focus their research on the international migration of Asian women. For example, Gamburd (2000) examines the impact of female migration on communities and families left behind in Sri Lanka. Oishi (2005) did comparative research on cross-national migration patterns and examined the causal mechanisms of female migration in Asia. Others focus on migrant domestic workers, including Constable's (1997) ethnographic accounts of Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong, Parrenas' (2001) comparative research on Filipina domestic workers in Los Angeles and Rome, Huang, Yeoh and Rahman's (2005) edited collection of research on the phenomenon of female domestic workers in Asia and Lan's (2006) study of the relationship between Filipina and Indonesian migrant domestic workers and their Taiwanese employers. All of these studies have provided rich findings and advanced our understanding of the experiences of migrant women and the dynamic process of the feminisation of international migration. Nonetheless, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis of migrant women and a lack of research providing dynamic insight into the multiple stages of the migratory process, including the motives or causes, migratory channels, the nature of employment in the labour market and settlement in the country of destination. Moreover, despite its significant location as one of prime destinations of migration in Asia, the study of migrant workers – needless to say, women migrant workers – in Korea is largely absent in scholarly work. To address these shortages, this research is designed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the interactive process of

international migration through a *gendered* lens focusing on the case study of migrant women in Korea.

## **I. The Case Study: Migrant Women in Korea**

A case study of Korea would provide an interesting, new empirical account of the process of international migration. Since the mid-1980s, Korea – once a major labour sending country – has become one of the major labour receiving countries in East Asia. From the 1960s to the 1980s nearly two million Korean workers were sent to Europe and the Middle East, mostly as miners and nurses to West Germany and as construction workers to the Middle East. However, the situation has been reversed since the 1990s. Having grown into one of the newly industrialising countries (NICs) in Asia with relatively high wages and a shortage of unskilled manual workers in small- and medium-sized firms, Korea has become a prime destination for migrant workers from developing countries in the region.

Korea insists on defining itself as a non-immigrant (*sojourn*) country. Legal permission for the permanent settlement of migrant workers does not exist in Korea. The only way to attain formal citizenship is through naturalisation. However, like other developed countries, Korea has been facing the ‘3-D syndrome’ since the late 1980s. As 3-D jobs – the aversion to difficult, dangerous and dirty jobs – in Korea are avoided by native workers, these jobs are predominantly taken by migrant workers. These migrant workers are filling up the gap in the Korean labour market, maintaining the country’s economic development. The influx of migrant workers presents a new challenge for the Korean nation considered as ‘monocultural and homogenous’ which has a fear of the cultural and social changes that might be

brought by migrants. The contradiction between the demands of economic rationality and an exclusive nationalistic ideology determines the characteristic feature of current policies of the Korean state toward migrant workers from poorer countries. The Korean government has adopted a temporary migration scheme, which rigidly controls the flow of low-skilled migrant workers. One of the distinctive examples of these regulatory measures is the 'industrial trainee scheme' for foreign unskilled workers who, being legally recognised as 'trainees' and not 'workers', end up working for low wages with no labour protection. Under these circumstances, Korea has been able to reduce possible economic and social costs and, at the same time, enjoy the benefits of the migrant labour force.

With the increasing number of migrant workers, a series of human rights violations emerges as one of the major social and political problems in Korea. In particular, gender related issues become evident as women migrant workers suffer various forms of sexual and racial discrimination due to their vulnerable positions as being migrant – often undocumented – workers from poorer countries. Although this is a general problem which can also be found in other labour receiving countries, migrant women in Korea are far more disadvantaged because of the strong Confucian, patriarchal culture, which is prevalent in Korean society and embedded in every aspect of state policies. Women migrant workers in Korea are concentrated in the archetypical female occupations, such as labour-intensive factory workers, restaurant staff, hotel cleaners, domestic/care workers and 'entertainers'. These occupations were traditionally reserved for Korean women, but are now increasingly filled by migrant women from developing countries in Asia, such as China, the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia.

This study primarily focuses on the case of migrant women in Korea, which

is a topic that has been largely overlooked by migration studies. One of the distinctive characteristics of the Korean case is that, unlike many other Asian countries, the feminisation of migration is less obvious in terms of the sheer number of women migrant workers. Women migrant worker constitute only one third of the total migrant workers in the Korean labour market. This could be one of the reasons why despite a growing interest in the issue of the human rights of migrant workers in Korea and inconsistent government policies toward them, the subject of *women* migrant workers has been largely neglected by Korean researchers and no comprehensive study of migrant workers in Korea with a gender sensitive approach is available. However, regardless of numbers, women migrant workers play crucial economic and social roles within Korean society. This study is therefore intended to challenge the absence of the gender perspective in the study of migrant workers in Korea. It does this by arguing that a case study of migrant women in Korea can show the complex dynamics of the process of international migration in Asia. The research is original in this respect, and challenges the existing theoretical and sociological discussion concerning the process of international migration in migration studies.

## **II. Aims of the Study and Research Questions**

This study proposes that gender is one of the principal analytical factors for theoretical conceptualisation in the study of international migration and, to a large extent, an important variable for the study of social and economic development in the era of globalisation. The aim of the study is to examine the process of international migration in the historical, social and political contexts of Korea, by way of the integration of theoretical analyses with a critical gendered lens. It aims to analyse the

social formation of the 'gendered' process of migration by looking closely at the three different migratory stages of female migrants: the migratory journey, employment and settlement. Taking empirical account of migrant women in Korea, the study attempts to show that gendered and racialised social relationships of power are pervasive in state policies and institutions. It also aims to show that, through the process of international migration, the sexual division of labour has been extended at a transnational level and this, in turn, has reinforced a gendered global labour market.

The research will explore answers to the following questions:

- i. Can existing theories explain the process and complexity of international migration and its multi-dimensional impacts on political, social, economic and cultural aspects?
- ii. How can we adopt a more comprehensive and balanced approach toward the study of the international movement of people and the socio-economic development process? How is gender implicated in this?
- iii. How can we produce a gender sensitive approach to the explanation of international migration? How do we produce the knowledge that legitimates women as 'knowers'?
- iv. What are the main factors that transformed Korea from a labour-sending into a labour-receiving country?
- v. What pushes women to move to Korea? How do the migratory journeys of women differ from those of men?
- vi. In what forms of labour are women migrant workers engaged in the Korean labour market? In what ways is the sexual division of labour extended from the national to the transnational level through international

migration?

- vii. Why are migrant women marginalised and rendered invisible in the dominant society? How are gender, race and class socially constructed and embedded in the institutional structure in Korea?
- viii. In what way is the gendered process of international labour migration moulded from the interactions between the economic, social and political aspects?

### **III. Structure of the Study**

**Chapter 1** begins with the question of whether there could be an overarching theory that encompasses the complexities of multifaceted migration. This chapter offers a concise account and critical evaluation of the dominant theories of migration. I attempt to reassess the conceptual framework through a gendered lens and to postulate that a gender sensitive approach is important for a comprehensive approach to theoretical conceptualisation in the field of international migration. This chapter includes a critical review of recent literature on women and migration, and explores how to advance the analysis of international migration from a gender sensitive approach. The chapter also introduces the theoretical approach used in the study and provides a brief overview of how the process of international migration will be analysed throughout the study.

**Chapter 2** provides the historical background to the context of this study. It explores multiple interlocking factors that transformed Korea from a labour sending country into one of the main labour receiving countries in Asia. This chapter starts by examining the historical background to the emigration of Korean workers during the



period between the 1910s and the 1980s. It then turns to an examination of three interlocking factors that have led to the influx of migrant workers to Korea: (1) the process of Korea's economic development, including the state-led economic development during the period between the 1960s and the 1980s and the policy of economic liberalisation in the 1990s that intensified the globalisation of capital; (2) changes in Korea's international relations in the post-Cold War era; and (3) cultural and social factors that have affected the increased movement of people from certain Asian countries to Korea.

**Chapter 3** discusses the methodology used in this study explaining the process by which the fieldwork data was collected and interpreted. Looking at both epistemological issues and research methods, this chapter introduces not only the ways in which the empirical study was designed and carried out, but also the process and the principle by which research questions were approached. Adopting feminist epistemology as an alternative theory of knowledge for this research, this chapter attempts to systematise as well as expand existing approaches to the migration of women which tend to merely 'add women, mix and stir' within orthodox theoretical frameworks of international migration.

Based on the epistemological and methodological position established in Chapter 3, the subsequent chapters focus on the empirical study of migrant women in Korea, beginning with an exploration of women's decisions on migration and their migratory journeys to Korea in **Chapter 4**. Chapter 4 examines in what ways the structural changes in the international migration system and the current system of the control of labour migrants in Korea have influenced individual decisions and strategies to pursue international migration. Analysing the empirical data of the migratory journeys of migrant women, this chapter suggests that while there are

evident structural determinations, a potential migrant acts strategically to further her interests by exploiting available resources within the increasingly institutionalised migration system in Asia.

**Chapters 5 and 6** explore in what ways women migrant workers are engaged in the labour market with certain types of occupations available for them once they entered Korea. These two chapters attempt to show that the feminisation of labour migration has a significant implication for the sexual division of labour in both the private and public spheres, which is further extended to the transnational level. **Chapter 5** focuses on changes in production and employment patterns in Korea, which have increased the demand for a female migrant workforce in certain sectors of the economy and generated continuing flows of migrant workers. Based on an analysis of empirical data from the manufacturing and service industries in which women migrant workers are heavily concentrated, this chapter discusses the gendered and racialised division of labour in the Korean labour market. Focusing on reproductive labour, **Chapter 6** examines the ways in which the traditional sexual division of labour in the private sphere has been extended to the transnational level through the commodification of reproductive work increasingly done by migrant care and domestic workers. This chapter is based on the argument that the sexual division of labour cannot be fully understood without considering the sexual division of reproductive labour in the private sphere, since the sexual division of social reproductive labour interacts with and reinforces the sexual division in the labour market. These two chapters highlight gender relations and racial discrimination in the labour market and anomalous state policies, which draw attention to the unlawful treatment of women migrant workers due to their ‘multiple vulnerability’ as women, migrants and undocumented workers.

**Chapter 7** examines how gender, race and class are socially constructed and embedded in the institutional structure, which results in different experiences for different groups of migrant women. This chapter begins with the question why despite the vital economic and social roles of migrant women in the country of destination, migrant women are marginalised and rendered invisible in the narratives of their multifaceted experiences as women, migrants and workers. It proposes that the different experiences of migrant women can be sufficiently explained not simply by arguing the gendered structure of society, but also by considering interconnections of racialisation, nationalism, class and gender. This chapter attempts to apply an integrated framework on the discussion of gender, race and class to the analysis of the racialisation of migrant workers and the issues of citizenship of (im)migrant women in the specific context of Korea.

The **conclusion** returns to the initial aim of this study and draws together the issues and findings, which were developed in previous chapters. It also suggests the broader implication of the study for further research.

# Chapter 1

## Literature Review: Critique of Migration Theories

### Introduction

As the process of migration affects every dimension of social existence and develops its own complex dynamics, research on migration is ‘intrinsically interdisciplinary’ (Castles and Miller, 2003:21). Each social scientific discipline explains different aspects of the movement of people with a range of approaches based on different theories and methods. Nevertheless, Arango (2000:283) critically argues that ‘a number of these explanations were not originally conceived to explain migration, but rather born to explain other facets of human behaviour and then imported and adapted for the explanation of migration’ and ‘the overall balance sheet of theoretical contributions still mixes lights and shadows’. It is, however, highly doubtful whether there could be an overarching theory that encompasses the complexities of migration. After all, as Arango (2000:295) observes, ‘migration is hard to define, difficult to measure, multifaceted and multiform, and resistant to theory-building’.

This chapter presents a succinct account and critical evaluation of the main theories of migration and introduces the theoretical approach of this study. One of the prominent features of international migration has been the large number of women on the move. In particular, ‘the feminisation of migration’ is most pronounced in Asia. ‘Feminisation’ refers not only to the increase of the number of women migrant workers, but also to the social construction of the workers and their jobs in the local and global economy. Witnessing the continuing rise of the migration of women, there

has been a gendered intervention of feminist scholars in migration studies. Despite significant contributions from feminist scholars in migration studies, much of the gendered discussion still remains within the framework of gender-blind theories of international migration. A gender-sensitive approach needs to do more than just add 'women' migrants to the explanation of causes and trends of international migration. Nevertheless, it does not mean simply rejecting the theoretical legacy of existing theories of international migration. In this study, I attempt to reassess the conceptual framework through a gendered lens and to combine existing migration theories with a gender-sensitive account to explain how gender is implicated in the process and structures of international migration.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section examines one of the oldest theories of migration, the neo-classical economic approach. It looks at how the push-pull, equilibrium and cost-benefit analyses offered by this theory explain the movement of people, and evaluates its contributions and limitations. Following this, the second section looks at the structural approach, which is rooted in Marxist political economy and has developed a macro account of international migration since the early 1970s. The third section examines integrative theories of migration, which emerged in the late 1980s. Challenging the orthodox frameworks of agency and structure, researchers have increasingly called for an integrated approach, which allows for the explanation of migration at both the micro and macro levels. The fourth section postulates that a gender sensitive approach is important for a comprehensive approach to theoretical conceptualisation in the field of international migration. It critically reviews recent literature on women and migration and explores how to advance the analysis of international migration from a gender sensitive approach. In the concluding section, the theoretical approach used in this

study is discussed. This section includes a brief overview of how the process of international migration is analysed in historical, social and political contexts, and how this process should be scrutinised by means of a better integration of theoretical analyses with a critical gendered lens.

## **I. The Neo-classical Economic Approach**

The neo-classical economic approach is probably the oldest and most well-known approach, although it is also the most criticised theory of international migration. This approach is based on the assumption of ‘methodological individualism’ (Goss and Lindquist, 1995:320) and understands the international movement of labour as a result of rational individual decisions to maximise returns on their labour. The following three analyses – push-pull, equilibrium and cost-benefit accounts – share this basic standpoint in theorising labour migration.

### *Push-Pull Analysis*

Understanding the pattern of movements of labour as a result of aggregate individual decisions of behaviour, the push-pull analysis attempts to develop a ‘general framework’ for explaining the labour migration process. Ravenstein’s laws of migration (Ravenstein, 1885; 1889), which were developed from the 1881 British census data on the birthplaces of informants, provide starting-points for the push-pull analysis. In Ravenstein’s laws of migration the size of population and distance are essential factors in shaping the pattern of movements of labour. For Ravenstein, most migrants travel short distances and those who travel long distances tend to go to big

cities, which are centres of commerce and industry. Migration takes place by stages through an absorption process. There are 'currents of migration' in which people in the rural area tend to move to nearby towns and eventually towards rapidly growing cities. In this case, the decline of the rural population is soon compensated by migrants streaming from further rural areas. Although Ravenstein's laws of migration take into account a number of non-economic factors motivating currents of migration, such as oppressive laws, a burden of taxation, bad climate, or movements under compulsion (e.g. slave trade), it clearly emphasises that the economic motive to 'better' themselves in material respects is predominant in factors influencing individual decisions to migrate (Todaro, 1976).

Based on Ravenstein's laws of migration, Lee (1966) attempts to develop a general framework for analysing migration, which includes the development of 'streams' and 'counter-streams'. Taking into account destinations and the volume of migration, Lee examines the efficiency of migration and introduces a number of factors which influence a degree of the efficiency and the individual decision to migrate: origin and destination plus and minus factors<sup>1</sup>; intervening obstacles; and personal factors. For Lee, streams and counter-streams coexist in the migration process – i.e. there will be migrants who return to their origin areas when they find that their initial perceptions do not accord with reality in the destination area or fail to achieve their objectives of movement. Accordingly, the volume of the 'net' stream (streams minus counter-streams) is more directly related to minus factors at origin (origin 'push' factors) than to destination 'pull' factors.

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<sup>1</sup> As people do not possess sufficient knowledge of the precise outcome of potential destination pluses and minuses, 'perceptions' of destination pluses and minuses, uncertainty, expectations and risks are important elements in the migration process. In this case, the existence and nature of personal, family or ethnic 'contracts' in destination areas can significantly influence migrant perceptions (Todaro, 1976).

Lee also emphasizes that migration is selective and migrants are either 'positively' or 'negatively' selected. Lee's 'positive-negative' selectivity of migration is explained with individual decisions based on 'pull factors' at destination and 'push factors' at origin. Migrants responding to plus factors at destination tend to be 'positively' selected, i.e. they are more educated, skilled and ambitious than the general origin population and the potential destination is socially, economically, or politically more lucrative. On the other hand, migrants responding to push factors at origin tend to be 'negatively' selected. For example, unskilled-rural peasants are driven off their lands by economic hardship/unemployment or people flee from political/religious persecution.

### *Equilibrium Analysis*

Like the push-pull analysis, the equilibrium analysis of the neo-classical approach also understands that rational individual decisions result in international labour migrations and highlights that international migration, just like internal migration, is caused by differences in wage rates between countries (Borjas, 1989; Lewis, 1954; Ranis and Fei, 1961; Todaro, 1976)<sup>2</sup>.

Geographical differences in the supply of and demand for labour and the resulting differential in wages induce workers from the low-wage country to migrate

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<sup>2</sup> Massey *et al.* (1993:434) discuss a number of implicit propositions and assumptions of the macro-level analysis: i) The international migration of workers is caused by differences in wage rates between countries; ii) The elimination of wage differentials will end the movement of labour, and migration will not occur in the absence of such differentials; iii) International flows of human capital – that is, highly skilled workers – respond to differences in the rate of return to human capital, which may be different from the overall wage rate, yielding a distinct pattern of migration that may be opposite to that of unskilled workers; iv) Labour markets are the primary mechanisms by which international flows of labour are induced; other kinds of markets do not have important effects on international migration; and v) The way for governments to control migration flows is to regulate or influence labour markets in sending and/or receiving countries.



to the high-wage country. Asserting that there is an abundant supply of labour in the poor country, which could fulfil a scarce supply of labour in the affluent country, this macro-level or equilibrium analysis understands that workers are naturally and voluntarily moving towards other countries having higher wages and more job opportunities. As a result of this movement of labour, the supply of labour decreases and wages rise in the poor country, whereas the supply of labour increases and wages fall in the affluent country (Massey et al, 1993). This, in turn, leads an international wage to an *equilibrium* point. The elimination of wage differentials will eventually end the movement of labour, and migration will not take place in the absence of such differentials.

### *Cost-Benefit Analysis*

The neo-classical cost-benefit analysis asserts that individual rational actors decide to migrate as a cost-benefit calculation leads them to expect a positive monetary net return from migration (Massey *et al.*, 1993). In this analysis, potential migrant workers estimate the costs and benefits of moving to other countries where the expected discounted net returns are greatest over a certain period of time (Borjas, 1989).

The following equation is an analytical summary of the individual decision-making process (Massey *et al*, 1993:434-435; Todaro, 1976:32-33):

$$ER(0) = \int_0^{\infty} [P_1(t)P(t)_2 Y_d(t) - P_3(t)Y_o(t)]e^{-rt} dt - C(0)$$

$ER(0)$  is the expected net return to migration calculated before departure at time 0;  $t$  is time;  $P_1(t)$  is the probability of avoiding deportation from the destination country (1.0 for legal migrants and  $<1.0$  for undocumented migrants);  $P_2(t)$  is the probability of employment at the destination;  $Y_d(t)$  is earnings if employed at the place of destination;  $P_3(t)$  is the probability of employment in the country of origin;  $Y_o(t)$  is earnings if employed in the country of origin;  $r$  is the discount factor; and  $C(0)$  is the sum total of the costs of movement (Massey *et al.*, 1993:435). If the quantity  $ER(0)$  is positive for the potential destination, the rational individual migrates; if it is negative he/she stays and if it is zero, he/she is indifferent between moving and staying. In this scheme, a potential migrant goes to the country in which the expected net return to migration is greatest.

The microeconomic formulation concludes that international movement is caused by international differentials in wage and employment rates<sup>3</sup> and aggregate migration flows between countries are sums of individual moves decided on the basis of individual cost-benefit calculations (Massey *et al.*, 1993:435). ‘Human capital characteristics’ such as education, experience, training and language skills – which increase the probability of employment and earnings in the destination – will also increase the probability of international movement. The cost of movement ( $C(0)$ ) includes not only the costs of travelling, the costs of maintenance during moving and job-hunting, the material costs and efforts of learning a new language and culture, but also the psychological costs of leaving families and relatives at the origin and making new ties at the destination. As proposed by the equilibrium analysis, international movement does not occur in the absence of differences in wage and

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<sup>3</sup> Unlike the equilibrium analysis, this analysis does *not* assume full employment.

employment rates between countries<sup>4</sup>. Migration continues until expected earnings have been equalised internationally.

### *Evaluation*

In the neo-classical approach, international labour migration is viewed as a functional distribution of labour between countries, particularly from labour-abundant to labour-scarce areas. According to this approach, labour migration is, in general, considered as an economically efficient and positive movement that could fulfil the deficiency of labour in the destination and bring positive returns to migrant workers. As S. M. Lee (1996:8) observes, 'in the long-term, the functionalist paradigm predicts that migration will decline as economic equalisation occurs, assuming the inevitable modernisation and development of economies'.

The simple and 'optimistic cast' of the neo-classical approach to migration has influenced national policies on labour migrations in a number of developing countries, e.g. the Philippines. For governments in developing countries, migration has become a solution to problems such as unemployment and poverty, which could provoke political discontent. Migrant workers are expected to send remittances to their home and this can possibly alleviate internal poverty and help to service foreign debts (Phizacklea, 1998; 1999).

The emphasis here on individual decisions on migration could be a useful tool for explaining female labour migration. In a situation of poverty and unemployment women could decide to move to cities and abroad for work. Labour

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<sup>4</sup> However, the cost-benefit analysis suggests that the important factor in migration decision making process is *the expected difference of earnings*, not the absolute real-wage differential.

migration provides them with possibilities of employment and earnings to help their families. Women are no longer seen as passive actors – following their husbands as marriage partners – and become positive actors making their own choices.

Nevertheless, the neo-classical approach has been heavily criticised for its tendency towards ahistoricism. Historically, for example, there have been push factors for labour migration in Asia, but it has not always been pull factors that have provoked the movement of labour between countries. During the 1960s and the 1970s when Japan faced a deficiency of labour, there was no inflow of foreign migrant labour, not withstanding the fact that there were certainly many workers who would have been willing to migrate to Japan for jobs and economic returns for their labour<sup>5</sup> (Seol, 1999). This approach also provides a limited explanation of other types of migration, such as forced migration (notably slavery) or movements of indentured labour, which used to comprise a larger volume of international movements than free labour migration did until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The neo-classical approach is also criticised for its unrealistic assumptions/propositions, which overlook the specific political-economic contexts of each country. Looking at international labour migration in the same light as internal labour migration, this approach takes no account of structural and administrative constraints and obstacles, such as immigration policies and laws imposed by states. These institutional constraints affect not only individual migration decisions but also the legal status of migrant – especially women – workers in the destination. As it will be discussed throughout this study, the patriarchal nature of the state, which is

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<sup>5</sup> Rapidly growing Japan experienced serious labour shortages between 1965 and 1975. However, the Japanese government prevented small and medium size firms from hiring foreign migrant workers. Instead, the government encouraged them to mobilise retired people and married women into the workplace and at the same time introduced labour-saving technology. Until the 1970s, except Korean-Japanese migrants who moved to Japan during the Japanese colonial period, there had been no foreign migrant workers in Japan.

described as 'state masculinism' (Phizacklea, 2000:108), is reflected in the system of immigration legislation and the application of immigration policies, which give rise to discriminatory measures against women. Furthermore, whereas the analysis of the neo-classical approach is based on the role of individual actors, it takes no account of other intermediaries such as employment agencies, brokers and traffickers. Most migrant workers, especially women, are exposed to the manipulative activities of intermediaries with whom state authorities often connive. Migrant workers increasingly tend to fall into a huge debts trap to these intermediaries in the process of migration. More importantly, with an overemphasis on human agency 'the complexity of hierarchically structured social relations' (Phizacklea, 1998:26) and gender differentiating factors, such as the gender segregated labour market, are not seriously considered. It views individual actors as a homogenous group making rational decisions on migration without considering gender, ethnicity and class relations.

## **II. The Structural Approach**

Providing a very different macro account of international migration, the structural approach has been one of the dominant theories of migration since the early 1970s. The structural approach is rooted in Marxist political economy and views international migration as a product of the international capitalist development process (Bonacichi and Cheng, 1984; Castles and Kosack, 1973; Castells, 1975; Nikolinakos, 1975; Petras, 1981; Portes and Walton, 1981; Sassen, 1988). Most accounts of this approach are drawn from dependency or world system theories.

### *The Marxist Notion of a 'Relative Surplus Population'*

As a starting point, it is worth looking at the Marxist notion of a 'relative surplus population', which is fundamental to the main argument of the world system account. Marx (1970) argues that as capital accumulation cannot be rapid enough to absorb the whole working population, accumulation itself produces a 'relatively surplus population' – i.e. creates unemployment. A surplus population is 'a condition for the existence of the capitalist mode of production' as the 'industrial reserve army' provides a mass of available labour power and regulates the general increase of wages. A relative surplus population includes not only the unemployed who lost jobs as a result of technological and structural changes in the mode of production, but also the 'potential' group of women or young people who are not yet wage labourers.

As the capitalist mode of production extends, the 'potential' surplus population has to sell its labour power to survive. However, the surplus population reaches its limit when the whole of the reserve army of labour participates in economic activities. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the industrialised capitalist economy had already approached the limit while there were massive reserve armies of labour in other parts of the world. As a consequence, capitals in the core penetrate into the periphery by disintegrating traditional/pre-capitalist economies using the power of market to proletarianise populations in the periphery. Marx suggests the example of the 19<sup>th</sup> century England, which supplemented its deficient labour supply with peasants from Ireland and dispatched them to its colonies in the New World.

## *World System Theory*

Drawing on the Marxist notion of a relative surplus population and based on the work of Wallerstein (1974), world system theory asserts that the international movement of labour is based on the structure of the world capitalist market, which has developed and extended since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The penetration of capitalist economic relations into peripheral, non-capitalist countries causes the international movement of labour. It is argued that the present labour migration is closely related with earlier colonisation or colonising movements (Portes and Walton, 1981). This capitalist market penetration was assisted by the colonial regime that exploited natural resources and labour to serve the economic interests of colonising countries. Today, neo-colonial governments and multinational firms enter the Third World on the periphery of the world economy in search of land, raw material, cheap labour and new markets for their products. As capitalism has expanded outward from the core, a growing share of the human population has been incorporated into the world market economy. As this world capitalist market influences and controls natural resources and labour in the periphery, it creates a disposable relative surplus population and migration flows are inevitably generated, some of which move abroad (Massey *et al.*, 1993).

According to world system theory, the international mobility of labour follows the international flow of goods and capital in opposite direction (Massey *et al.*, 1993). Foreign investment from the industrialised country changes market relations and develops modern forms of production, thereby disrupting the traditional employment structure in the periphery. At the same time, it forges strong material and cultural links with the core and this whole process mobilises the regional and

transnational movement of labour (Sassen, 1988). This process has been intensified by multinational corporations and the globalisation of financial markets. It is argued that there is a continuing polarisation of the employment structure in global cities<sup>6</sup> (Castells, 1989; Sassen, 1988; 1991). The world economy is managed from a small number of global cities in which banking, finance, administration and the high-tech/IT industry are concentrated. A highly skilled workforce is concentrated in such global cities (e.g., London, Paris, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Sydney, etc.) and these cities also have a strong demand for services from unskilled workers. These low-paid service jobs are largely filled by unskilled migrant workers from the periphery since native workers refuse to take these jobs.

For industrialised countries, migration can be a labour supply system particularly suited to the needs of firms, where the organisation of the labour process entails low wages and powerless labour (Sassen, 1988). The use of migrant labour reduces the cost of production for employers through low wages and lower costs for the organisation of production. Due to their vulnerable status as foreigners, they are less likely to be politicised and more likely to rely on their employers. Therefore, by hiring migrant workers, apart from cheap labour, firms can gain additional benefits from labour supply flexibility – e.g. night shifts, ease of hiring or firing – and organisational flexibility – e.g. the use of hazardous equipment in substandard work spaces (Sassen, 1988:40). Portes and Walton (1981: 50) argue that ‘the cheapness of migrant labour is not a built-in feature of the migration process and does not inhere in the personality of migrants, but is dependent on deliberate political manipulation’. Such manipulation is conditioned by the political vulnerability of immigrants. Crossing a political border itself weakens the status of workers in the host country as

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<sup>6</sup> This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.



the weaker the legal standing of migrant workers, the more employers can obtain compliance and make more profits from them through use of political threats such as deportation (Castells, 1975; Portes and Walton, 1981).

### *Evaluation*

The structural approach understands migration movements within the context of the international capitalist development process. In the context of an unequal and exploitative relationship between the core and periphery, migration has become a chronic mechanism to be activated in order to suit the demands of employers in core countries (Bonacichi and Cheng, 1984). For this approach, international labour migration is viewed as an 'intrinsic component' of major processes of structural change throughout history, rather than as a result of individual motivations and push-pull factors of origin and destination (Portes and Walton, 1981; Zolberg, 1978; 1989). Therefore, unlike the neo-classical approach, international migration is explained as a response to the dynamics of market creation/relocation and the structure of the world political economy, which has led to a gap of wage rates or of employment opportunities between the poor and rich countries.

Highlighting political economy of the migratory process with international and historical perspectives, the structural approach makes up for the limitations in the ahistorical and unrealistic neo-classical approach. It reflects historical processes and the emergence of different types of migration, colonialism, multinational firms, interpenetrating structures of capital investment practices in post-colonial countries and external constraints (e.g. immigration policies and laws) on the movement of people. This approach provides a convincing account of tendencies in the current era

of globalisation, such as global inequalities, the international division of labour and the disadvantageous status of migrant workers in the host country.

The structural approach can be a useful tool to analyse changing divisions of labour at the local and global levels and the relationship between changes in the location of production and the emergence of selective gendered migration. Sassen (1988) provides a significant example of the relationship between the industrialisation process in the Third World and female migration. Through investment practices of multinational firms in export processing zones (EPZs) in Southeast Asia and Mexico, she argues, young female labour is incorporated into world-market factories. The integration of women into employment in the multinational firms induces more women to migrate toward cities and other countries and results in the feminisation of migration. It also emphasises the gender-specific nature of low-wage labour – especially in developing countries – which is closely related with the decisions of multinational firms to relocate production lines (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992). On the whole, this approach highlights the fact that women as well as men migrate to sell their labour in the host country. As Phizacklea (1999) points out, the structuralist model can provide an account that recognises migrant women as individual and collective agents who are also subject to external constraints.

The structural approach is nevertheless criticised for ‘its mechanistic, capital-logic approach to global migratory process’ (Phizacklea, 1998:26). Whereas the neo-classical approach is blamed for its voluntaristic account, the structural approach is overly economically determinist neglecting the role of human agency. Without an analytical mechanism for individual migrants, the structural approach does not explain why some people migrate while others do not. Also, while some

have seen its potential for explaining the migration of women in the constantly evolving transformation of production relations, relations of reproduction in which women are largely involved are marginal within this approach (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992). More and more women are integrated into labour migration, which is closely related with paid reproductive work, such as domestic service and sex/entertainment work. The engagement of migrant women in paid reproductive work is one of the significant features in the process of international migration. For example, the increasing tendency towards the commercialisation of care work carried out by women migrant workers has formed 'global care chains' that have reinforced the inequality of social reproduction between rich and poor countries as well as the international sexual division of labour. In order to provide a complete picture of the process of international migration, which is dynamic and constantly evolving, it is crucial to embrace a further dimension of reproductive work alongside the organisation of production.

### **III. The Integrated Approach**

New conceptualisations of migration emerged in the late 1980s, which considered migration as a system evolving from linkages between sending and receiving countries. Challenging the orthodox frameworks of agency and structure, researchers have increasingly called for an integrated approach, which is capable of explaining migration at both the micro and macro levels. This integrative conceptualisation attempts to articulate between different levels of migration analysis by stressing social networks (Boyd, 1989; Fawcett, 1989) and a migration systems paradigm (Fawcett and Arnold; 1987).

## *The Social Networks and Migration Systems Perspectives*

Boyd (1989) argues that studying networks allows for an understanding of migration as a social product. In other words, international migration is not either a mere result of rational decisions made by individual actors or a mere result of economic or political parameters, but rather an outcome of all these factors in interaction. As a starting point for the social networks perspective, Boyd (1989:645) notes that 'structural factors provide the context within which migration decisions are made by individuals or groups. However, at this micro-level analysis, the decision to migrate is influenced by the existence and participation in social networks, which connect people across space.' Social networks based on interpersonal ties of family, kinship and community connect former migrants, migrants and non-migrants in sending and receiving countries across time.

Taking the household as a means of 'bridging the gap between social and individual levels of analysis', Boyd (1989) highlights that families and households are the basic units of analysis in the social networks perspective. Migration provides an important strategy for the survival of families, by generating income in the form of remittances to ensure its maintenance and reproduction. Functioning as the connection between the macro- and micro-levels, the household is one of the intermediate objects of analysis in a social networks perspective.

Migrant networks, which develop from social networks, increase the likelihood of international movement as they provide information and resources, thereby reducing the costs and risks of movement. As migrant networks expand and the costs and risks of migration fall, the flow becomes less selective in socio-economic terms and more representative of the sending community or society

(Massey *et al.*, 1993). Massey (1990:8) argues that 'once the number of network connections in an origin area reaches a critical level, migration becomes self-perpetuating because migration itself creates the social structure to sustain it.'

Apart from households, kinship and local community ties, there is another significant object of analysis in a social networks perspective: intermediary networks which are comprised of private and state employment agencies, brokers and voluntary humanitarian organisations. Once international migration to certain core countries has increased, receiving countries tend to raise the entry barriers to control the flow. Strict immigration control then creates a lucrative economic niche for entrepreneurs and organisations who provide a range of legal or illicit services to migrants for their own profits (Massey *et al.*, 1993). This yields an underground market in international migration: smuggling across borders; counterfeit documents, passports and entry visas; recruitment of workers with unreasonable fees; brokering fake marriage between migrants and citizens of the destination country; and other clandestine services needed for migrants in the country of destination. At the same time, voluntary humanitarian organisations are formed in order to help migrants, who are easily manipulated and victimised by these clandestine practices in the underground market.

As a step toward a broad-based theoretical development of migration study, Fawcett and Arnold (1987) introduce a migration systems paradigm which views international migration as a unified social process and understands that individual decisions and actions are conditioned by structural forces at each stage of migration. Based on three conceptual categories – state-to-state relations and comparisons, mass culture connections, and social networks – a migration systems paradigm attempts to understand the dynamic process of international migration through the use of both

micro- and macro-data. It highlights the diverse linkages between places – which are not only flows and counter-flows of people, but also transactions involving information, goods, services and ideas obtained via mass media and telecommunications – and the interplay between the macro-level structural factors and personal/intermediary networks at the micro-level.

### *Evaluation*

The social networks and migration systems perspectives emphasise the importance of taking account of social as well as political and economic linkages at the micro- and macro levels. Understanding international migration through an integrated approach provides for more comprehensive analytical frameworks. Its emphasis on intermediary institutions – such as recruiters, brokers and humanitarian organisations – as well as social networks provides for a more detailed and satisfactory explanation of the process of migration. According to a study of social networks among Filipino migrant workers in one of industrial complexes in the suburbs of Seoul in Korea (Park *et al.*, 1999)<sup>7</sup>, 48.7% of workers were strongly influenced and helped by friends to come to Korea for employment and 51.3 % of workers came to Korea through public and private recruitment agencies. On the whole, over 80% of workers have already had either friends or family or acquaintances working in Korea. This study shows that by means of social networks workers cover costs and gain access to information in a migration setting in Korea. It also highlights the gradual expansion

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<sup>7</sup> This study focuses on Filipino migrant workers in the Masuk industrial complex located in a suburb of Seoul in which a large number of furniture making sweatshops are concentrated. Along with workers from Bangladesh, Filipino workers are a majority of workers living and working in the area and most of them are undocumented. Workers in the Masuk industrial complex build up a large Filipino community revolving around the local Christian church.

of social networks among Filipino workers and active roles of recruitment agencies or brokers in contributing to the continual flow of new and return workers from the Philippines into Korea.

Despite the useful account provided by the integrated approach, it should be cautiously combined with a gender sensitive perspective. In particular, the household as a basic unit of the social networks analysis does not always make collective decisions. In her in-depth study of Mexican migration, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994:95) argues that household members have competing interests and agendas, and the 'household cannot think, decide, or plan, but certain people *in* households do engage in these activities'. Her study shows that men who migrated to the U.S. – leaving their wives and children – decided autonomously, often without considering the opinions of other family members. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994:96) also points out that traditional gender relations in the migration networks, which have facilitated men's and constrained women's migration, are changing. Through migration, social and cultural expectations of gender relations have been reformulated and women have paved the way for their own migration system and networks of support. Accordingly, understanding patterns of migration requires attention to the power relations of gender in social networks and in households.

Also, the social networks perspective is rather one dimensional. It tends to be limited in providing an adequate analytical framework for reconciling micro and macro perspectives. The analytical concept of 'linkages' developed by the social network perspective does not fully explain the complex and dynamic nature of agency and structural factors within the migration system. While there are evident structural determinations, a potential migrant could act strategically to further her/his interests by taking advantage of available resources within the increasingly

institutionalised migration system. Importantly, an understanding of the articulation between structure and agency is needed in the analysis of the process of international migration. As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4, Goss and Lindquist (1995) suggest an integrated concept called, the 'migrant institution', which articulates between various levels of analysis, and therefore goes beyond the analysis of the social networks perspective. As we will see later, the notion of migrant institutions is highly relevant in the case of international migration in Asia where the process of migration has been largely institutionalised.

#### **IV. Migration Theory with a Gender Sensitive Approach**

##### *Gender as a Central Concept of Analysis*

Noting the absence of women in the study of international migration, some of the recent literature has acknowledged the different migration experiences between women and men. During the 1980s and the 1990s, some researchers in Europe and North America began to focus on migrant women. This shift was informed by the emphasis on gender equality in the women's movement and by changes of the international mobility of labour with growing female labour force participation (Boyd, 1989; Lim, 1995; Morokvasic, 1984, Pedraza, 1991; Phizacklea, 1983; Seller, 1994; Simon and Brettell, 1986; Tienda and Booth, 1991). These studies emphasise that woman is a valid analytical category in international migration and reject the conventional stereotypical treatment of women as 'passive dependents', notably the emphasis placed on their roles as wives and mothers. They make women visible in the context of international migration and provide rich empirical studies of women as



individual migrants and their diverse experiences in the migration process.

It is nevertheless argued that migration studies still remain predominantly gender insensitive as migration research adds sex as a variable in analyses without reassessing the conceptual framework in a gendered way. The tendency within the study of migration has been merely to 'add women, mix and stir' within orthodox theoretical frameworks (Grieco and Boyd, 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). It is essential that the term 'gender' rather than 'sex' should be used (Grieco and Boyd, 2003; Pessar and Mahler, 2003). While 'sex' is a simple biological dichotomous variable, which is invariant over time and space, 'gender' is 'the social and cultural ideals, practices and displays of masculinity and femininity' (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994:2) which construct roles, relations and hierarchy. In her study of Mexican migrant women in the U.S., Hondagneu-Sotelo locates gender at the centre of her analytical framework, rather than simply adding a gender variable to the conventional approach. She argues that:

[t]his study begins with the premise that an appropriate research strategy required more than either examining men's gender in isolation or simply "adding" women to the picture. Gender is not simply a variable to be measured, but a set of social relations that organize immigration patterns. The task, then, is not simply to document or highlight the presence of undocumented women who have settled in the U.S., or to ask the same questions of immigrant women that are asked of immigrant men, but to begin with an examination of how gender relations facilitate or constrain both women's *and* men's immigration and settlement (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994:3, emphasis in the original).

Hondagneu-Sotelo shows that gender is exercised in relational and dynamic ways.

She illustrates how the social relations of gender influence the migration decisions, behaviours and experiences of both women and men. The emphasis on the social relations of gender leads us to ask how gender is implicated in the process and structures of migration. Gender-sensitive research goes further than simply explaining causes and trends of international migration. It should aim to show how ostensibly gender-neutral processes of movement are in fact gender specific, resulting in fundamental differences in the migration experiences of women and men.

### *Gender-Specific Structure of International Migration*

Pessar and Mahler (2003) note that gender is a fluid – not fixed process – as one of ways humans create and perpetuate social differences. They assert that gender should also be understood as a structure that organises and signifies power at levels above the individual. Accordingly, gender is embedded in institutions and there are structural factors that condition gender relations. Pessar and Mahler (2003:813) cite Glenn's argument: 'major areas of life – including sexuality, family, education, economy and the state – are organised according to gender principles and shot through with conflicting interests and hierarchies of power and privilege' (Glenn, 1999:5, cited in Pessar and Mahler, 2003:813). Arguing that gender relations are present in all types of institutions, including the market, the state, education, the family and even the street, Connell (1987) develops a concept of a 'gender regime', referring to 'the historically produced state of play in gender relations in a given institution'. A gender regime is an aggregate of practices, ideological and material that acts to construct images of masculinity and femininity in a given social context and to sustain forms of gender inequality. According to Connell, gender inequalities

persist through a complex of institutions, and it is important to show how gender is actually reproduced through the strategies and interactions of such institutions.

Taking account of those arguments on gendered institutions and structures, many researchers show that there are fundamental differences in the migration of men and women (Lim, 1995; Simon and Brettell, 1986; Tienda and Booth, 1992) and the migration process is gendered and sex-selective (Morokvasic, 1983; Pedraza, 1991). Gender differences arise from the subordinate status of women in familial, societal and cultural structures of both the sending and receiving countries. Grieco and Boyd (2003:11) argue that 'women's status acts as a "filter", gendering structural forces and influencing the migratory and settlement experiences of men and women differently'. The process of migration is certainly constrained by social structures both in the country of origin and destination. Gender as well as race, ethnicity, nationality and class determine people's ability and decision to move, their act of migration. Through their policies concerning emigration and immigration in particular, states are major actors in the international migration process. Even though immigration laws and regulations seem gender-neutral on the surface, value judgements based on stereotypical images of men and women and the traditional sex roles in societies are embedded in administration practices concerning the control of migration flows. Many scholars argue that the migration policies of many receiving countries implicitly assume a 'dependent' status for women (Boyd, 1976, 1986; Lim, 1995). Migrant women are often classified by their relation to men, such as wives or daughters, regardless of their own independent status. Such policies and practices are based on the stereotypical idea that places women into the private sphere rather than the public sphere, thereby increasing the social vulnerability of migrant women. Some migrant women become economically dependent on their husbands or fathers

until a work permit is granted. If women decide to work without documents, they become dependent on their employers and their undocumented status in the labour market can make them more vulnerable to exploitation, low wages and poor working conditions.

### *Patriarchal Gender Relations*

For a gender-sensitive study of international migration the question should be not 'why women are excluded', but 'to what extent the general institutional structure and the character of particular institutional areas have been formed by and through gender' (Acker, 1992, quoted in Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994:3). It is therefore essential to examine in what way gender relations are constructed and exercised in different areas in society, such as the family, the labour market and the state. In particular, the pattern of the incorporation of migrant women into the labour market shows us how the economic structure consolidates gender relations in the labour market. Grieco and Boyd (2003:23) argue that racial, nationality and gender stereotypes are prevalent in the labour receiving country and act as powerful allocative mechanisms in the labour market. Migrant women tend to be segregated into traditional 'female' occupations, such as domestic/care work, service work or garment manufacturing (Morokvasic, 1984; Pedraza, 1991). As Morokvasic (1984) asserts, migrant women become incorporated into 'sexually segregated markets' at the lowest stratum in high technology industries in the receiving country, or in the 'cheapest' sectors in those industries which are labour intensive and employ the cheapest labour to remain competitive. Accordingly, in the process of international migration the sexual division of labour becomes evident in the labour market. Nevertheless, the

concentration of migrant women in certain 'female' occupations, which are mostly 'unskilled' and low paid, cannot be explained by mere economic reasons, such as human capital deficiencies, cheap labour costs or increasing demands of labour. There are certainly sex roles and occupational stereotypes that segregate migrant women into certain occupations and industries in the labour market. Moser and Young (1981) note that women tend to be segregated into particular occupations, which are carefully delimited by an ideology linking their activity to gender and the vast majority of women work in occupations which have a structural resemblance to their family role in the household.

Here, it is worth considering the concept of patriarchy, which has been a controversial subject of discussion within feminist literature. Literally, patriarchy means rule of the father and the term was originally used to describe social systems based on the authority of male heads of household. Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, feminist theorists have used the concept to refer to the social system of masculine domination over women in general. Attempts have been made to understand patriarchy from many different standpoints and here we will look at some of the more influential interventions since the 1970s. Rich (1980), for instance, understands patriarchy as male domination over women's sexuality and bodies. For her, sexual practice is socially constructed around male notions of desire – not women's – and heterosexuality is socially and politically institutionalised in contemporary society. In *The Dialectic of Sex* Firestone (1971) develops the idea that patriarchy and sex class are based on the reproductive capacities of women. She argues that women's oppression lies in their reproductive roles, such as pregnancy, childbirth and childcare, and these roles have been controlled by men. Focusing on the exploitation and the oppression of women derived from men's control over the productive and

reproductive activities, which take place within the domestic mode of production, Delphy (1984) argues that patriarchy and capitalism are independent forms having their own system of exploitation and social classes. Mitchell (1975) defines patriarchy in terms of ideology and a concept derived from psychoanalytic theory. She discusses gender in terms of the separation between the two systems in which the economic level is ordered by capitalist relations ('the economic mode of production') and the level of the unconscious, which is ordered by the law of patriarchy ('the ideological mode of reproduction'). On the other hand, Hartmann (1979) understands patriarchal relations operating at the level of the expropriation of women's labour by men, not at the level of ideology or the unconscious. Hartmann argues that women are exploited by men in the form of both housework and wage labour and these two forms of exploitation reinforce each other, locating women in a position of disadvantage within the family and the labour market. She supports her argument by providing historical examples of how women have been excluded from the better jobs by organised male workers with the support of the state.

Among the various discussions of patriarchy, Eisenstein's analysis of capitalist and patriarchal relations is important work to note. Criticising biologically determinist, ahistorical and universal analyses of patriarchy by Firestone and Mitchell, Eisenstein (1979b) argues that forms of patriarchy vary between historical periods or societies. She argues that patriarchy precedes capitalism through the existence of the sexual ordering of society, which derives from ideological and political interpretations of biological difference, and that these social relations of reproduction are carried over from time to time. Eisenstein (1979a) explains that there is the dynamic of power involved in society that drives from both the class relations of production, in which exploitation occurs, and the patriarchal sexual

hierarchy, in which the oppression of women occurs. Emphasising the mutually dependent relations between patriarchy and capitalism, she states that:

patriarchy (as male supremacy) provides the sexual hierarchical ordering of society for political control and as a political system cannot be reduced to its economic structure; while capitalism as an economic class system driven by the pursuit of profit feeds off the patriarchal ordering. Together they form the political economy of the society, not merely one or another, but a particular blend of the two (Eisenstein, 1979a:28).

Eisenstein argues that patriarchy and capitalism operate within the sexual division of labour and society, which has both a material form (sex roles) and ideological reality (the stereotypes, myths and ideas defining these roles). For her, 'the patriarchal system of control is necessary to the smooth functioning of the society and the economic system' (ibid.). In other words, patriarchy and capitalism become 'an integral process' for both economic profit and societal control, and capitalist and patriarchal relations form a mutually interdependent system of 'capitalist patriarchy'.

Eisenstein also examines the role of the state. Introducing the concept of 'the capitalist patriarchal state', she argues that patriarchy operates at the state and society level as well as the family level. She explains that:

the state represents and defines the real separation of public and private life in terms of the differentiation of women from man. Patriarchy thus transforms biological sex into politicised gender, giving men priority while making women "different" (i.e. unequal), or "less", or the "other". And it simultaneously establishes the sexual division of labour, the distinctness of family and market,

patriarchal controls within the market, and so forth. Although the specific historical source of patriarchal control has shifted from the “father” to the “husband” to the “state” (while remaining simultaneously rooted in each), the dynamic of sexual class – the process of hierarchically differentiating woman from man – ensures the continuity of patriarchy. We cannot understand patriarchy, therefore, by simply analysing domestic power structures (the dominance of a particular father or husband) or a static notion of biological power (strength, aggression) (Eisenstein, 1984:330-331).

Eisenstein’s concept of ‘the capitalist patriarchal state’ is closely related to current state policies towards women migrant workers. In particular, as we will see in Chapter 6, maintaining the patriarchal idea of reproductive work as women’s personal responsibilities, the state responds to the function of reproduction and to the need for the maintenance of the household by importing migrant women rather than by providing proper state welfare provisions. In this regard, the state manipulates both local and migrant women to fulfil its own need for sustaining economic and social development. As women migrant workers now carry out the jobs traditionally occupied by local women, migration may simply transfer them from one form of patriarchy to another, leaving gender relations in the private and public spheres essentially unaltered. Through the feminisation of labour migration, the sexual division of labour has therefore been extended to the transnational level.

On the other hand, Walby (1990) reformulates patriarchy in an attempt to overcome the earlier problems of reductionism, ahistoricism and universalism. Walby defines patriarchy as ‘a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women’. She identified six structures of patriarchy: the mode of production in the household; paid work; the state; male violence;



sexuality; and culture. She argues that while these structures are relatively autonomous, they have causal effects upon each other and capture the depth and pervasiveness of gender inequalities. For Walby, patriarchy changes over time. She argues that in Britain during the 20<sup>th</sup> century patriarchy changed from the 'private' form to the 'public' form. Private patriarchy is based in the family and household involving individual men exploiting the labour of individual women. On the other hand, in public patriarchy women are not confined to the domestic sphere anymore, but engaged in the public sphere through paid work and political participation. According to Walby, patriarchy is not obsolete but still prevalent in society. It has only changed its form, rather than being restricted to the household.

Regarding the issue of international migration, Walby's argument on 'private to public patriarchy' highlights both historical and spatial factors. It integrates the influence of political, economic and cultural forces and, furthermore, understandings of patriarchal structures in local and global contexts (Youngs, 2000). As mentioned above, the system of patriarchy has been extended to the global level through gendered labour migration and increasing cross-border marriages in the Asian region. However, it is interesting to note that through the process of international migration, the public and private spheres operate across state boundaries and deviate from the conventionally constructed dichotomy of public and private spaces, which institutionalises social practices<sup>8</sup>. Women migrant workers play a crucial role in the public sphere in both the countries of destination and origin, by means of paid

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<sup>8</sup> Youngs (2000) points out that there is little analysis of the changing power relationships between the public realm of the state and market and the private realm of the household/family. Besides, there is little attention paid to how conceptions of public and private spaces and the ways in which people occupy and act in them are being altered. In order to answer this question Youngs observes Filipina maids in Hong Kong. Through her study, she shows how the women migrant workers are renegotiating the boundaries of public/private and local/global in ways that reveal these supposed oppositions as complexly and contradictorily interconnected.

employment and sending remittances. At the same time, given the characteristics of their jobs such as domestic and caring work, the majority of these workers are often confined to the 'private' sphere and become a largely invisible, hidden force in economy and society.

It is therefore crucial to take account of a dynamic view of patriarchy that goes beyond the public and private dichotomy. Youngs (2000) argues that political economic space has been predominantly viewed through 'the patriarchal prism'. According to Youngs (2000), 'the patriarchal prism' through which political economy has traditionally been interpreted is based on the prioritisation of public sphere activities over the private realm on the basis of a power relationship between the two. She explains that gender critiques of public/private dynamics break apart this prism and provide access to an understanding of the world economy in both local and global terms. She emphasises the relevance of public/private questions for consideration of structure/agency interactions in an era of globalisation.

Above all, it is crucial to avoid a universalising view of patriarchy and gender inequality. Patriarchal structures operate across public and private spheres with different histories and societies. Also, it is important to incorporate racialised social relations into the account of gender relations. From this point of view patriarchal gender relations are constructed simultaneously with hierarchies of class and racialised social relations. As Gardiner (1997:126) argues, 'patriarchy offers a historically grounded rather than universal explanation of male dominance' and feminists should avoid using patriarchy as a universal explanation for gender inequality. This is because 'gender relations are constituted by a shifting matrix of elements including race, class, sexuality, fertility and care of dependants, all of which operate with degrees of autonomy and linkage' (Gardiner, 1997:126).

Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994:3) describes patriarchy as ‘a fluid and shifting set of social relations’ and women not only collaborate but also resist the patriarchal gender relations in diverse ways. Here, Kandiyoti’s notion of the ‘patriarchal bargaining’ is a useful intervention (Kandiyoti, 1988). The patriarchal bargain indicates the existence of set rules regulating gender relations, to which genders accommodate and comply, but which are at the same time contested, redefined and renegotiated. Kandiyoti (1988:274) argues that ‘different forms of patriarchy present women with distinct “rules of the game” and call for different strategies to maximise security and optimise life options with varying potential for active or passive resistance in the face of oppression’. In this sense, patriarchal gender relations are fluid and negotiable and can be seen as the production of both imposition and struggle (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). The notion of patriarchal bargaining can be applied to understanding the different strategies of individual women and coping mechanisms used by women in different historical, social and cultural contexts to defend their subordinate positions. As we will see in Chapter 4, women’s decisions on migration can be understood as patriarchal bargaining to cope with economic, social or cultural problems at home, such as poverty, unemployment or social pressures of marriage.

### *Bringing the ‘Woman as an Agency’ Perspective into the Analysis*

Clearly, women have often appeared as vulnerable and invisible subjects in the process of international migration. Female migrants are subject to problems caused by factors related to their sex and gender in the patriarchal social relations. Moreover, women from the Third World migrating to developed countries for work are often

represented by a stereotypical image of sacrifice, suffering and isolated victims. It is however crucial to avoid 'abstract structuralism' – i.e. the tendency to lose agency in social and historical processes – in the analysis of migrant women. Apart from the mere 'victim' approach, it is important to direct our attention to women's agency and empowerment, by questioning how migrant women make strategic choices when taking a decision on migration and when organising collective power that enable them to redress exploitation and inequality (Piper, 2000; Tacoli, 1999). In the conference on 'Gender, Migration and Governance in Asia', Molina (2002) points out that there has been a shift of paradigm in the political economy of migrant women.

A paradigm shift of migrants invokes the recognition of the paramount characteristics of migrant as resilient and struggling women and workers with huge political and economic potentials. Moreover, it is also equally important to recognise that in addition to the economic benefits, migration has also provided a process for women migrants towards self-determination and self-worth along the lines of class and gender (cited in the report on 'Gender, Migration and Governance in Asia' conference, 2002).

It is important to balance two contrasting views in the victim/agency divide in this discussion – one emphasising the 'victimisation' of women workers and the other the 'agency' of individual migrant women. Piper (2003:28) states that the association of the migration of women with exploitation and the presentation of migrant women as victims often lead to a strong policy orientation towards various forms of protection of female migrant workers. She argues that although women should be promoted as individual and collective agents, those policymakers' ideas of

'protection' might not address migrant women's need for empowerment. Piper and Roces (2003) also emphasise that it is necessary to contextualise the experiences of migrant women to show to what extent they are victims and agents. Piper and Roces (2003:9-10) subscribe to the following description of various levels and extents of agency.

The notion of agency attributes to the individual actor the capacity to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life, even under the most extreme forms of coercion. Within the limits of information, uncertainty and other constraints that exist, social actors are 'knowledgeable' and 'capable' (Long, 1992, cited in Moser and Clark, 2001:4).

According to Piper and Roces (2003), differences in determining agency and identity are related to the importance of place and location in the constitution of multiple realities. Taking the example of increasing numbers of migrant women working as entertainers and sex workers, especially in Asia, those women are often undocumented migrants and the nature of their occupation is socially stigmatised by the highly patriarchal and Confucian value systems that are prevalent in Asia. They work in isolation with little or no protection from government authorities and very often become victims of violence and poverty. Nevertheless, it is necessary to pay attention to the cases in which some women entertainers and sex workers 'choose' their jobs for their own economic survival strategy. With a low level of education or skill and given their own country's economic stagnation, some women choose this type of job from the very few 'options' available for them. Therefore, rather than perceiving those workers as mere passive 'victims', governments and civil society

groups need to consider the specific social and personal contexts in which some women decide to migrate for those jobs<sup>9</sup>. It is after all necessary to avoid generalising migrant women as victims on the basis of the universal and simplistic assumptions that ignore the social and personal context in which women act in their own interests.

Questioning a simplistic picture of migrant women confined to 'institutionalised forms of dependency', Phizacklea (1998:34-35) discusses the possibilities for transformative politics and for organisation and coalition-building across hierarchies of class, ethnicity and gender. She cites an example of an organisation called KALAYAAN, which represents a coalition of migrant and immigration groups, trade unions, lawyers and individuals, which led to a successful campaign to reform the immigration law governing for migrant domestic workers in Britain<sup>10</sup>. This example shows that the social networks of migrant workers could provide workers with more than a simple support group, which was set up with a social function. Phizacklea shows how KALAYAAN served as an organisation that was able to transform the roles of migrants, through networking and coalition-building intended to take on political campaigns. Despite unequally distributed knowledge and power, and structural constraints, migrant workers acted as collective agents showing that 'the powerless have the capacity to mobilise resources and secure 'spaces' of control'<sup>11</sup> (Phizacklea, 1998:27) in a migration setting.

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<sup>9</sup> For further discussions on policies and training implications regarding the issue, *see* the report on the 'Gender, Migration and Governance in Asia' conference (ANU, 5-6 December 2002). ([http://apmrn.anu.edu.au/publications/fulldocwp\\_13.htm](http://apmrn.anu.edu.au/publications/fulldocwp_13.htm))

<sup>10</sup> For detailed information and discussions, *see* Anderson (1993).

<sup>11</sup> In her discussion, Phizacklea embraces Giddens' structuration thesis which attempts to move away from a rigid agency and structure division, by viewing structure as a set of rules and resources integral to the conduct of individual and collective actors (1998:26-27). Giddens' theory of structuration will be examined in detail in Chapter 4.

## **Conclusion: Unpacking the Gendered Process of International Migration**

The theoretical approach of this study is based on the following observation: ‘there is no such thing as a general theory of migration’ (Arango, 2000:283). International migration is too complex and multifaceted to be explained by a single overarching theory. As Arango observes, theorising international migration takes ‘the form of a string of separate, generally unconnected theories, models or frameworks, rather than a cumulative sequence of contributions that build upon previous blocks’ (ibid.). The focus of existing theories has primarily been on understanding the causes of international migration by explaining why people move or what determines the volume of migration from one country to another. However, the migratory process does not end when people take a decision to move based on ‘push’ factors and when they successfully arrive at the destination country. Rather, the process continues with the employment of migrants in the labour market, the settlement of migrants and consequential societal transformations in the country of destination and, furthermore, with the emerging process of transnationalisation and its economic, political and social implications for the country of origin. Theorising the multiform process of international migration, which takes place with various interrelated variables, therefore, requires multidisciplinary and multidimensional approaches. As Fielding aptly asserts, ‘perhaps migration is another “chaotic concept”, one that needs to be “unpacked” so that each part can be seen in its proper historical and social context so that its significance in each context can be separately understood’ (Fielding, 1983:3, cited in Arango, 2000:295). Focusing on the empirical research of the migration of women to Korea, this study therefore attempts to ‘unpack’ the process of international migration within historical, social and political contexts of Korea and to

scrutinise each process with a better integration of theoretical analyses through a critical gendered lens<sup>12</sup>.

In this study, the process of international migration is unpacked into the three different migratory stages: the migration decision and entry to the destination; modes of employment; and residence/settlement in Korean society. While multiple – economic, social, political and cultural – dimensions of the process of migration are taken into account throughout the study, a different analytic framework needs to be adopted for an adequate explanation of each migratory stage.

First, the importance of the link between structure and agency is considered in the analysis of the migration decision and admission to the country of destination (Chapter 4). As an explanatory framework for this migratory stage, the concept of the migrant institution, which was developed by Goss and Lindquist (1995) in the context of the structuration theory, is examined. Understanding the concept of the migrant institution within the structuration perspective provides an analytical framework for articulating between structure and agency in the process of international migration. The crucial role played by states in the process of international migration should not be underestimated. As Arango (2000:293) observes, ‘any theory built primarily with economic materials is bound to be in trouble in an international migration scene in which political considerations and the state intervenes so prominently’. The state strategically imposes strict rules and regulations, thereby increasing structural constraints in the process of international migration. Structural constraints then give rise to other actors in the migration institution, who provide alternative migrant channels to potential migrants. Despite evident structural determinations, a potential migrant acts strategically to further her

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<sup>12</sup> Feminist epistemological issues relating to the empirical research will be discussed in Chapter 3.



interests by exploiting available resources within the increasingly institutionalised migration system.

Second, the conceptual point of entry into the analysis of modes of employment of migrant workers in Korea is the systematic link between international migration and changing divisions of labour (Chapters 5 and 6). A critical examination of the theory of New International Division of Labour (Ernst, 1980; Fröbel *et al.*, 1980) leads to the conceptualisation of the notion of the *transnational* division of labour (Cohen, 2006), which embraces changing aspects of divisions of labour in developed as well as developing countries and, more importantly, patterns of international migration. In particular, the notion of the transnational division of labour provides an important tool to understand the changing position of the Korean economy in the global market and how the country has become reliant on the supply of migrant workers from developing countries. The concept of the transnational division of labour also offers a valuable account of the ‘feminisation’ of the labour force at local and global levels, which can be extended into the notion of the transnational sexual division of labour facilitated by the international migration of women workers. Moreover, the process of international migration has not only reconfigured the transnational division of labour, but also deepened the gendered and racialised division of labour within the labour market. Just as the state controls the inflow of migrants, the labour market for unskilled migrant workers is strictly regulated by the state. The analysis of changing divisions of labour in Korea gives a comprehensive account of how social, political, cultural and institutional processes are intertwined in the context of production and social reproduction. While the analytic framework for this migratory stage is primarily based on the structural account of international migration, the empirical data shows how women migrant

workers strategically opt for employment suitable to them within this structural context.

Third, the migratory stage of the residence and settlement of migrants in the country of destination is completely omitted in the existing theories of migration. Regardless of the type of migration – whether it is labour, asylum or marriage migration – the social and political relations of migrants to the host society are one of the significant aspects of the migratory process. As mentioned above, the central aim of this study is to avoid the simple addition of ‘gender’ in the analysis of the experiences of migrant women. The experience of the residence and settlement of migrant women in Korean society can be sufficiently explained not simply by arguing the gendered structure of society, but also by considering social and political relations in the aspects of race, ethnicity and class. Therefore, a feminist integrative framework (Acker, 2006; Brewer, 1993; Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; Glenn, 1992; King, 1988) is adopted to analyse how gender, race and class are socially constructed factors in the interlocking system of multiple discriminations experienced by migrant women. Following Fielding’s argument above in favour of unpacking each migratory process ‘in its proper historical and social context’, the integrated framework for the discussion of gender, race and class is applied to the analysis of the racialisation of migrant workers in the specific context of Korea. As the empirical data will show in Chapter 7, interconnections of racialisation, nationalism, class and gender have significant implications for the social structural division in terms of citizenship rights of women (im)migrants in Korea.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Migration Transition: The Case of Korea**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter serves to provide the background to the site of this research. It explores how Korea, once a labour sending country, transformed into one of the main labour receiving countries in Asia. Until the mid-1980s Korea was one of the major labour sending countries in Asia. During the Japanese Colonisation (1910-1945), over four million Koreans were voluntarily and involuntarily moved to China, Manchuria, Central Asia and Japan. During the period between the 1960s and the 1980s nearly two million Korean workers were sent to Europe and the Middle East. Since the 1990s, however, Korea has become a prime destination for migrant workers from developing countries in the region. As the beginning of major inflows of migrant workers into Korea coincided with Korea's growth into one of the newly industrialising countries (NICs) in Asia, it is easily assumed that the dominant factor in the migration transition of Korea is the country's rapid economic development. Nevertheless, as this chapter will show, economic development is just one of the multiple interlocking factors that has brought on the influx of migrant workers to Korea.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. First, it starts by examining the historical background to the emigration of Korean workers during the period between the 1910s and the 1980s. This historical overview of the earlier emigration of Korean workers is particularly important for an understanding of the current

demographic composition of migrant workers in Korea. More than one third of migrant workers in Korea are ethnic Koreans who are descended from those who left the Korean peninsula and established settlements in the north-eastern provinces of China, Manchuria, Siberia, Sakhalin and Central Asia from the 1860s to the 1940s. Of the ethnic Korean migrants flowing back into Korea, most are from China, but there are also ethnic Koreans coming from Russia, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

The second section examines three interlocking factors that have led to the influx of migrant workers to Korea. Firstly, it presents a historical overview of the process of Korea's economic development, which was managed by the state. This section examines the state-led economic development during the period between the 1960s and the 1980s and the more recent policy of economic liberalisation in the 1990s, which intensified the globalisation of capital movement and the relocation of large Korean firms to developing countries in Asia. It also looks at the changes of the Korean labour market that subsequently increased demand for migrant labour. Secondly, it examines how Korea's international relations in the post-Cold War era have affected its liberalisation of economic and diplomatic policies, which have led a significant impact on the flow of migrant workers to the country. Considering the political aspect is particularly crucial in the case of Korea. Due to its specific geopolitical position during the Cold War, Korea's economic behaviour had been predominantly determined by the national-security related concern to maintain relations with North Korea and the global powers: China, Japan, Russia and the United States. As the conflict-ridden Cold War ended at the beginning of the 1990s, the geopolitical situation changed and brought significant economic and social changes in the Asian region. Finally, this section looks at cultural and social factors that have affected the increased movement of people from certain Asian countries to

Korea. It identifies the material, cultural and social linkages that brought large numbers of migrant workers into Korea.

## **I. Historical Background of Emigration of Korean Workers**

### *Emigration to Manchuria and Japan (the 1910s - 1940s)*

Since the year of 1910 when Korea was annexed to Japan, Korea had been under Japanese colonial rule for 35 years. The movement of Korean workers to Manchuria and Japan during this period was a principal component of the economic and military expansion of the Japanese empire. In 1911 the emigration of Korean workers to Manchuria and Japan started to take place on a large scale. In the 1910s and the 1920s Manchuria was the favoured destination of Korean migrants. Farmers and labourers crossed the Yalu and Tumen rivers and left for Manchuria (some moved even further up and settled in Siberia) to escape from famine and poverty. Migrants to Manchuria came mainly from northern rural areas – Hamkyeong and Pyeongan provinces – and moved with their family members. However, by the late 1920s migration slowed down as the Chinese government and the Manchurian Chinese regarded Korean migrants as the ‘civilian front’ carrying out the colonial economic policy of the Japanese Army (S-W. Park, 1999). Under these political circumstances, Korean migrants in China and Manchuria became disadvantaged in education, residence, tenant farming and community activities. During this period, Korean workers also started to move to Japan. Rather than push factors in Korea, pull factors in Japan had a great influence on the movement of Korean workers to Japan. The Japanese munitions industry that was stimulated by the First World War boom faced

a shortage of manual labour and Korean migrant workers started to fill this gap. In 1922 Japan introduced the 'Free Passage' system for Koreans in order to obtain cheap labour to overcome the post-war economic recession. Unlike family migration to Manchuria, which mostly came from the northern provinces of Korea, migrants to Japan were predominantly individual male workers and over 85% of these workers were from southern rural areas – Cheolla and Kyeongsang provinces. Those migrants were temporary manual labourers who spent only one or two years in Japan before returning to Korea.

In the 1930s and the early 1940s when Japanese military expansion in the Pacific Asia region accelerated, the movement of Koreans extended to all of the Japanese wartime empire. A year after the Manchurian Incident in 1931, the Japanese Kwangtung Army established the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo. In 1937 Japan declared war on China, before overstressing its power by declaring war on the United States. During this period, nearly 2.6 million workers voluntarily migrated to Manchuria and Japan in search of higher wages (S-W. Park, 1999). Higher wages and better employment opportunities in the booming Japanese wartime industrial economy attracted a great number of Korean migrant workers. Japan also needed these cheap colonial workers to make up for a shortage of labour in the domestic labour market, after a large number of Japanese workers were mobilised for warfare. These migrant workers were given lower-end manual jobs in day labour, construction, mining and the metalworking industry. They were strictly regimented by Chinese and Japanese colonial authorities. On the other hand, another 1.5 million Koreans were conscripted and mobilised to serve as industrial labour and civilian personnel in the Japanese military during the late 1930s and the early 1940s (S-W. Park, 1999; Shin, 1998). A great number of women in Korea and other colonies were mobilised for so-

called 'military comfort women' who were forced into sex slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army. These were young women aged between 17 and 20 and were sent to the frontlines in Manchuria, Burma, the Philippines and Indonesia.

S-W. Park (1999) argues that this massive migration of Korean workers during the 1910s and the 1940s was a result of the yen-bloc labour market formed in the Japanese wartime empire.

The economic autarchy of the yen bloc created a new demand for labour by integrating all the peripheral colonial labour markets. Japan's military security policy resulted in endless military and colonisation campaigns in East Asia, beginning with Taiwan (1895), and continuing with Korea (1910), Manchuria (1931), and finally deep into China (1937) until it overstretched itself in the self-destructive Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (1941). Japan was not unmindful of the economic potential of these regions, but its primary reason for acquiring them was assumed strategic necessity (S-W. Park, 1999:20).

By 1945 there were roughly four million Koreans – accounting for 16% of the total Korean population – residing in Japan, Manchuria, China and the Soviet Union. After Korea restored its independence from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, only half of those migrants returned to Korea. Those who remained in Japan and China account for the majority of today's overseas Koreans. The Korean diaspora in this period was an involuntary consequence of the history of modern Korea.

*Emigration to West Germany (the 1960s - early 1970s)*

The 1960s was the important turning point of international migration of Koreans as voluntary migration for overseas employment began. In 1962 West Germany agreed on providing industrial technology for Korea. For the Korean government advancing the coal mining industry was one of the crucial components of its industrialisation strategy. Accordingly, in 1963 247 Korean miners arrived at West Germany for three-year contract labour and during the next 15 years 8,395 Koreans migrated to West Germany to work as miners (see Table 2.1). After a formal agreement between the West German and Korean governments, in 1965 Korean nurses began to migrate to West Germany. As Table 2.1 illustrates, by 1977 10,371 Korean nurses had migrated to West Germany by which point they outnumbered miners.

**Table 2.1: The number of Korean Miners and Nurses Migrated to West Germany, 1963-1977**

| Year  | Miners | Nurses | Total  |
|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1963  | 247    | -      | 247    |
| 1964  | 806    | -      | 806    |
| 1965  | 1,180  | 18     | 1,198  |
| 1966  | 286    | 1,227  | 1,513  |
| 1967  | 7      | 421    | 428    |
| 1968  | 3      | 91     | 94     |
| 1969  | 10     | 837    | 847    |
| 1970  | 1,305  | 1,717  | 3,022  |
| 1971  | 982    | 1,363  | 2,821  |
| 1972  | 71     | 1,449  | 1,728  |
| 1973  | 842    | 1,182  | 2,176  |
| 1974  | 1,088  | 1,206  | 2,386  |
| 1975  | 459    | 3      | 924    |
| 1976  | 314    | 62     | 752    |
| 1977  | 795    | 795    | 1,590  |
| Total | 8,395  | 10,371 | 20,532 |

*Source: K. G. Lee, 2000:91*

While miners tended to concentrate in the south and the west, such as



Duisburg, Frankfurt and München, most of the nurses were working in the north, such as Hamburg and Berlin. When the three-year contract terminated, only 40% of the miners returned to Korea, while 40% of them remained and settled in West Germany. The remaining 20% of miners migrated to other countries, mainly to the United States. On the other hand, as friendly and hard working Korean nurses had established a positive reputation in West Germany, they tended to extend their contracts at the request of their employers. At the end of the contract, a large number of nurses tended to remain in West Germany, as there was a large wage gap between the Korean and German labour market. Moreover, when they returned to Korea their nursing careers in West Germany were not acknowledged by Korean hospitals (K. G. Lee, 2000). Many of the Korean nurses married Korean miners and settled in West Germany permanently and these nurses and miners have formed the largest overseas Korean community in Europe until the present.

#### *Emigration to the Middle East (the mid-1970s - 1980s)*

The number of Korean workers migrating for overseas temporary employment increased dramatically during the oil boom of the mid-1970s. The oil price increases in 1973 led to a massive investment programme by Middle Eastern oil exporting countries. This required a large number of foreign workers, notably to meet the demand for workers in the expanding construction industry. In 1975 there were nearly 1.7 million foreign workers in the major oil producing countries (Hyun, 1989). Until 1975 the main source of overseas labour had been the neighbouring Arab countries. However, between 1975 and 1979 there was a rapid increase in the temporary migration of South Asian workers, mainly from Pakistan and India

(Amjad, 1989). During this period, the number of workers from the Philippines, Thailand and Korea also began to increase. Korean emigration for temporary employment was concentrated in the Middle Eastern construction industry. A large proportion of Korean workers migrated to Saudi Arabia, Iran and Kuwait<sup>13</sup>. Korea was one of significant suppliers of labour for the Middle East. Unlike migrant workers from South Asia, Korean workers were regular employees of Korean firms that had contracts in the Middle East (Amjad, 1989).

The most distinctive feature of Korean emigration to the Middle East was that it took place within an organisational setting (Hyun, 1989). The majority of Korean workers migrated without accompanying their families and were employed directly by Korean construction firms with branches in the Middle East. All workers were housed in a work camp, which was a self-sufficient housing unit and an enclave community in which everything was supplied by their Korean companies. While workers worked within a familiar environment, they were almost entirely isolated from the host society. The work camp was an attractive scheme, not only to the host countries – who did not want their cultural identity to be affected by contact with non-Arab/non-Muslim workers – but also to the Korean firms who benefited from the highly efficient control of labour.

Korean emigration to the Middle East grew primarily in response to prospects for better economic opportunities. Average monthly earnings from employment in the Middle East were about twice as high as the earnings of construction workers in Korea at that time. The economic benefits of migration on the migrant family's household were substantial. Remittances from abroad also had a positive effect on the Korean economy, which had suffered from a chronic balance of

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<sup>13</sup> In 1982, 71% of the total migrant workers in the region worked in Saudi Arabia (Hyun, 1989).

payments deficits. The voluntary, temporary and organised migration to the Middle East resulted in a substantial flow of remittances from Korean migrant workers and Korea experienced the first ever current account surplus in 1977<sup>14</sup>. Hyun (1989:151) points out four main features that affected the high rates of remittance flows from Korean migrant workers in the Middle East: (1) remittances from the individual workers without accompanying families; (2) the temporary nature of Korean labour migration, where the main motive was the accumulation of savings for the future; (3) the lower living costs in work camps<sup>15</sup>; and (4) the Korean government's stipulation that at least 80% of the earnings of migrant workers should be remitted through the Korean banking system. Korean contract labour migration to the Middle East reached a peak during the first half of the 1980s and then dropped in the second half of the decade. The number of Korean migrant workers began to decrease significantly from the mid-1980s.

## **II. Globalisation and an Influx of Labour Migrants to Korea**

When the construction business in the Middle East slowed down in the mid-1980s, Korean labour migration to the region declined sharply and most Korean workers returned home. Conversely, from the late 1980s foreign workers began to enter Korea. A significant inflow of migrant workers, mostly from Asian countries, took place from the beginning of the 1990s. The number of migrant workers in Korea increased rapidly to over 100,000 in 1995, 200,000 in 1996, 400,000 in 2004 and over 500,000 in 2007. Korea was transformed from a major labour sending country

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<sup>14</sup> Remittances from abroad increased from US\$18.4 million in 1965 to US\$1,077 million in 1986 and the average annual rate increase during this period was 21.4%. In 1982, foreign exchange earnings from remittances reached their highest level at US\$1,939 million (Hyun, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> Return trip expenses and living costs in the destination country were paid by the employers.

into one of the main labour receiving countries in Asia. This section examines a number of factors – economic globalisation, Korea’s international political and economic relations, and cultural/social linkages within the Asian region – that have led to the influx of migrant workers to Korea.

### *Korea in the Midst of Economic Globalisation*

#### Rapid Economic Growth through the Export-oriented Industrialisation Strategy

Since the 1960s, Korea’s industrialisation has been carried out under an export-oriented industrialisation (EOI) policy based on strong government economic management. The export-promotion policy was an important shift in the country’s development strategy from the import-substitution policy of the 1950s. Korea’s EOI policy promoted labour-intensive industries, which in turn made use of a relatively cheap and abundant labour force. Successive shifts in the composition of exports have occurred since the beginning of the first five-year plan in 1962. Exports in the early 1960s were dominated by primary commodities – such as silk, tungsten and fish – as well as labour-intensive products – such as plywood, wigs and garments. The Korean economy successfully took off during the 1960s: its economic growth reached an annual rate of 7.8%, while annual exports grew to 41.7%. In the 1970s, as industrialisation proceeded, manufactured goods emerged as the dominant type of export commodity and the major exports shifted to textiles, ships and steel plates, which relied on capital as well as labour. The proportion of primary commodities fell from 80.1% in 1960 to less than 15% by 1975 (Song, 1997).

The 1970s was the decade in which the Korean industrialisation accelerated,

with the development of heavy and chemical industries (HCIs), such as steel, petrochemical, shipbuilding, machinery and nonferrous metals. The HCI strategy was introduced in 1973 to address concerns regarding the transformation of industry from a labour-intensive to a capital-intensive structure. It also sought to reduce the mounting current account deficits caused by an ever-increasing import demand for industrial products. The development was initiated by the government and, in particular, by President Park Jung-Hee's ambitious commitment to heavy and chemical industries at the Blue House (the Presidential Office), without much consultation with other economic ministries. In the early 1970s, HCI was generally seen as premature for an economy with only a decade of growth based on light manufacturing and with few natural resources. Furthermore, the private sector was not capable of investing in heavy and chemical industries. The IMF and the Federation of Korean Industries (FKI) also strongly opposed HCI when the policy was first announced. However, despite the objections of domestic and international capitalists, it was pushed vigorously by Park's authoritarian government (E. M. Kim, 1997).

There were several international and domestic political and economic conditions that explain why, despite objections, the Park regime made this abrupt move into HCI. The international financial system became very unstable owing to the collapse of the Bretton Woods system in 1971. As a consequence, the growth of economic nationalism was accompanied by increasing protectionism, and continuous dependence on labour-intensive export industries seemed less promising as domestic wages rose rapidly. The political conditions of the period were, nevertheless, more important than these economic factors. In the early 1970s, there were significant changes in East Asian geopolitics, as Nixon's visit to China and the thawing of the

Cold War brought uncertainty to the Korean peninsula. The Nixon Doctrine emphasised greater self-defence among US allies in Asia, and the Nixon administration began a partial withdrawal of US military forces from Korea in 1971. As a result, Park felt a great threat and was determined to strengthen Korea's military power. His decision to promote HCI was therefore influenced considerably by Korea's defence considerations, notably with respect to the North Korean rivalry.

By the 1980s, export commodities had become even more capital-intensive. Korea's export structure reached a turning point when manufactured exports shifted decisively to skill-intensive products such as computers, semi-conductors, colour televisions and motorcars. During the period between 1986 and 1988, Korea experienced an unprecedented economic boom, achieving the first trade surplus. This was the result of favourable external conditions, the so-called 'three lows': the low exchange value of the Korean currency (*won*) *vis-à-vis* the US dollar and Japanese yen; low international interest rates; and low oil prices.

Korea's rapid economic growth through the EOI strategy was clearly associated with the rapid urbanisation and labour migration from rural areas to the major cities, which led to a massive growth of the manufacturing workforce. As a proportion of the total workforce, the manufacturing workforce peaked in the late 1980s, while the agricultural workforce declined rapidly during the 1960s (Table 2.2). Table 2.2 shows that the unemployment rate declined remarkably to very low levels in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. The high growth rate resulted in the creation of over ten million jobs and this was reflected not only in the overall increase in the workforce, but also the expanding economic participation of female workers (Kim, Bae and Lee, 2000). It is interesting to note that the decline of unemployment in the 1980s coincided with the conspicuous decline of the number of Koreans working

overseas, mostly in the Middle East. The number of Korean migrant workers in the Middle East decreased by 80% between 1983 and 1990 – from 225,000 to 45,000 –, as a result of improved job opportunities and wages at home (Wilkinson, 1994).

**Table 2.2 Changes in Employment Structure and Unemployment in Korea, 1963-1990**

|  | 1963  | 1970   | 1975   | 1980   | 1985   | 1988   | 1990   |
|--|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Economically Active ('000 persons)                           | 8,230 | 10,062 | 12,193 | 14,431 | 15,592 | 17,305 | 18,487 |
| Unemployed (%)   | 8.2   | 4.5    | 4.1    | 5.2    | 4.0    | 2.5    | 2.4    |
| Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (% of employed population) | 63.1  | 50.5   | 45.9   | 34.0   | 24.9   | 20.7   | 18.3   |
| Mining and Manufacturing (% of employed population)          | 8.7   | 14.3   | 19.1   | 22.6   | 24.5   | 28.5   | 27.3   |
| Services and others (% of employed population)               | 28.2  | 35.2   | 35.0   | 43.4   | 50.6   | 50.8   | 54.4   |

*Sources:* Economic Planning Board, *Annual Report on the Economically Active Population Survey*, various issues; Ministry of Labour, Republic of Korea, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1991* (Wilkinson, 1994:81).

At the beginning of its industrialisation Korea was endowed with an almost unlimited labour supply and an absence of strong trade unions. The Korean trajectory for economic growth – which was shaped by a strong, comprehensive developmental state, a tight alliance between the state and large private enterprises called '*chaebol*', and the exclusion and repression of labour – worked well for several decades. The state formed a tight working partnership with the *chaebol* in pursuit of the common goal of economic development. In fact, the state and the *chaebol* were the two principal institutions of the industrialisation and economic development of Korea

during the 1960s and the 1970s. The *chaebol* played an increasingly greater role over time not only as the implementers of the government's industrial policies but also as entrepreneurs who took advantage of both political and market incentives (E. M. Kim, 1997). The *chaebol* in Korea have three main organisational features: (i) *family ownership and management* with a centralised and hierarchical system of control based on loyalty; (ii) *flexibility* in mobilising and in exchanging capital, technology and personnel among member companies; and (iii) *horizontal diversification* – the so-called 'octopus style' of territorial expansion – in an unusually wide range of often unrelated business activities (E. M. Kim, 1997). Although a large number of independent small- and medium-sized enterprises flourished during the 1960s and contributed to EOI, the *chaebol* and their member firms began to dominate the domestic economy. Furthermore, the *chaebol* received a disproportionate amount of government support, such as low-interest-rate loans. As Amsden (1989) points out, unlike Japan or Taiwan, Korea's export was dominated by the *chaebol* and large businesses rather than by non-*chaebol* affiliated small- and medium-sized firms.

During the 1960s, the Park regime sought to consolidate the relationship between the government and the *chaebol*. While the state and the *chaebol* formed a close working relationship, the state was the dominant member of this partnerships, remaining autonomous from the interests of the private sector and often exerting its influence in an authoritarian manner. The Park regime achieved a delicate balance in this relationship, in which each of the two partners was an autonomous member of a formalised and close alliance – i.e. 'embedded autonomy' (Evans, 1995) – that was essential for effective implementation of the state's economic development plans.

Unlike the reciprocal relationship between the state and the *chaebol*, the state-labour relationship was one in which labour was extensively repressed. The



Korean government supported the rapid growth of the *chaebol* and exports through an increasingly violent interventionist labour policy. The state, in collaboration with the *chaebol*, suppressed wages in order to make Korean export products price-competitive in the world market. The 1963 amendments to the labour law also made difficult for workers to form independent labour unions for collective bargaining.<sup>16</sup> According to Choi (1989), by the end of the 1960s, dissident labour unions gradually disappeared, while government-sponsored and company-approved labour unions took on labour union activities. Accordingly, labour unions lost their militancy and did not represent the interests of the workers in their negotiation with the management (E. M. Kim, 1997). Repression of labour represents a darker side of Korea's economic growth. Korean workers, who worked long hours under poor working conditions, did not enjoy the outcomes of economic development and their right to form and mobilise labour unions was severely restricted.

However, as Korea's economy was rapidly growing, average real wages in the manufacturing sector rose spectacularly and there was growing antagonism between the *chaebol* and labour in the 1980s. The state's HCI drive of the 1970s produced a small group of the super-wealthy *chaebol* demanding the reduced role of state in the economy, notwithstanding the fact that they grew due to the state's generous subsidies and protection. In spite of reduced state support, the *chaebol* flourished and dominated the nation's political, social and economic arenas making Korea the 'Chaebol Republic' (Wolgan Choson, 1989). As the *chaebol* and the country as a whole became more prosperous, workers began to feel that they were not equally sharing the country's 'economic miracle'. In fact, real wages in Korea had fallen substantially behind the nation's gross domestic product and also lagged

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<sup>16</sup> For details of the 1963 amendments, see E. M. Kim (1997: 121).

far behind industry-wide productivity gains (Ungson, Steers, and Park, 1997). Many workers felt that the miracle itself had occurred only as a result of the sacrifice of their labour, and that the time had come to demand a return on this investment. Accordingly, workers and trade unions began a concerted drive to improve wages and working conditions. In addition, the HCI brought relatively well-trained workers into large factories providing fertile ground for labour union mobilisation. Despite having one of the most repressive labour regimes in relation to labour, Korea had, by the end of the 1980s, also developed one of the most militant labour movements in Asian history (Deyo, 1987). The number of strikes rose from 300 in 1986 to almost 4,000 in 1987 and these strikes resulted in significant wage increases across broad segments of the workforce. Wage rates increased by 37% within a year between 1987 and 1988 (Ungson, Steers, and Park, 1997). During the period between 1970 and 1984, wage increases were faster in Korea than in Brazil, Argentina or Taiwan. Taking 100 as the base in 1970, the wage index in 1984 reached 276 in Korea, compared to 84 in Brazil, 112 in Argentina and 191 in Taiwan (Amsden, 1989:195-196). In particular, wages in the manufacturing sector have risen since 1987, thereby pushing up labour costs in the manufacturing industry. With rapid increases in wages, differences in wage levels were widening between Korea and other developing countries in Asia. By the late 1980s, Korea was no longer a cheap labour country.

### Korea's Economic Relations with the United States

Korea's industrialisation had depended heavily on imports of capital, goods and technology from Japan and on exports of its products to the mass consumer markets of the United States and Europe. When Korea was still at the state of the 'less

developed economy' in the 1950s and the 1960s, its economic relations with the United States were mainly that of recipient and donor. During the period between 1953 and 1962, foreign aid to Korea (95% of which came from the United States) amounted to about 8% of Korean GNP and 77% of fixed capital formation, and financed about 70% of imports (Mason, *et al.*, 1980). Korea was, at this stage, the third largest recipient of foreign aid in the world, following Vietnam and Israel (Song, 1997). However, economic relations between Korea and the United States entered into a new phase from 1986, as Korea's trade balance with the United States turned positive for the first time. By the late 1980s Korea became one of the top five trade surplus countries in the world – following Japan, West Germany, Taiwan and Canada – and the United States was Korea's largest trade partner accounting for most of Korea's trade surplus.

On the other hand, the United States found that its own traditionally positive trade balance with Korea turned negative. The American deficit with Korea increased from US\$4.3 billion in 1985 to US\$ 9.6 billion in 1987 (Wilkinson, 1994). Believing Korea's overall trade surplus was due to the maintenance of unfair trade barriers and an undervalued Korean currency, the United States placed great pressure on Korea to reduce tariff barriers. Korea, on the other hand, insisted that the United States failed to recognise that Korea was still a developing country with a large foreign debt, and that the country was still undergoing rapid and difficult socioeconomic and political transformation. Although Korea initially reduced tariff barriers, as the United States demanded, many tariffs remained and the government remained committed to raising or imposing tariffs whenever strategically necessary for the economy. Accordingly, economic relations between Korea and the United States became increasingly strained. The United States announced the end of the General System of Preference

(GSP) status for Korea in 1989 and the application of the so-called 'Super 301' provisions of the omnibus trade act to pressure Korea to liberalise its markets and revalue its currency (Song, 1997). A Korean state undergoing rapid economic development would not receive an American favouritism any more<sup>17</sup>. Under these circumstances, Korea could not go against the current of the times and was forced to adapt to external pressures in an increasingly protectionist and globalised world.

### Korea's Globalisation Drive in the 1990s: 'the *Segyehwa* Policy'

In November 1994 President Kim Young Sam articulated a new national goal for creating a New Korea, namely, globalisation. *Segyehwa* is the Korean term for globalisation, as envisioned by the President Kim Young Sam<sup>18</sup>. *Segyehwa* entailed political, cultural and social reforms and was far more comprehensive than mere 'economic liberalisation'. As illustrated in the following speech by President Kim, *segryehwa* was meant to describe Korea's unique concept of political, economic, social and cultural globalisation to reach the level of the advanced nations of the world.

Fellow citizens: Globalisation is the shortcut which will lead us to building a first-class country in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is why I revealed my plan for globalisation and the government has

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<sup>17</sup> It is also worth noting that the geo-political and historical structure in East Asia had also significantly influenced on the long-term aid and assistance from the United States. During the Cold War, economic prosperity of the region was thought to be a wise strategy against communism. Thus, due to the strategic considerations, the United States had provided huge military and economic aid to Korea and tolerated the mercantilist policies of Korea and Japan. However, the end of the Cold War weakened American geo-political interests in the East Asian region (for more details on this discussion, see Haggard, S. and Moon, C-I (eds), 1989).

<sup>18</sup> The Kim Young Sam government announced on 6 March 1995 that it had decided to keep, not translate into English, the Korean word '*segryehwa*' in its romanised form, as the official name for its globalisation drive (S. Kim, 2000).

concentrated all of its energy in forging ahead with it. It is aimed at realising globalisation in all sectors – political, foreign affairs, economy, society, education, culture and sports. To this end, it is necessary to enhance our viewpoints, 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, cited in S. Kim (2000:1)<sup>19</sup>).

Subsequently, in order to formulate strategic policies for globalisation the Kim government formed the Presidential *Segyehwa* Promotion Committee (PSPC) in January 1995. In order to pursue the *segryehwa* policy, the Kim administration set four policy aims: a clean government; a sound economy; a healthy society; and peaceful unification with North Korea. In particular, economic reforms were focused on the liberalisation of the Korean market through an open market policy, under the name of ‘globalisation’, which was described by President Kim as a global trend in an era of a ‘borderless’ global economy in which room for asserting national sovereignty in economic affairs was sharply diminishing (Gills and Gills, 2004). The vision and basic principles of the initiative for economic globalisation focused on achieving world-class competitiveness by enhancing economic efficiencies through the promotion of economic liberalisation and deregulation.

The initiatives of the Kim government in economic liberalisation and deregulation were clearly reflected in the ‘New Economy Policy’ (NEP). Identifying economic liberalisation with democratisation, the Kim government claimed that the policies of a democratic government should be predicated on liberal market competition<sup>20</sup>. The NEP attempted to relax regulations to encourage the participation

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<sup>19</sup> Seoul KBS-I Television in FBIS-EAS-95-004, 6 January 1995 (Internet version).

<sup>20</sup>The Kim government is widely criticised for beginning the liberalisation process without a carefully

and creative power of the private sector, as well as to reform monetary, financial and administrative institutions in the pursuit of market autonomy and justice (Republic of Korea Government, 1993, cited in Y. H. Lee, 2000: 121). E. M. Kim (2000) points out that the Kim government's *segye-hwa* policy towards business was more passive than active. In the 1990s Korea moved away from the EOI policy towards the goal of economic liberalisation under the globalisation drive. The policy was aimed at deregulation so that individual enterprises could be autonomous in their management and investment. The policy was intended to encourage the private sector to take initiatives in the globalisation drive. The policy was certainly different from the previous government-led industrial development policy, which directed the private sector to invest in certain industrial sectors by providing low-interest-rate loans, industrial licenses and other subsidies. Thus, Korean enterprises are no longer protected by a strong central government or by high trade barriers, but must compete in a global market against multinational firms with considerably more resources, experience and technology.

### The Globalisation of Production: Korea's Outward Foreign Direct Investment

The late 1980s witnessed a general increase in foreign direct investment in the world economy and the rapid rises of multinational corporations (MNCs) from the newly industrialising countries (NICs) in Asia. Dunning (1997) argues that while previously

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prepared economic and institutional foundation. This is attributed to Kim's political ambition to join the OECD. Accession to the OECD was not based on a purely economic rationale because President Kim regarded it as a significant political achievement. He viewed that Korea would be internationally acknowledged as a developed country by being a member state of the OECD and wanted to achieve this during his term of office. In an attempt to gaining access to OECD membership (which occurred in 1996), the Kim government sought the rapid liberalisation of the financial market without carefully considering the economic conditions prevailing at the time. Some scholars argue that Kim's abrupt liberalisation drive was the main cause of the Korean financial crisis in the late 1990s.

foreign direct investment (FDI) came mainly from the advanced industrialised countries seeking markets, resources or greater efficiency, the new forms of FDI from developing countries – such as Korea – sought to acquire new competitive or ownership-specific advantages. He observes that this new type of FDI occurs often in firms producing technology-intensive and branded goods in oligopolistic industries. As mentioned above, by the mid-1990s Korea's exports and industrial structure were fundamentally transformed. The major export industries in Korea have changed from traditional, labour-intensive to capital-intensive – and recently to technological-intensive – industries. With changes in the industrial structure and constant increases in labour costs, many large Korean firms moved their labour-intensive assembling factories to countries with lower labour costs.

Although overseas foreign direct investment (OFDI) of Korean firms was first permitted in 1968, OFDI was constrained by a small foreign currency reserve and the government concerns over capital flight. Following the country's first trade surplus in 1986, the Korean government relaxed its policy on OFDI. In 1994 a number of OFDI policies were introduced to ease regulations and decrease the number of restricted sectors. In 1996 investment restrictions in all sectors and regions for OFDI were completely abolished and regulations on foreign real-estate acquisitions were relaxed (E. M. Kim, 2000). Although the Korean government did not provide subsidies to promote OFDI, it removed barriers to overseas investments and allowed private firms to freely invest in overseas markets (*ibid.*). OFDI therefore became one important dimension of the corporate globalisation of Korea in the 1990s. Korea's OFDI outpaced its inward FDI in 1990, making the country a net exporter of direct investment. The OFDI of Korean firms is concentrated in Asia and North America. It is argued that OFDI in North America constitutes an attempt by Korean

firms to penetrate the North American market created by the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). On the other hand, the high OFDI in Asia is attributed to lower wages in the region and the intension of Korean firms to increase market shares in the fast growing Southeast Asian and Chinese markets.

With the government's support, in the form of the *seggyehwa* policy, the *chaebol* have taken the lead in Korea's OFDI. E. M. Kim (2000) argues that the involvement of the *chaebol* in OFDI has been 'impressive', as in 1994 the total OFDI of the five largest *chaebols* – Daewoo, Hyundai, LG, Samsung and SK – was nearly US\$1.4 billion, accounting for almost 70% of all OFDI. Assembly manufacturing accounted for the largest share of OFDI (E. M. Kim, 2000). The investment patterns of the *chaebol* are diverse in terms of investment regions and businesses. For example, Daewoo has extensive investments in automobile and component production plants in the former Soviet-bloc and Eastern Europe – including Uzbekistan, the Ukraine, Poland, Romania and the Czech Republic – as well as in India, China, Vietnam and the Philippines. It has also established manufacturing electronics and home appliances in the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Poland and Mexico. In addition, Daewoo has expanded its OFDI into telecommunications equipment and services in Central Asia – including Uzbekistan, the Ukraine and Kazakhstan – and China. Hyundai was the first company to take its construction business abroad, notably to the Middle East. In 1992 Hyundai Engineering and Construction has entered the Thai market through a joint-venture housing project worth US\$3.3 billion. It also entered China with investments worth US\$100 million (Ungson, Steers and Park, 1997). Hyundai has also operated OFDI projects in automobile plants and semiconductor factories in the company's gigantic North American market. Samsung, which is the largest Korean *Chaebol*, has pursued a



dynamic OFDI strategy since 1993. Samsung has established a comprehensive manufacturing complex, putting all the components of production in one location in each of OFDI sites, in order to minimise transaction costs and increase synergy between processes (E. M. Kim, 2000). Among Samsung's companies, Samsung Electronics has been the most active company in OFDI. In 1993, Samsung Electronics established a joint-venture manufacturing plant for a telecommunication switching system in Shandong Province in China. It later expanded its products to fibre-optic cables, transmission equipment and handsets (Parsley and Clerman, 1994).

MNCs are the main agents facilitating the globalisation of production. They operate 80% of FDI and are the main employers of 850 export processing zones (EPZs) in developing countries, with a workforce that has been estimated at around 27 million (Gills, 2002). The globalisation of production is based on integrated global value chains, in which there are direct linkages between production, composition and retailing (Barrientos, Kabeer and Hossain, 2004). The globalisation of production involves a high degree of mobility and supply flexibility across countries. The organisation of the production process is facilitated by the mobility of capital and finance, and characterised by just-in-time global delivery systems. It has also altered labour relations, producing new trends in the form of the flexibilisation and feminisation of labour. The globalisation of markets for manufacturing goods has intensified competitive pressures to produce increasingly differentiated product lines at lower costs and with shorter lead times, in an effort to meet varying and specific market demands. Under these pressures, flexibility in the manufacturing industry has been a growing imperative for prompt production runs, rapid shifts between different products, and optimally priced product specification for different markets. Although technological improvement and just-in-time strategies have enabled companies to

ease some of the pressures, global manufacturing production takes advantage of the lower cost through forms of employment that are part-time, temporary, casual and sub-contract based.

Under these circumstances, the participation of women in the labour force has been rising in global production. MNCs' foreign plants, especially global factories in EPZs, have drawn a large number of young women into waged labour. According to a study of local workers in overseas Korean firms in China, Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia, an average of 65% of workers are women (Chung and Seok, 2000). Similarly, according to data from the Bangladesh EPZs authority, 70% of the employees in the Chittagong EPZ were women in 1996 (Gills, 2002). Semiconductor assembly plants – such as electronics plants or labour-intensive manufacturing plants producing garments, textile and shoes – require highly disciplined and less unionised workers for maximum efficiency. Women – particularly young women who are mostly first-time entrants into waged labour – are therefore most suitable for the operation of those global factories. Being a direct source of cheap labour, women workers are central to the off-shore manufacturing factories that produce or assemble commodities for the global market. Women in global production are often subject to particular social relations within global factories and the political economy of FDI in Asia (Gills, 2002; Lim, 2001). Developing countries become excessively competitive in order to attract and maintain FDI, as they believe that the growth of the export manufacturing industry through FDI will create further employment opportunities for the local labour market and increase exports. Foreign capital flows are encouraged by the policies of developing countries that offer profit-tax holidays, duty-free imports and exports, unrestricted remittance of profits, repatriation of capital and so forth. Moreover,

MNCs tend to easily evade labour regulations as many EPZs are excluded from the scope of national labour laws. This results in an increase in the level of labour exploitation, in the form of low wages, excessive working hours and very little job security. Lim (2001) argues that since female employment creation in multinational factories is based on patriarchal exploitation – low absolute and relative wages for women workers – the elimination of these conditions may well bring about an elimination of their jobs, given the ‘footloose’ nature of globally mobile capital and the availability of flexible female labour in other developing countries.

### *The Globalisation of Production and International Migration*

The ‘new industrialisation’ through OFDI in the developing countries of Asia has generated both internal and international migration. Many of the Asian workers in global production are drawn from rural subsistence farming. Often large-scale employment in commercial agriculture displaces small farmers and results in rural to urban migration. Furthermore, the expansion of export manufacturing industries in EPZs and the resultant new jobs bring rural young women into wage-labour. Sassen-Koob (1984a:1144) argues that immigration and global production ‘have evolved into mechanisms for the massive incorporation of Third World women into wage-labour’. She argues that there are systemic links between the employment of women in global production in less developed countries and the employment of immigrant women in developed countries. Sassen-Koob (1984a) points out that a foreign FDI firms dominate the new industrial zones objectively and culturally, thereby creating linkages to the countries where the capital originates. Thus, rural migrants to EPZs become potential international migrants as the presence of foreign firms in EPZs

facilitates access to information and a sense of cultural familiarity with potential destination countries.

In regard to Sassen-Koob's observation, there is a possible relation between expansion of OFDI of Korean MNCs and an influx of Asian migrants to Korea since many migrant workers in Korea come from countries that have been the central sites for OFDI of Korean firms. As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4, the Korean case shows a more systematic link than the U.S. one suggested by Sassen-Koob. For example, in 1991 the Korean government introduced a temporary migration scheme, namely the Industrial Technical Trainee Programme. Those who had been employed in the Korean overseas companies were sent to Korea as trainees for apprenticeships of between six months and two years. Initially, only those companies that established overseas branches through FDI were eligible to apply for trainees. Under this scheme, a thousand workers from Southeast Asia and China migrated to Korea as 'industrial trainees'.

### *Labour Shortages in the Manufacturing Sector*

As discussed above, in an effort to deal with rising labour costs, many large Korean firms have moved their labour-intensive assembly factories to countries with cheaper labour costs, such as China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Eastern European countries. Nevertheless, there are many firms that are compelled to remain in Korea for various reasons (W-W. Park, 2002). First of all, small firms tend to remain in Korea, as their initial capital bases are too small to move overseas and they lack adequate information on the off-shore operation. Second, some industries – such as construction, mining, agriculture and fisheries – cannot move overseas because by

nature these industries are geographically dependent and immobile. Third, time-constrained industries, such as cleaning, printing and dairy products, cannot relocate overseas. These firms, therefore, have had to increase international competitiveness, either by reducing labour costs through automation or by producing high-quality products through substantial investment in R&D. However, for most small and medium-sized firms, technological renovation and product innovation are not easy options, because they involve large-scale and constant investments and their production processes do not often lend themselves to change (Y-B. Park, 1996). All things considered, many small and medium-sized manufacturing firms in Korea have little choice but to rely on the workforce within the limits of the possible.

**Table 2.3 The Number of Vacancies and Shortage Rate in Small and Medium-sized Korean Firms, 1990-2000**

(in 000s and %)

|      | All occupation |           |                   | Production and related |           |                    |
|------|----------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
|      | Employees      | Vacancies | Shortage rate (%) | Employees              | Vacancies | Shortages rate (%) |
| 1990 | 4,428          | 192       | 4.34              | 2,420                  | 166       | 6.85               |
| 1991 | 4,563          | 250       | 5.48              | 2,446                  | 222       | 9.07               |
| 1992 | 4,615          | 197       | 4.26              | 2,320                  | 157       | 6.76               |
| 1993 | 4,534          | 164       | 3.62              | 1,964                  | 119       | 6.04               |
| 1994 | 4,904          | 175       | 3.57              | 2,251                  | 124       | 5.64               |
| 1995 | 4,929          | 183       | 3.71              | 2,161                  | 125       | 5.80               |
| 1996 | 5,218          | 156       | 2.98              | 2,212                  | 106       | 4.80               |
| 1997 | 5,294          | 129       | 2.44              | 2,172                  | 84        | 3.88               |
| 1998 | 4,892          | 32        | 0.65              | 1,874                  | 20        | 1.04               |
| 1999 | 4,870          | 47        | 0.97              | 1,716                  | 28        | 1.63               |
| 2000 | 5,723          | 72        | 1.26              | 1,866                  | 40        | 2.15               |

*Source:* Ministry of Labour, *Report on Employment Prospects*, each year

*Notes:* 1990-1998 (firms with over 10 workers); 1999-2000 (firms with over 5 workers)

Labour shortage rate = the number of vacancies as per cent of total full capacity employment

Since the beginning of the 1990s, however, labour shortages in small and medium-sized firms have intensified. Small and medium-sized firms have suffered serious labour shortage problems as the labour shortage rate for these firms grew

steadily from 1.5% in 1985 to 4.34% in 1990. For the firms engaging in the manufacturing industry, the shortage rate was even more remarkable, increasing from 2.35% to 6.85% during the same period. Furthermore, in certain industrial sectors – including plastics, electrical machinery and commercial fishing – the shortage rate was even higher, reaching 30% and even 40% (*Los Angeles Times*, 10 November 1996). As seen in Table 2.3, by 1991 there were 222,000 production jobs that were not filled with workers. However, after Korea introduced the Industrial and Technical Training Programme<sup>21</sup> in 1991 – which allowed foreigners to enter Korea as ‘trainees’ in small and medium Korean firms – the shortage rates in small and medium-sized firms started to decline from 9.07% to 1.04% between 1991 and 1998 (see Table 2.3). The steady decline of labour shortages after 1992 illustrates that continuous inflows of migrant workers into the manufacturing sector have reversed the labour shortage problem in small and medium-sized Korean firms. Moreover, with the onset of the Asian crisis in 1998 the severity of the labour shortage further diminished.

It is nevertheless worth noting that the decline in the labour shortage rate during the period of the financial crisis (1997-1999) was only a temporary phenomenon. During the early stage of the crisis, the Korean government initiated a repatriation policy leading to large-scale deportation of undocumented migrant workers. The intention of the Korean government with such a policy can be found in the following statement made by a spokesperson for the Korea Federation of Small Businesses (KFSB).

We expect a temporary vacuum in jobs occupied by foreign

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<sup>21</sup> The Industrial and Technical Training Programme will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

workers because Koreans are still reluctant to work in the sweatshop sector, known here as the three-D sector – dirty, dangerous, and difficult. But after a time the three-D market will be swamped with South Korean applicants (*Agence France Presse*, 16 February 1998, cited in Lim, 2003:143).

Contrary to this prediction, whereas the unemployment rate in Korea jumped from 2.6% in 1997 to 7% in 1998, many small and medium-sized firms still faced a labour shortage problem and, in fact, the shortage rate has increased constantly ever since. As seen in Table 2.4, the total shortage rate in small and medium-sized firms was 9.36% in 2002. In particular, the shortage of unskilled labour in production and related jobs was most severe (11.55%) among the categories of occupation. On the other hand, the shortage rates in administrative and managerial jobs (4.14%) and services (3.01%) are comparatively lower than those in production jobs. According to the report of Ministry of Planning and Budget (2003), the smaller firms tend to face a higher shortage rate, and – notably in production and related jobs – the shortage rate in small firms employing 5 to 19 workers is as high as 18%.

**Table 2.4 The Number of Vacancies and Shortage Rate by Occupation in Korea, 2002**

|  | Employees (people) | Vacancies      | Shortage rate (%) |
|--|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Administrative and managerial          | 398,387            | 17,224         | 4.14              |
| Production and related                 |                    |                |                   |
| <i>Professional</i>                    | 71,432             | 7,333          | 9.31              |
| <i>Technical and semi-professional</i> | 171,431            | 17,252         | 9.14              |
| <i>Skilled</i>                         | 603,913            | 72,987         | 10.78             |
| <i>Unskilled</i>                       | 641,416            | 83,768         | 11.55             |
| <b>Sub total</b>                       | <b>1,488,192</b>   | <b>181,338</b> | <b>10.86</b>      |
| Services                               | 16,978             | 527            | 3.01              |
| Sales                                  | 80,081             | 5,862          | 6.82              |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>1,983,638</b>   | <b>204,951</b> | <b>9.36</b>       |

*Source: Ministry of Planning and Budget, Report on the Labour Shortage in the Small and Medium Firm (2003)*

There are a number of structural changes that have caused the shortage of labour in small and medium firms in Korea. First, there has been a change in the Korean demographic structure. While Korean demography took the form of a pyramid until 1960, since the 1980s the demographic structure has transformed into a bell shape, as a result of a decrease in the level of fertility and an increase in the average life expectancy. Based on the national statistical data for the period between 1990 and 2005, the average population growth was 0.7% and the average growth of the population over 65 was 4%. As a result of a change in the age structure, Korea now faces an ageing population and a shortage of young workers. A cheap and abundant supply of young workers migrating from rural areas to cities fed rapid economic growth in the 1960s and the early 1970s, but this rural to urban migration of young workers ceased in the mid-1970s (Y-B. Park, 1996). Second, there has been a 'job mismatch' between the supply and demand for labour. High educational attainment by young people and substantial differentials in wages and in the social status of production and non-production workers have led to a 'job mismatch' in the Korean labour market and this has resulted in labour shortages in the manufacturing sector. As seen in Table 2.5, the number of high school students entering higher education has constantly increased. Accordingly, the number of university and technical college graduates has constantly increased (see Table 2.6). As the number of college graduates increases, those who are likely to enter production work after high school declines significantly. Under these circumstances, a large number of new entrants into the labour market prefer non-production jobs with substantially higher wages, higher social status, better working environments and welfare provisions. The labour force has started to move away from the manufacturing sector – which is



characterised as dirty, dangerous and demanding – to the service sector in parallel with the changes in the Korean industrial structure (Y-B. Park, 1996). Finally, there has been a ‘skill mismatch’ between the supply and demand for labour. Y-B. Park (1996) argues that, since the 1980s Korea has neglected the vocational training of industrial skilled manpower and over-emphasised general and commercial subjects in high school. As a result, although 90% of labour market entrants had at least a high school diploma, most of them had an academic or commercial education. He points out that the supply of industrial skilled manpower based on vocational training decreased from 89,000 to 54,000 during the 1980s.

**Table 2.5 The Ratio of High School Students Entering Higher Education, 1985-2002**

|                        | 1985 | 1995 | 1997 | 2001 | 2002 |
|------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Academic High School   | 53.8 | 72.8 | 81.4 | 85.2 | 87.0 |
| Vocational High school | 13.3 | 19.2 | 29.2 | 44.9 | 49.8 |

*Source: Ministry of Education, A Statistical yearbook of Education, each year*

**Table 2.6 Changes in the Number of University/Technical College Graduates (people)**

|                   | 1995           | 1997           | 2001           | 2002           | Increase Rate* (%) |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| University        | 180,664        | 192,465        | 239,702        | 244,852        | 35.3               |
| Technical College | 143,075        | 175,965        | 232,972        | 239,114        | 67.1               |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>323,739</b> | <b>368,430</b> | <b>472,674</b> | <b>483,966</b> | <b>49.5</b>        |

*Source: Ministry of Education, A Statistical yearbook of Education, each year*

*Note: \*Increase rates of the number of graduates between 1995 and 2002*

### *Changes in Korea's International Relations in the Post-Cold War Era*

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the rapid economic development and

changes in the industrial structure are not the only factor that has brought on the large flow of migrant workers into Korea. Owing to the country's specific geo-political position, the political aspect is also one of the crucial factors in the 'migration transition' (Castles and Miller, 2003) of Korea. In the aftermath of the Korean War (1950-1953), economic decisions in Korea have been made on the basis of security rather than overall economic deliberation. A concern for national security – particularly geopolitical insecurity – during the Cold War, has affected Korea's economic behaviour profoundly. Korea has had to face an unpredictable and antagonistic relations with North Korea and the world powers: China, Japan, Russia and the United States. In the conflict-ridden and turbulent Cold War geopolitical situation, Korea had close economic relations with the United States and Japan, while treading a cautious path with China and Russia. Under these circumstances, the phrases stressing security – such as 'security first (*anbo jaeil*)' and 'the security dimension (*anbojeok chawon*)' – have often been used by policy makers and national leaders in order to justify unpopular decisions and to compel the Korean public and Korean firms to comply with government policies (Song, 1997). However, between 1989 and 1991, when the Cold War reached its terminal stage with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the de-Sovietisation of Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union heralded an acceleration of globalisation, which has altered the very nature of international relations and the nature of Korea's foreign policy. In order to adapt to the pressures and advantages associated with globalisation, Korea has shifted the focus of a national policy from a security agenda to an economic one. Changes in Korea's foreign policy and the normalisation of diplomatic relations with countries from the former socialist bloc – including Russia, China, Vietnam and Eastern European countries – have enhanced economic and cultural relations between Korea

and these countries and subsequently led to vigorous movements of people.

It is generally argued by Korean scholars (e.g., C-J. Lee, 2000; Song, 1997) that the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games marked a turning point in the unfolding of Korea's active diplomatic and economic relations with the Soviet Union, China and other former socialist countries in Eastern Europe. With the two previous games – in Moscow (1980) and in Los Angeles (1984) – having been adversely affected by boycotts from the two opposing blocs, the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games were attended by 161 of the 167 members of the International Olympic Committee, including the Soviet Union and China. C-J, Lee (2000) comment on this event as follows.

The success of the Olympiad inculcated the populace with a sense of national pride and a heightened awareness of internationalism. In particular, South Korea set forth a new national image – that of a vibrant, competent, and efficient modern state – and its leaders developed confidence in their ability to manage domestic and foreign affairs (C-J, Lee, 2000:172).

This 'sports diplomacy' provided the main impetus for Korea's 'northern diplomacy (*bukbang oegyo*)', which attempted to overcome the ideological and security constraints in the Cold War system. The objectives of Korea's northern diplomatic policy are well presented in the following statement by President Roh Tae Woo.

The northern policy of the Republic of Korea will serve to convince socialist countries of the effectiveness and efficiency of freedom and democracy and help them carry out reforms. The ultimate objective of our northern policy, however, is to induce

North Korea to open up and thus to secure stability and peace in the Korean Peninsular. The road between Seoul and Pyongyang is now totally blocked. Accordingly, we have to choose an alternative route to the North Korean capital by way of Moscow and Beijing. This may not be the most direct route, but we certainly hope it will be an effective one (*Korea: A Nation Transformed*, 1990, cited in C-J. Lee, 2000:173).

In September 1990 Korea and the Soviet Union agreed to normalise diplomatic relations. Mikhail Gorbachev was favourably inclined to Korea's northern diplomatic initiatives and economic cooperation. Korea agreed to provide US\$3 billion in economic assistance to the Soviet Union and the two countries agreed that they would respect each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, and settle international conflicts and controversies by peaceful means (C-J. Lee, 2000). Both Korea and the Soviet Union believed that rapprochement between two countries would be a significant step toward eliminating the Cold War conflicts and the longstanding confrontational mentality in the Asia Pacific Region. The success of Korean northern diplomacy with the Soviet Union resulted in Korea's entry into the United Nations and the conclusion of the Basic Agreement ('Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression and Exchanges and Cooperation') with North Korea (ibid.).

The normalisation of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union boosted Korea's efforts to normalise diplomatic relations with China. In the first place, Korea made peaceful approaches toward China, which had experienced diplomatic isolation and economic difficulties following the Tiananmen Square incident. In an effort to advance economic relations between two countries, Korea fully supported China's open-door policy, which was initiated by Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s. In 1985 the

two countries agreed to set up a temporary channel of communication in Hong Kong, through the Korean Consulate and the China News Agency. Relations improved in 1986 when China sent a huge delegation to the Asian Games in Seoul, despite objections from North Korea (Sung, 1994). In 1988 China's Shandong province was designated as an 'open area', in an effort to attract Korean investments. A year after, Korea permitted selected Korean banks to enter into correspondent bank agreements with the Bank of China, thereby facilitating foreign exchange transactions (ibid.). In 1990 Korea sent large numbers of tourists to China, imported Chinese goods and provided financial support for the Beijing Asian Games (C-J. Lee, 2000). In the same year a direct passenger ferry service between China and Korea was launched and the two countries established the Overseas Trade Promotion Offices in Seoul and Beijing. C-J. Lee (2000) argues that, on the whole, the economic imperative was a crucial factor in China's decision to shift to a policy of diplomatic flexibility toward Korea. As a result, in August 1992, Korea and China agreed to normalise diplomatic relations. The two countries agreed to develop 'enduring relations of good neighbourhood, friendship and cooperation on the basis of the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual nonaggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefits, and peaceful coexistence' (*Korea Herald*, 25 August 1992, cited in C-J. Lee, 2000:174). Since then, China has become one of Korea's major trading partners and Korean firms' OFDI sites. Furthermore, Korean government's relaxation of the immigration control toward Chinese nationals after the normalisation led to increasing movements of people between the two countries.

Following the normalisation of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and China, Korea established diplomatic relations with Vietnam in December 1992.

Previously, the relationship between Korea and Vietnam had been hostile. During the Vietnam War (1969-1974), Korean troops were dispatched to assist the United States war against North Vietnam and from that point on the two countries had been enemies rather than allies in the Cold War system. However, although some political issues<sup>22</sup> regarding the war remain unsettled, as far as the economic sector is concerned, bilateral relations between two countries have been increasingly constructive (*The Korean Times*, 10 July 2004). Since adopting the open-door policy of the 'Doi Moi' reforms in 1986, Vietnam has attracted FDI on a large-scale and experienced huge increases in exports – especially textiles and natural resources, such as rice, oil and gas. Since establishing diplomatic relations with Vietnam in 1992, Korea has emerged as one of the largest foreign direct investors in Vietnam. At the end of July 1992, investments by Korean companies in Vietnam stood at US\$4.5 billion, ranking fourth among foreign investors in Vietnam in terms of size (*ibid.*). According to a report of *The Korean Times* (10 July 2004), there are currently 668 Korean firms officially registered in Vietnam. Including Korean firms having made unofficial advances into Vietnam under the names of local firms, the total number of Korean firms operating businesses in Vietnam is estimated as more than 1000. Vietnam has a number of positive factors for Korean FDI. The country is endowed with abundant cheap labour and is located in a geographically strategic place for expanding Korea's business relations with other Southeast Asian countries. Furthermore, since significant levels of FDI from the United States, Japan and Europe have not yet made inroads into Vietnam, Korean investors still have had an advantage in the Vietnamese market. As there are large numbers of Korean firms in

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<sup>22</sup> The Korean government has not yet made an official apology for the act of war and been neglected large numbers of Korean-Vietnamese descendants (*Lai Dai Han*) who were deserted by their Korean fathers, who were mostly military personnel, after the Vietnam War.

Vietnam, many Vietnamese workers have been sent to Korea as 'trainees' and – following China, the Philippines and Bangladesh – Vietnamese migrant workers have constituted one of largest groups of migrant workers in Korea.

### *The Formation of Cultural and Social Networks in the Asian Region*

It is apparent that contemporary migratory flows in Asia are unprecedented in their scale and impact. Nevertheless, the composition of the nationalities of migrant workers varies between receiving countries in Asia. For example, Korea has received large numbers of migrant workers from China, the Philippines, Pakistan, Indonesia, Vietnam and Bangladesh, whereas Japan has received the majority of workers from the Philippines, Thailand, Iran, Brazil, China, Peru and Korea. It is interesting to note that in Korea, where there are relatively high wages and severe shortages of labour, people still move to Japan in search of work. Moreover, workers from South America – such as Brazil and Peru – would rather cross over the Pacific Ocean and come to Japan, than go to the United States. Push and pull factors of international migration – such as wage differences, better employment opportunities or geographical proximity – cannot fully explain this varying range of the nationalities of migrant workers between receiving countries. Seol (1999) points out that push and pull factors between countries cannot give a clearer explanation of why Guatemalan workers would rather migrate to Korea, given the close proximity of the United States to Guatemala. According to him, it is because there has been a social bridge (in this case, Korean firms operating businesses in Guatemala) between Korea and Guatemala, and workers who came to Korea could not find this bridge between themselves and the United States. He correctly argues that, apart from structural

controls, such as immigration laws and regulations, this social bridge between sending and receiving countries has significantly influenced on the composition of the nationalities of migrant workers. In fact, it has been widely discussed that diverse linkages between countries have stimulated and maintained international flows of people (Boyd, 1989; Fawcett, 1989; Lim, 1987; Salt, 1987; Sassen-Koob, 1984a). As discussed in Chapter 1, the diverse linkages between sending and receiving countries are highlighted in migration systems theory, which suggests that 'migratory movements generally arise from the existence of prior links between sending and receiving countries based on colonisation, political influence, trade, investment or cultural ties' (Castles and Miller, 2003:26).

The movement of capital and goods plays the most significant part in building up these linkages between countries. As mentioned above, as Japan and other Asian NICs – including Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore and Taiwan – have rapidly industrialised through the export-oriented strategy and penetrated into other developing countries with their capital and investments, Asian economies have vigorously integrated over the last decades and resulted in increased movements of people in the region. The nationalities of migrant workers in Japan and NICs tend to coincide with these countries' export markets and OFDI sites (Lloyd and Williams, 1996; Martin, 1994; Sekiguchi, 1992; Seol, 1999). As discussed in the previous section, since the late 1980s Korea has become one of the leading export countries, and this process has actively involved OFDI in China, the Philippines, Pakistan, Indonesia, Vietnam and Bangladesh and resulted in large numbers of migrant workers from these countries. In other words, material linkages have been brought by Korean capital investment in these developing countries. As Sassen (1988) argues, the international movement of migrant workers, therefore, takes place in the opposite



direction to the flow of capital and goods.

Material linkages significantly influence the cultural and social linkages between sending and receiving countries. Trade commodities and the presence of foreign firms in developing countries tend to facilitate access to information and a sense of cultural familiarity with potential destination countries. Besides, as regional economic integration and the development of information technology have intensified, people in Asia have become more culturally interactive, easily adapting to diverse or sometimes similar cultures of neighbouring countries. One example is the recent 'Korean Wave (*Hallyu*)' across East and Southeast Asia. The ever-growing demand for Korean pop culture is generating a Korean boom in many Asian countries. In China, one out of four foreign productions on TV is from Korea and the Korea National Tourism Organisation reports that 359 Korean films and soap operas were televised in China over the last two years (*Arirang News*, 1 March 2005). During the first eight months of 2004 nearly three million tourists from Japan, China, Taiwan and other Southeast Asian countries visited Korea (*Korea.net*, 2005). Fans of Korean pop music, TV soap operas and films spend money on trips to Korea as well as Korean goods, fashions, hairstyles and food. Dan Kim, the head of the advertising and special promotion department of the tourism organisation, states that 'the boom has gone from dramas [TV soap operas] themselves to food, fashion, computer games...all things that appear in Korean dramas' (*Yonhap News*, 15 December 2004). The Korean Wave has clearly influenced people's consumption preferences for Korean goods and become a significant cultural and social bridge connecting Korea and people in Asia.

Admittedly, those media linkages can portray attractive conditions that serve as an incentive to move. People in developing countries who become acquainted with

the appearance of Korean life styles, family/social relations, fashion, food and commodity goods on TV and in films may cherish the virtual image of comparatively affluent and developed Korea, thereby being stimulated to come to Korea in search of better economic opportunities. Fawcett (1989) identifies 'Tangible/Mass Culture Connections' as one of linkages<sup>23</sup> in a migration system, which 'consist primarily of mass communication products', such as newspapers, films, books, magazines and TV programmes. He argues that:

[t]hese are the media that can effectively convey images and ideas about places across space to large audiences. A certain amount of international movement is attributable to the media themselves, as in the example of reporters on foreign assignment. The more important aspect of mass culture connections, however, is the information they convey about distant countries. Television and films, in particular, serve to make other places less foreign or strange, thus in modern times effectively reducing a psychological barrier to moving that has been important historically. ... Information is the essential ingredient of this Tangible/Mass Culture linkage (Fawcett, 1989:675).

Cultural and social linkages are also shaped by historical and political factors. British colonial history in India and the subcontinent brought large numbers of workers from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh into Britain in the 1960s (Castle and Kosack, 1985). Colonial experiences have built up historical social linkages between Europe and former colonies, thereby bringing Jamaican workers to Britain, Algerian

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<sup>23</sup> Fawcett classifies linkages into four categories (State-to-State Relations; Mass Culture Connections; Family and Personal Networks; and Migratory Agency Activities) and three types (Tangible Linkages; Regulatory Linkages; and Relational Linkages). For more details on this discussion, see Fawcett (1989).

workers to France and Surinamese workers to the Netherlands. As a result of Japanese colonialism, there are currently large numbers of ethnic Koreans living in Japan (660,000), China (1,960,000) and Russia and Central Asia (450,000) (Seol, 1999). Undoubtedly, these overseas Koreans have formed social linkages between Korea and those countries. There are great numbers of Korean-Chinese migrant workers in Korea and Korean employers prefer these Korean-Chinese workers, who can communicate with them in Korean and understand Korean culture. Similarly, there are large numbers of migrant workers from Brazil, Peru and Argentina in Japan. Most of these workers are the descendants of Japanese (*nikkeijin*) who migrated to those countries in the past and who re-migrate to affluent Japan in search of work. These cases represent social linkages built up by ethnic ties between sending and receiving countries. On the other hand, there are political factors that affect the formation of social linkages. The long-term stationing of U.S. troops in Korea and the Philippines has brought many Korean and Filipino immigrants to the United States. As mentioned in the previous section, the normalisation of diplomatic relations between Korea and Vietnam has ended the long-term antagonism caused by the Vietnam War and resulted in cooperative economic relations between the two countries. Bilateral relations have been increasingly constructive and there are many Korean firms investing in Vietnam. Accordingly, this has led to increases in Vietnamese 'industrial trainees' and migrant workers in Korea.

After all, there have been bridges that connect Korea with other Asian countries. Material, cultural and social linkages have produced large flows of migrant workers into Korea. The following description of Nguyen how Vietnamese migrant workers became acquainted with Korea sums up the preceding discussion.

They have been acquainted with Korea through Korean commodities, such as Samsung TVs, Daewoo motorcars and LG cosmetics. They recognise Korean spicy dishes like *Kim Chi*, famous Korean sport like *Taekwondo* and the Korean national football team which is the strongest in Asia. They also know former President Park Jung Hee who entered the Vietnam War and the White Horse and the Fierce Tiger military units that fought in the war. People in the Ho Chi Min city call the motorway built by the Korean army in the 1970s the '*Dai Han* [Korean]' motorway. ... Korean soap operas are remarkable eye-openers to Vietnamese people, especially the youth. Due to tremendous demand from viewers, most of the programmes have been replayed twice and three times on TV. ... Korean soap operas and films have made Korea familiar with Vietnamese People (Nguyen, 1999, cited in Seol (2000a:158-159) - translated by author).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided the overview of the processes in which Korea has transformed into a major labour receiving country in Asia. The main finding in this chapter is that Korea's 'migration transition' has been influenced by economic, political and cultural/social changes that were interlocked on the local and global levels. In the first part of the chapter the history of the emigration of Korean workers during the colonial and the post-colonial periods was examined. As mentioned in the beginning, the historical overview of the earlier emigration of Korean workers is particularly significant because it helps to explain the current demographic composition of migrant workers in Korea. As we will see in Chapter 4, the 'reverse migration' of ethnic Koreans from China and Central Asia to Korea implicates that there are strong historical and cultural linkages in this particular movement of people. The second

part of the chapter showed that Korea has passed through a 'migration transition' as a result of industrial, demographic and international political transitions and increasing cultural/social linkages between Korea and other Asian countries. Korea has been transformed from a labour-intensive to a capital- and technological-intensive industrial economy based on high-tech industries, services and foreign investment under the globalisation drive ('*segyehwa*') pursued by the state. The Korean case shows a systematic link between the globalisation of production and international migration – i.e. there is a close relation between expansion of the OFDI of Korean MNCs and an influx of Asian migrants to Korea, since many foreign workers in Korea come from countries that have been the central sites for the OFDI of Korean firms. It has shown that as industrialisation has proceeded in Korea, the country has faced the rise of domestic wage levels and serious labour shortages in the manufacturing industry, owing to a demographic transition – which has been manifested in a decrease in the level of fertility and an ageing population – and job and skill mismatches in the labour market. Korea's migration transition has also been affected by the changes in Korea's international relations in the post-Cold War era. The period of between 1989 and 1991 – when the Cold War reached the terminal stage – became a turning point for the acceleration of globalisation that has altered the very nature of geopolitical relations and Korea's foreign policy. Changes in Korea's foreign policy and the normalisation of diplomatic relations with China and Vietnam have enhanced economic and cultural relations between Korea and these countries and led to increasing movements of people. Last but not least, the intensified movement of capital and goods has significantly influenced the cultural and social linkages that connect Korea with other Asian countries, further stimulating flows of migrant workers into Korea.

Korea is now undeniably dependant on migrant labour – particularly for ‘3D jobs’ which local workers reject. The limited success of the repatriation policy and the continuous shortages of labour in the manufacturing industry during the Asian Financial Crisis in the late 1990s suggest that the inflow of migrant workers to Korea will continue. Under these circumstances, the influx of migrant workers presents various new challenges for the Korean state. The following chapters are based on the empirical research and will extensively examine how the Korea state has attempted to reduce the possible negative economic and social impact of migrant workers while, at the same time, sought to enjoy the benefits of migrant labour. The principal objective of this study is to find out how gender and race/ethnicity are significantly implicated in the state structures and policies that control the movement of people, and to what extent the ostensibly gender-neutral process of migration is, therefore, gender specific, resulting in different migration experiences between women and men. As a first step towards this examination, the next chapter will discuss the methodology of the empirical research.

# Chapter 3

## Research Methodology

### Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology used in this study and explains the process by which the fieldwork data was collected and interpreted. It looks not only at the ways in which the empirical study was designed and carried out, but also the process and the principle by which research questions were approached. It aims to systematise as well as expand on the existing approaches to the migration of women discussed in Chapter 1.

Since existing studies are based on problematic social inquiries that merely ‘add women, mix and stir’ within orthodox theoretical frameworks of international migration, it is important to account for the process of knowledge production by discussing not only research methods but also epistemological and methodological issues in this study. According to Harding (1987:3), epistemological issues have significant implications for ‘how general theoretical structures can and should be applied in particular disciplines and for the choice of methods of research’. She notes that there are close connections between epistemology, methodology and research methods. In order to understand such connections, she distinguishes three concepts as follows: a research method as a technique for gathering evidence; methodology as a theory and analysis of how research should proceed; and epistemology as a theory of knowledge. Harding highlights that in order to advance feminist inquiry one should consider important connections between these three aspects.

Epistemological issues and research methods are discussed in separate sections of this chapter. In order to produce a gender sensitive approach to the explanation of international migration, it is crucial to discuss epistemological issues. The first section therefore discusses why this study adopts feminist epistemology as an alternative theory of knowledge that legitimates women as 'knowers'. I go on to ask the following questions: to what extent is a feminist standpoint important for this study?; what are the limitations of feminist standpoint theory? and can feminist standpoint theory provide an epistemic vantage point in this study? The second section discusses research methods, including the process and the techniques of data collection from the field research. In particular, it accounts for important issues concerning the primary method of data collection of this study: semi-structured interviews.

### **I. Feminist Epistemology: A Feminist Standpoint**

Epistemology is a theory of knowledge and answers questions about who can be a "knower", what tests beliefs must pass in order to be legitimated as knowledge and what kinds of things can be known (Harding, 1987). Accordingly, epistemology provides a philosophical grounding for assessing what constitutes valid and adequate knowledge. Feminists argue that a traditional theory of knowledge within mainstream or, more appropriately, 'malestream' social science is androcentric and apolitical by excluding women as knowers. Regarding feminist critique of traditional epistemologies, Harding (1987:3) explains that:

they [feminists] claim that the voice of men (of the dominant class



and race); that the subject of a traditional sociological sentence is always assumed to be a man. They have proposed alternative theories of knowledge that legitimate women as knowers.

Feminists argue that theorising knowledge is a political process. Feminist epistemology explicates the ways in which power relations shape which knowledge is believed and why. Traditional sociological theories, methods and concepts originating in the lives of men from dominant groups (i.e. white, Western, middle-class) have created an incomplete or distorted knowledge. Thus, claiming women as knowers or '*agents of knowledge*' (Harding, 1987), feminist epistemology redefines 'knowing' and 'knowledge'.

Different epistemologies offer different accounts of what constitutes legitimate knowledge and what criteria develop valid knowledge of social life. Harding's typology classifies three feminist epistemologies, namely feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint theory and feminist postmodernism (Harding, 1986; 1987; 1991). Among the three different theories of knowledge, feminist standpoint epistemology most strongly challenges the dominant androcentric epistemology (Harding, 1993). Harding (1996:146) notes that standpoint theorists 'enable us to gain a more accurate understanding of the epistemic authority of knowledge-claims that originate "from below" and suggest guidelines, a "method", for everyone to follow in seeking better to understand nature and social relations'. The core idea of feminist standpoint theory is that women's subordination to patriarchy provides a more complete understanding of gendered social relations than men have, and this gives them 'epistemic privilege'.

## *Researching from Women's Experience*

Feminist standpoint epistemology draws from Marxist standpoint theory which provides an important epistemological means for understanding forms of domination. According to Marxist standpoint theory, which was developed from Hegel's reflections on the master/slave relationship from the standpoint of the slave's life, a proletariat's subordinate position enables her/him to attain dual vision and, therefore, to have an epistemologically privileged perspective on society. The standpoint of the bourgeoisie only captures a surface knowledge of society owing to the vested interests and values of the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the proletariat, being oppressed and central to the capitalist mode of production, has insights both into being the means of capitalist production and the privilege of the bourgeoisie in the capitalist system. The distinct perspective of the proletariat, which emerges from practical – i.e. socially marginal and economically central – activities in a capitalist system provides a more accurate understanding of the social reality and, therefore, has epistemic privilege.

In particular, Hartsock (1983) and Rose (1983) have explicitly based their theories on the Marxist account. Hartsock (1983) argues that just as a Marxist understanding of class and society from the standpoint of the proletariat enables us to understand bourgeois ideology, a feminist standpoint can allow us to get beneath the surface of social relations and understand patriarchal institutions and ideologies. 'Patriarchy', which contributes to the continuation of women's oppression, and 'reproductive labour', which are central to women's lives, are crucial concepts in the formulation of an account of feminist standpoint epistemology. Hartsock (1983) and Rose (1983) argue that women's lives differ structurally from those of men since

women's reproductive work in 'the sexual division of labour' involves a unity of mind, body and heart, contesting the abstract and depersonalised traditional knowledge production. Hartsock (1983) uses the term 'the sexual division of labour', rather than 'the gender division of labour' as she claims that the division of labour between women and men cannot be determined by purely social dimensions. She argues that, whereas the fact that women and not men bear children is not a social choice, women's childrearing is clearly a societal choice implicitly decided by compulsory heterosexuality and male dominance in a society. Following Hartsock's argument on the distinctive experience of women, which differs structurally from the experience of men, Rose (1983) states that women's reproductive work – especially caring work – is distinctive because it is a 'labour of love'. Thus, for Rose, an important aspect of feminist standpoint epistemology is 'an acknowledgement of the central role of emotional involvement' in the process of knowledge production (Tanesini, 1999:141). Given that their experiences differ structurally from those of men, women have a particular and privileged understanding of male supremacy and gendered social relations. For Hartsock and Rose, women do not merely have epistemic privilege over gendered social relations, but also over all knowledge production because of women's different ways of experiencing and because of the feminine cognitive style, which is reinforced through the sexual division of labour.

Smith (1988; 1990) also focuses on women's experience as the basis of her theory of a feminist standpoint. Unlike Hartsock and Rose, for Smith, women's experience is granted an epistemic advantage only over the matters concerning gendered social relations. Smith's account (1988) is derived from her own experience of being a sociologist and a single mother of two children. For Smith, while the intellectual world has always appeared 'genderless', it is certainly 'gendered' and is

in fact 'structured by its gender subtext' (1988:7). She continues that:

[i]nterests, perspectives, relevances [leak] from communities of male experience into the externalised and objectified forms of discourse. Within the discourses embedded in the relations of ruling, women were the Other (Smith, 1988:7).

Emphasising the division of labour that accounts for the different experiences of men and women, Smith (1988:83) argues that women's main responsibility for managing household chores, bearing and caring for children – i.e. what Smith calls 'the concrete and particular' – liberates men from attending to those needs and makes it possible for men to fully participate in 'the abstract mode of action'. For Smith, moving between the two worlds, women sociologists could recognise, explore and find alternative ways of thinking and inquiring from the standpoint of women based on women's own experience – i.e. women's everyday lives.

Nevertheless, feminist standpoint theories have been extensively criticised. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002:74) note that 'attempts by feminist standpoint theorists to tackle productive ways of researching gendered social life at the limits of modern thinking have attracted numerous criticisms'. The foremost critique of the feminist standpoint theory is the risk of essentialism and universalisation. The epistemic privilege of a feminist standpoint posited by Hartsock, Rose and Smith is based on women's shared experience. However, women's experiences are not homogeneous, rather women encounter different problems and different forms of oppression based on social attributes, such as class, race, culture, religion, disability and sexual orientation. Feminist epistemology should avoid a simple question of producing 'women's knowledge about women'. If feminist standpoint theories

generalise women's experiences without recognising differences, they may risk the pitfalls associated with traditional androcentric social science to which is objected by feminists themselves.

The importance of diversity in women's experiences raises a serious question: whether there is 'an experience', shared by all women, to constitute the basis of a standpoint. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) also remark that the grounding of a feminist standpoint in experience is problematic in practice since the notion of experience does not have consistent meanings across all versions of standpoint theories. In fact, the notion of 'experience' itself has been strongly criticised by feminists (e.g. Scott, 1992). The notion of experience raises much wider and deeper discussions within feminism. In particular, it has been the focus of strong criticisms by those who follow post-structuralist perspectives. The main critique of the use of 'experience' as a foundation of knowledge is that experience is contestable, because people's accounts of their lives are constructions of the events, based on interpretations of them. Nevertheless, Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) – citing Skegg's (1997) negative, but sympathetic appraisal of standpoint theory – highlight standpoint theory's achievement in putting 'women' at the centre of knowledge production. They state that '[t]his leaves making sense of 'experience' as an unresolved issue, but one that cannot be abandoned' (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002:76), a view with which I concur. Indeed, experience, in particular shared experience, makes a problematic foundation for knowledge due to its constructed nature and ontological differences. However, this does not mean abandoning the notion of experience altogether, since taking account of women's experience is still indispensable for producing feminist knowledge.

The standpoint debate is related to important issues which are continuously

debated within feminism and, more generally, in sociology. A large number of critiques of standpoint theories are made, particularly from postmodern and post-structuralist perspectives that are critical of universalistic grand theories. The problem of 'difference' in standpoint theories, discussed above, is raised as one of those critiques. Indeed, standpoint theories underestimating the importance of differences among women are in danger of making some women's experiences invisible. Unjustified generalisations should be avoided. However, we should also be careful to avoid over-emphasising 'differences', which could lead us to demean 'gender' as a critical issue or an analytic category. Tanesini (1999) also cautions against putting too much emphasis on difference among women because this attitude tends to construe people with different identities as complete and mysterious 'Others'. In this case, it becomes 'easy to fall prey to all sorts of generalisations which merely reflect our prejudices: e.g. that all black people must be poor' (Tanesini, 1999:148). Despite these criticisms, it is not simply a case of dismissing standpoint theory entirely. Feminist standpoint theory is still meaningful because it is the theory that strongly challenges the dominant androcentric knowledge by 'centring' women's lives and experiences in the production of knowledge. Hence, it is worth examining recent standpoint theories that attempt to overcome the shortcomings of earlier feminist standpoint theories, and looking at their relevance to the research on migrant women in this study.

*'Learning from the Outsider-Within'*<sup>24</sup>

Harding (1993; 1996; 1998) provides an alternative notion of feminist standpoint epistemology and attempts to clarify the critiques of standpoint theory (e.g. Harding, 1998: 146-164). She argues that standpoint epistemology is based on the claim that all knowledge is socially situated and socially constructed. In other words, all knowledge is shaped by 'what the socially advantaged groups in any society want to know and how it benefits them to understand and explain it' (Harding, 1996:148). Harding argues that a feminist standpoint does not arise from the heterogeneous experiences of women, which are 'shaped by social relations' (1991:123), but rather from objective social locations. She posits that these objective social locations are better than others as starting points for knowledge production. Harding (1993:56) explains that:

[s]tandpoint theories argue for "starting off thought" from the lives of marginalized peoples; beginning in those determinate, objective locations in any social order will generate illuminating critical questions that do not arise in thought that begins from dominant group lives.

She then argues that:

[s]tarting off research from women's lives will generate less partial and distorted accounts not only of women's lives, but also of men's

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24 The title of this subsection is borrowed from the title of one of Collins' works: Collins, P. H. (1991) 'Learning from the Outsider Within: The Social Significance of Black Feminist Thought', in Fonow, M. and Cook, J. (eds), pp. 35-59.

lives and of the whole social order (Harding, 1993:56-57).

Harding (1993) notes that women's lives and experiences provide the 'ground', rather than 'foundation' in the conventional philosophical sense, for the production of knowledge. These grounds are 'the site, the activities, from which scientific questions arise' and epistemic advantaged starting points for research (Harding, 1993:56).

Harding (1991; 1996; 1998) argues that feminist standpoint theory therefore sets out guidelines for the 'logic of discovery'. Starting research from marginal lives helps to foster an understanding of the mechanisms of oppression, which maximises the objectivity of the results of research by revealing and understanding previously hidden aspects of social relations. hooks (1984) also argues that by moving marginalised people's lives 'from the margin to centre' of social analysis, we can start social inquiry from vantage points for critical insights into social relations. Adopting Black feminist Patricia Hill Collins' work, Harding argues that the position of marginal lives as outsiders within the social order can generate less partial and distorted accounts of nature and social life. Collins (1991; 2000) argues that Black feminist scholars in outsider-within locations have 'new angles of vision' for critical insights of race, class and gender. Collins (2000:11) illustrates the prominent notion of an 'outsider-within perspective' by providing the example of Black domestic servants working in White households. On the one hand, their 'Blackness' made them perpetual 'outsiders' to the White families they are working for, but, on the other hand, doing caring work for White middle-class women allows them an insider's view and demystifies White power relations in the household. A similar thread of Collins' outsider-within perspective can be found in the work of Smith.



According to Smith's notion of the 'bifurcated consciousness' of women, 'women's situation in sociology discloses to us a typical bifurcated structure with the abstracted, conceptual practices on the one hand and the concrete realisations, the maintenance routines, and so forth, on the other' (Smith, 1990:27).

Starting research from the perspective of outsider-within offers 'strong objectivity in the research, which is one of the prominent features of standpoint theory. Harding (1987; 1991; 1996; 1998) rejects 'objectivism' adhered by a conventional scientific method that purports to be value-free and to maintain a neutral perspective. Instead, she argues that a 'subjective' element in the analysis of fact increases the objectivity of feminist research. Therefore, the researcher is not 'an invisible, anonymous voice of authority', but 'a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests' (Harding, 1987:9). Harding explains the role of the researcher in knowledge production as follows:

We need to avoid the "objectivist" stance that attempts to make the researcher's cultural beliefs and practices invisible while simultaneously skewering the research objects beliefs and practices to the display board. Only in this way can we hope to produce understandings and explanations which are free...of distortion from the unexamined beliefs and behaviours of social scientists themselves...the beliefs and behaviours of the researcher are part of the empirical evidence for (or against) the claims advanced in the results of research (Harding, 1987:9).

Moving the lives of migrant women from the margin to centre of the analysis, this study is based on the standpoint of the 'outsider-within'. Migrant women are 'outsiders' who exist 'within' the very core of the international migration system,

from which they are, nevertheless, marginalised and silenced in the dominant study of migration. They play crucial economic and social functions, but are socially and politically marginalised in the country of destination. Adopting the standpoint of the outsider-within affords the lives of migrant women distinctively valuable positions in understanding social relations that are not visible from dominant accounts. In order to maximise objectivity, standpoint theory allows me as a researcher to examine my own social location within the research project, not just that of the migrant women who are 'researched'. Because researchers and their subjects are located in specific social-historical settings and there is a social relationship between them, research cannot be construed as a process of removing the presence of the researcher (Anderson, 1993:42). Thus, as an 'outsider-within', I (being an immigrant woman researcher working within the discipline of sociology in the West and a married woman in Korean society) could use my own social position to reveal new sociological insights in the study of migrant women.

On the other hand, in relation to race and ethnicity, my social position could be situated in the dominant group of society. The social relationship between me, as a researcher, and migrant women is bound by power relations shaped by race and ethnicity. Ramazanoglu (1989) argues that it is the researcher's role to interpret and conceptualise women's lives to see what could not be seen before. She illustrates, 'a feminist researcher for whom racism is a salient concept could give a very different account of the same women's experiences from one who has no consciousness of racism' (1989:54). As Anderson (1993:42) aptly points out, politically engaged standpoints are not simply the result of biological identity: 'they are not inherent in one's race, sex or class'.

As mentioned above, the essentialist concept of women, which unifies

women's experience based on their roles in reproduction, should be avoided. Undoubtedly experiences of migrant women are bound up in the problems of 'multiple jeopardy' of race, ethnicity and class, not the singular gender inequality (King, 1988). Harding's emphasis on standpoint theory as 'socially located knowledge' makes up for this weakness in earlier standpoint theories. She argues that 'socially located knowledge' is socially located in 'a gender/class/race matrix' (Harding, 1996:153). The subject of knowledge is not treated as being homogenous, but as being heterogeneous and contradictory. Multiple subjects mean that each group has its own standpoint. In this case, one could question which group's standpoint should be privileged. Is it the group that is most oppressed? How then do we measure oppression in order to distinguish the most oppressed? Collins' notion of the 'matrix of domination' helps us to answer these questions (Collins, 2000). Collins rejects additive models of oppression. She points out that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, but particular forms of intersecting oppressions – e.g. intersections of race, gender and class – are interrelated. These intersecting oppressions are organised by the 'matrix of domination'. Collins (2000:18) argues that 'regardless of the particular intersections involved, structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power reappear across quite different forms of oppression'. In this sense, women are all partly victims of oppression and partly oppressors to varying degrees depending on the situation (Tanesini, 1999:153). This is a significant point for this study, which deals with diverse groups of women who may share their positions in Korean society as migrant workers, but whose experiences could be different from each other in terms of race, ethnicity or nationality<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> This issue will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

## II. Research Methods

### *Qualitative Research*

As seen in the first section, feminist research methodology focuses on discovering the social relationship between the researcher and the researched. When research remains too tightly bound by the framework of scientific methodology, the vital texture and nuances in this relationship would be missed out (Anderson, 1993). In this case, qualitative methods are more appropriate for carrying out feminist research because ‘when we study qualitatively, we get to know them personally and experience what they experience in their daily struggles in society’ (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984:7). Taylor and Bogdan (1984) explain that while quantitative research emphasises objectivity and reliability, qualitative research emphasises *validity*. They note that:

[q]ualitative methods allow us to stay close to the empirical world (Blumer, 1969). They are designed to ensure a close fit between the data and what people actually say and do. By observing people in their everyday lives, listening to them talk about what is on their minds, and looking at the documents they produce, the qualitative researcher obtains first-hand knowledge of social life unfiltered through concepts, operational definitions, and rating scales (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984:7).

This study adopts qualitative methods, in particular, semi-structured and group interviews. Semi- and unstructured interviews are widely used methods in feminist research since they ‘convey a deeper feeling for or more emotional closeness to the

persons studied' (Jayaratne, 1983:145, cited in Westmarland, 2001). A qualitative approach to data collection does not represent the complete realisation of diverse lives of migrant women. However, this study is not intended to provide 'rigorous evidence' on the subject of migrant women, but rather attempts to discover the lives of these women and their experiences in the social, political and cultural context of international migration, which could not be seen before.

Some official statistical data are collected and analysed in this study. Numerical information illustrated by tables, graphs or pie charts helps us to clarify and draw a wider picture of the research subjects. However, statistical data should be critically assessed and cautiously used in any analysis. While secondary analyses of statistical data are presented in this study, they do not play a significant role, for the following reasons.

First, women are largely invisible in official statistics collected during the fieldwork. Official statistics were of no use for major parts of this study because there is limited data on migrant women for the purposes of analysis. There is no sex breakdown of figures in almost all government statistical data on migrant workers in Korea. Neither the total population of legal and undocumented migrant workers, the population of migrant workers in different industries, the population of industrial trainees, nor the statistics on working hours and wages are subdivided by sex. Women do not appear as a category in the data on the total number of migrant workers in service industries, in which most migrant women are engaged. Throughout the fieldwork, I interviewed a number of government officials and attempted to collect any data with a sex breakdown, but the figures were largely unavailable. As Oakley and Oakley (1979:188) point out, the function of official statistics may not be 'that of providing material for social scientists, but that of

satisfying the 'needs' of government departments and thus indirectly those of government itself'. The invisibility of women workers in official statistics therefore partly explains their invisibility in policymaking and implementation regarding migrant issues in Korea.

Second, there are certain ambiguities in the official statistical data on migration. There are concerns over accuracy and potential for political manipulation in official statistics because they are produced by individuals within organisational settings and by governmental policies (Irvine *et al.*, 1979; May, 1997). Questioning the 'neutrality' of official statistics published by the state, Irvine and Miles (1979:125-126) argue that its economic and political functions are embedded in the production of official statistics, such as its processing and presentation. An example of the ambiguous nature of official statistics is the data on the number of undocumented migrant workers. There is no clear indication of how data on undocumented workers was collected and produced. The Korean government tends to evaluate its policy measures based on the official data, which often under-represents the actual number of undocumented workers. For example, based chiefly on the decreased number of undocumented workers in the official statistics, the 2005 report of the Korea Labour Institute (the government-funded research institute) evaluates the Employment Permit System (EPS) as a 'generally satisfying' policy after one year of its enforcement. After all, as Irvine and Miles remark, formulating statistics is a social practice. Therefore,

it is not necessarily the case that quantitative analysis makes social research any more 'scientific', let alone more 'objective'. The use of statistical techniques poses its own problems, in the same way as do other ways of presenting and assessing knowledge of society; it

is inherently no more theory-free or value-neutral than other approaches (Irvine and Miles, 1979:3-4).

### *Working in the Field*

The field research was conducted between April and September 2005 in Korea. The fieldwork involved the collection of published and unpublished materials, the participation in conferences and seminars on the relevant subjects of this study, and interviews with 31 migrant women, several male migrant workers, three government officials and four NGO workers<sup>26</sup>. During the fieldwork, I also worked as a volunteer for the nongovernmental organisation, the 'Women Migrants Human Rights Centre (WMHRC)' in Seoul. This was prearranged through email correspondence with WMHRC during the fieldwork planning stage in March 2005. The organisation was selected through an internet-based search, based on its location and the range of activities and services provided for migrant women living in Korea. My voluntary work in WMHRC involved translation of materials published by the centre and assistance for organising a regional conference on women migrant workers in Asia jointly promoted by Migrant Forum Asia, WMHRC and the Joint Committee for Migrant Workers in Korea (JCMK), which was held in September 2005. My initial expectation was that WMHRC would become a useful research site and a potential contact point for informants and interview participants. Working in the organisation gave me access to useful inside information and documents, and an opportunity to take part in seminars and workshops organised by NGOs in the field. Nevertheless, because the activities and services of WMHRC were concentrated on supporting

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<sup>26</sup> See Appendix for the list of interview participants.

mainly cross-border marriage immigrants<sup>27</sup>, it had a limited role as an effective research site to locate the diverse groups of migrant women who I aimed to interview. Accordingly, in addition to WMHRC, I had to establish different contacts to find interview participants from diverse groups.

Over a period of six months, I organised interviews through five different contacts. Interestingly, each contact gave me access to different groups of migrant women. First, I was introduced to Carol, who is a Filipina migrant married to a Korean man, by WMHRC. Carol acted as a crucial informant and introduced me to other Filipina migrants. I also met three Korean-Chinese workers, including a woman who came to WMHRC seeking legal advice for a divorce from her violent husband. Second, nine out of fourteen Korean-Chinese workers were interviewed through the Korean-Chinese Association, which is a group organised by Korean-Chinese migrants in Korea. I made regular telephone contacts with the deputy director of the Korean-Chinese Association, who later became a key informant for Korean-Chinese interviewees who were all working in the service sector. Third, I interviewed three Indonesian workers, including a husband of one of the interview participants, and two Sri Lankan women workers through the Migrant Workers' Centre in Incheon City. This centre is not an NGO, but is operated by a local government. Due to the regional specificity<sup>28</sup>, all of the interviewees through this contact were working in the manufacturing sector. Fourth, I was introduced to a Vietnamese male worker, Tan, who was working in a glass factory where a friend of mine was working as an office manager. Tan became a key informant and introduced me to several groups of Vietnamese workers including three Vietnamese women who participated in the

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<sup>27</sup> Since January 2005, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family has commissioned WMHRC to implement the project of support for marriage migrants.

<sup>28</sup> Large industrial complexes are concentrated in this part of Incheon City.



interviews. Tan's extensive social network with Vietnamese migrant workers in Korea helped me to get inside the close-knit Vietnamese community in Hwa-Sung City and to have an opportunity for group interviews. Finally, I met the Filipina worker, Jenny, in the Migrant workers' Centre in Osan City, in which subcontracted factories of major electronic companies are concentrated. Jenny introduced me to a group of Filipina workers who were resident in the same village.

### *The Process of Semi-structured In-depth Interviews*

Since it was not possible to get hold of lists of migrant women in Korea for the purpose of sampling, I used the method of 'snowball sampling'. The snowball sampling technique helped me to find a number of key informants, who introduced me to other interviewees. Firstly, I interviewed one migrant through each contact. Therefore, at the outset I started interviews with just five people from the five different contacts discussed above. After having completed the interview, they then became informants and were asked to nominate others for interviewing. It was evident that Filipina and Vietnamese migrants who belonged to close social circles were more willing than other groups of migrants to introduce me to their friends for the interview.

All interviews were conducted by myself. Interviews were held in Korean with Korean-Chinese migrants and mainly in English with the other migrants. Some interviews, especially with the participants who had resided in Korea for a long time, were conducted bilingually in English and Korean. This was useful for interviewing migrants whose mother tongue was neither English nor Korean, since Korean words or expressions supplemented the communication in English. The interviews with

Vietnamese workers were assisted by a Vietnamese interpreter, Quyen, who was a Ph.D. student at Sung Gyun Gwan University in Korea. Quyen translated Vietnamese into English and vice versa for each individual interview with three Vietnamese women workers and for a group interview. With the full consent of the interviewees, the names appearing in this study are either real names or pseudonyms.

Apart from a couple of group interviews, interviews were conducted on a one to one basis and each interview lasted between one and two hours. With the consent of the interviewees, interviews were recorded on a digital recorder. I adopted a semi-structured in-depth interview but allowed as much room as possible for the interviewees to talk about their experiences in terms of their own frames of reference. Interview questions were designed using a chronological and biographical approach, exploring the biography of the interviewees in terms of four phases: the pre-migration; the migratory journey; the present life and work; and the prospective plan. Interviews did however not always begin with the questions on the first phase of migration. Starting the interview with the question on the past, such as “how did you decide to come to Korea?” or “what did you do before coming to Korea?” seemed to give the interviewee a negative feeling that she was being interrogated by the researcher. Therefore, interviews often began with rather simple questions about the present, such as the period of residence in Korea, commuting journeys between home and place of work, or current jobs.

Oakley (1981:41) argues that ‘the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship’. The interview participants in this study had to answer questions on their private lives including various aspects of conjugal and

social relations. Furthermore, because the majority of the interviewees are undocumented workers, some were rather apprehensive about being interviewed by a Korean researcher. One of the possible problems for the research based upon interpersonal dialogue is the difficulty in ascertaining whether or not the truth is being told by the interviewee. At the core of the problem and its resolution, there lies the concept of the bond of mutual trust. Accordingly, it was important for me to build a genuine rapport with an interview participant. In this case, the one-way process of interviewing, in which the interviewer detaches him/herself and treats the interviewee as a passive individual or an object for data producing, does not help to obtain best information (Maynard and Purvis, 1994; Oakley, 1987). I, therefore, tried to avoid impersonal and hierarchical relations with interviewees. The personal involvement became an important element in establishing trust among interviewees who were particularly suspicious or feeling uncomfortable about being interviewed. I found that simply 'being a woman researcher interviewing a woman' was not sufficient for an effective interview, and establishing a basis of trust between interviewer and interviewee was not easily established during the interview per se. In fact, maintaining contact with interview participants prior to and after interviews was essential for establishing a good rapport. For example, it took me nearly two months to establish trust and a close rapport with Korean-Chinese workers before the actual interviews were conducted. I regularly visited the deputy director of the Korean-Chinese Association who later became a key informant, and attended Sunday worship services in church where I could meet and informally talk to members or non-members of the Association. Accordingly, informal social meetings with the interview participants were a significant part of the interview process.

Except for Korean-Chinese migrants, most interviews were conducted in the

participants' homes. As most of the interviewees were engaged in paid work during weekdays, interviews were conducted mainly at weekends or in the evening on weekdays. Interviewing at home facilitated a friendly and relaxed ambience. Although conversations during interviews were occasionally interrupted by phone calls or children, home interviews provided me with the opportunity to observe the interactions and lives of interviewees in a family setting. For Korean-Chinese migrants, interviews took place in the office of the Korean-Chinese Association. Because most of the Korean-Chinese interviewees were employed as live-in domestic workers, they were not available for interviewing during weekdays. I, therefore, visited the office of the Korean-Chinese Association on Sunday when those workers came to the office for a social gathering after attending church.

In addition to individual interviews, three group interviews were conducted. Owing to the rigorous crackdown campaign against undocumented migrant workers, which was implemented by the Immigration Bureau between March and August 2005, when I visited Filipina and Vietnamese workers during the summer many were out of work and staying at home to avoid being caught. Thus, on three occasions I had an opportunity to have group interviews with a number of female and male workers who were sharing the same house. Since a group interview was not the main method of fieldwork research, it was rather informal and unstructured. Group interviews provided me with valuable insights into group dynamics and social relations, such as gender relations within the group. Group interviews showed that interaction within the group influenced people's opinions and responses to certain issues. For example, whereas in individual interviews interviewees tended to avoid negative opinions and express unpleasant feelings about Korean bosses or Korean society in general, workers tended to express grievances more openly in group

interviews.

### *The Field Journal*

During the fieldwork, I wrote a field journal. The journal was written after interviews or social meetings with migrant workers. Although it was rather brief and informal, the journal helped me to keep a record of conversations with interviewees outside of the interview setting. During breaks or mealtimes, when the digital recorder was off, some women talked at length about their personal histories, including failed marriages and children left back home. In addition to the interview data, such information certainly provided me great insights into their lives. This type of data was valuable and was therefore included in the data analysis. The journal also helped me to keep track of specific questions covered in the interviews and to record lists of questions missed in the interview. This was particularly useful when repeated interviewing was conducted because it reminded me to ask those questions in the subsequent interview.

### *The Analysis of Interviews*

All the recorded interviews were fully transcribed by myself. The interviews with the Korean-Chinese migrants, which were held in Korean, were transcribed in Korean and the selected transcriptions used in this study were translated into English. Each set of interview data is indexed chronologically according to the migratory stages of an interviewee: the pre-migration; the migratory decision and passage; the present work and life in Korea; and the prospective plan. The chronological index of the data

helped me to analyse the experiences of interview participants in accordance with each stage of the migratory process and to observe the ways in which different migrants related their experiences to their migratory journey. While a qualitative data analysis software package, such as Nvivo, is being increasingly used for data analysis in the Social Sciences, I chose not to use computer assisted methods in the data analysis in this study. By coding text and breaking it down into categories, the use of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) can facilitate the process of data analysis and provide a quick and simple way of finding the frequency with which interviewees use certain words in what contexts. Proponents of CAQDAS also argue that it provides reliable and rigorous qualitative data (Morison and Moir, 1998; Richards and Richards, 1994). However, CAQDAS was less applicable to this study owing to the relatively small volume of data and the in-depth semi-structured interview data, which contained significant non-verbal gestures and particular nuances in each interview. Moreover, in this study, as the interview data represented the biography of the interview participant in relation to her migratory journey, it was important for me to become familiar with the data by understanding and analysing the biographical detail of each participant rather than coding text and breaking her story down into categorised files to find similarities with the stories of other participants.

As mentioned above, this study is not intended to provide 'rigorous evidence' on the subject of migrant women. It rather attempts to discover the lives of those women, which have been largely marginalised in the dominant study of international migration. Through this attempt to recover the experiences of small groups of migrant women, it is hoped that the evidence and arguments presented will provide a stimulus for further debate, not only on the lives of migrant women in

Korea – which has been neglected in scholarly work – but also on the wider and more fundamental issues of gender relations in the process of international migration.

## **Conclusion**

In order to expand on existing approaches to the migration of women that merely ‘add women, mix and stir’ within orthodox theoretical frameworks of international migration, this chapter has discussed the process of knowledge production by looking at epistemological and methodological issues as well as the research methods used in this research. The primary empirical data of this research were collected during a six-month period of fieldwork. This involved both individual in-depth interviews with 31 migrant women and group interviews. Moving the lives of migrant women from the margin to centre of the analysis, this research is based on a feminist standpoint of the outsider-within. Migrant women are ‘outsiders’ who exist ‘within’ the very core of international migration system from which they are, nevertheless, marginalised and silenced in the dominant study of migration. They play crucial economic and social functions, but are socially and politically marginalised in the country of destination. Therefore, a standpoint of the outsider-within attributes to the lives of migrant women distinctively valuable positions in the process of understanding social relations that are not visible from the dominant accounts. From the standpoint of the outsider-within, women’s experiences are socially located in ‘a gender/class/race matrix’ (Harding, 1996). Acknowledging the heterogeneous nature of women’s experiences is a significant point for this study, which focuses on diverse groups of women who may share their positions in a host society as migrant workers, but whose experiences may be different from each other

in terms of race, ethnicity, or nationality. Based on the epistemological and methodological position established in this chapter, the following chapters will focus on the empirical study of the migration of women to Korea, beginning with an exploration of women's decisions on migration and their migratory journeys to Korea.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Migrant Women On the Move: The Road From Home**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines the processes that lead individuals to pursue international migration in search of better employment opportunities. As discussed in Chapter 1, international migration cannot be fully understood either as the result of an individual's rationally-based decision or by structural determinants in the countries of origin and destination. It is recognised that the household and social networks also play a part in facilitating migration. However, as mentioned earlier, this meso-level approach is problematic as an analytical concept as it does not take the power relations of gender into account. It is also questionable whether the social networks perspective can provide an adequate analytical framework for reconciling micro and macro perspectives. The empirical data of this study suggests that while there are evident structural determinations, a potential migrant acts strategically to further her interests by exploiting available resources within the increasingly institutionalised migration system. Therefore, an account of the articulation between structure and agency is needed in the analysis of the process of international migration.

This chapter attempts to integrate empirical data collected from fieldwork in South Korea into the concept of the 'migrant institution', developed by Goss and Lindquist (1995) in the context of the structuration theory of Giddens. This chapter is divided into three main sections. In the first section, I examine Goss and Lindquist's application of Giddens' structuration theory to the process of international labour

migration. Understanding the concept of the migrant institution within the structuration perspective provides an analytical framework for articulating between structure and agency in the process of labour migration to Korea. The second section starts by examining structural changes in the state control of unskilled migrant workers in Korea in the period between 1991 and 2003. It goes on to discuss the current migrant labour control system in Korea. Finally, in the third section, focusing on the pre-migration stage – including individual decisions on migration and various migrant channels chosen by potential migrants – I discuss how migrants acquire their knowledge of structures and exploit available means to realise their ends.

## **I. Articulating Between Structure and Agency in the Analysis of the Process of International Migration**

### *Migrant Institutions: A Structuration Perspective*

Massey *et al.* (1993:451) note that ‘as organisations develop to support, sustain, and promote international movement, the international flow of migrants becomes more and more institutionalised and independent of the factors that originally caused it’. Taking account of the ‘institutionalisation of migration’ through personal and intermediary networks, Goss and Lindquist (1995) further develop the concept of the ‘migrant institution’ to articulate between various levels of analysis. They define the migrant institution as ‘a complex articulation of individuals, associations, and organisations which extends the social action of and interaction between these agents and agencies across time and space’ (Goss and Lindquist, 1995:319). They develop this concept in the context of the structuration theory of Giddens and apply this to the

case of the Philippines.

Identifying weaknesses in extant theories of international migration with respect to the articulation between structure and agency, Goss and Lindquist (1995:331) find ‘a useful set of sensitising devices’ in the theory of structuration. Despite a number of limitations inherent in the theory of structuration, they argue that the theory provides ‘a means to transcend the macro-micro dichotomy and may help us to begin to develop a theoretical conception of social networks necessary to a fuller understanding of the process of labour migration’ (Goss and Lindquist, 1995:331). Structuration refers to ‘the dynamic process whereby structure comes into being’ (Giddens, 1976:121, cited in Parker, 2000:6). Thus, it is literally the process of producing structures. Thompson (1989:57) notes that in an attempt to deal with the problem of the relationship between action and social structure, there is ‘the shift from a static to a dynamic perspective from a theory of structure to a theory of structuration’. Recognising structures as the product of historical processes, i.e. structuration, Giddens (1984) argues that, through recursive human social activities, agents *reproduce* the conditions that make the activities possible.

In their study, Goss and Lindquist (1995) pay particular attention to Giddens’ concept of the ‘duality of structure’, which is conceived as a dialectical process by which the ‘structural properties of the social system are both the medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organise’ (Giddens, 1984:25)<sup>29</sup>. Rather than seeing action and structure as separating entities, Giddens views that both are constitutive of each other. Thus, ‘structure is not ‘external’ to individuals’ (Giddens, 1984:25) – both are interdependent.

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. the dualism of structure and agency (Archer, 1982; Mouzelis, 1991, 1995). The critics of Giddens reject the duality of structure and agency, and hold the view that they are logically exclusive of each other. Notwithstanding the significance of this debate, I do not intend to discuss the controversies associated with structuration theory, for reasons of limited space.

Goss and Lindquist (1995) argue that the insight of the Giddens' 'dialectic of control' is particularly important in understanding the operation of dual relations within migrant institutions. Giddens (1984:16) claims that:

[w]e should not conceive of the structures of domination built into social institutions as in some way grinding out 'docile bodies' who behave like the automata suggested by objectivist social science. Power within social systems which enjoy some continuity over time and space presumes regularized relations of autonomy and dependence between actors or collectivities in contexts of social interaction. But all forms of dependence offer some resources whereby those who are subordinate can influence the activities of their superiors. This is what I call the dialectic of control in social systems.

Therefore, according to the Giddens' 'dialectic of control', relations between domination and subordination are reciprocal, and even 'the most seemingly "powerless" individuals are able to mobilise resources whereby they carve out "space of control"' (Giddens, 1982:197, cited in Goss and Lindquist, 1995)'.

For Giddens, structures are rules and resources that both constrain and enable the actions of individuals. In this respect, structural constraint operates through the individual in the cumulative, everyday strategic decisions and actions that they make (Giddens, 1984). Human agents acquire a knowledge of structures to realise their ends, and through individual and collective actions these structures are reproduced and transformed. Even though social knowledge and power are unequally distributed and put individuals in a 'weak' social position, individuals tend to maintain some sense of autonomy and capacity for strategic action. Goss and Lindquist (1995:333)

argue that 'even the most marginalized populations are thus able to mobilise resources and rules in order to influence the actions of the most powerful towards them'.

Drawing upon Giddens' structuration theory, Goss and Lindquist (1995:335) suggest that 'what has previously been identified as migrant networks be conceived as migrant institutions that articulate, in a nonfunctionalist way, the individual migrant and the global economy, "stretching" social relations across time and space to bring together the potential migrant and the overseas employer'. In other words, potential migrants as knowledgeable agents use their understanding of the rules and exploit their access to allocative (economic) and authoritative (political) resources within the migrant institution in order to attain overseas employment. Goss and Lindquist (1995) note that 'social networks may become migrant networks' since successful migration experiences are followed by friends, relatives and others, reinforcing the strategies and social relationships on which they are based.

Goss and Lindquist (1995) conclusively argue that through the routinisation of the social practices of migration and the articulation of the strategic goals of individuals and institutional agents, international migration becomes *institutionalised*, and access to migration is conditioned by the operation of specific rules and the mobilisation of resources. The migrant institution then becomes a permanent feature of social life, consisting of knowledgeable individuals and the agents of organisations and other institutions – including social networks and the state.

The concept of the migrant institution emphasises the increasingly significant role played by intermediary agencies in international migration. This is particularly relevant to the current migration process in Asia, which has become increasingly institutionalised. Goss and Lindquist argue that, even though institutionalised

migration leads to a corrupt and deceptive system of migration, individuals still seek employment overseas. They observe that:

this is an indication of relative deprivation in the country, but it is also the result of the selective flow of information through the migrant institution. Institutional agents control knowledge about the risks and disappointments of international migration, but it is obviously in their interests to hide these and to promote the advantages of overseas labour (Goss and Lindquist, 1995:344).

### *Migrant Institutions in the Gendered Process of International Migration*

Goss and Lindquist's adaptation of structuration theory provides us with a dynamic perspective on the process of international migration. In particular, the account of social reproduction and the enabling character of structure enables us to conceptualise an individual migrant as an agent in her or his migratory project. It is argued that Goss and Lindquist's application of structuration theory to migration is 'innovative and constitutes a long overdue attempt to resolve the agency/structure impasse of migration theory' (Phizacklea, 1999:39). Chant and Radcliffe (1992:19) also remark that the structuration perspective is 'perhaps the most fruitful way to examine the rationality and selectivity of broad movements of population, without at the same time losing sight of the micro-social circumstances which give rise to participation in migration'.

Nevertheless, it is important to avoid a holistic approach to the concept of 'knowledgeable agents'. Clearly, the range of allocative and authoritative resources available to individuals are differently distributed and very often structurally

circumscribed. Even when the most marginalised interpret their situation and can mobilise available rules and resources, the modalities of the strategic use of rules and resources by agents may vary between individuals, depending on their position within social institutions. This becomes apparent when we consider the different levels of knowledge of rules and access to resources between women and men in their pre-migration stages. In this case, agency becomes dependent on structurally conditioning factors which differentially distribute the capacity to influence outcomes (Parker, 2000). Unequal distributions of social knowledge and power as well as rules and resources between women and men make women opt for different strategic use of resources. Differently 'sedimented' practices of women and men – who draw selectively on institutional rules and resources in pursuit of their interests – become institutionalised and this, in turn, influences the gendered process of international migration.

## **II. The Structure of Dominance: the State Control of Unskilled Migrant Workers in Korea**

As examined in Chapter 2, the structural background of the influx of migrant workers to Korea has been formed as a result of the rapid socio-economic development of the country and the increasing demand for workers to fill the vacuum in 3D jobs in the Korean labour market. Combined with the push factors in the sending countries, good employment opportunities for unskilled workers and relatively high wages have made Korea an increasingly attractive destination for international labour migrants in Asia. Regardless of the demand for migrant labour in labour-scarce sectors, until July 2004 the Korean state strictly prohibited unskilled

migrant workers from entering Korea for the purpose of employment. Nevertheless, since the late 1980s migrant workers have continuously flowed into Korea resulting in a large number of undocumented workers. Despite a series of changes in the state policy on the control of migrant workers in Korea, the state policy on migrant workers has been unrealistic and failed in many aspects. This section aims to highlight and provide dynamic insight into the changes in the state policy that have occurred between 1991 and the present.

### *An Overview of the Changes in the State Control of Migrant Workers in Korea*

#### The Industrial and Technical Training Programme for Foreigners (ITTP)

In response to severe labour shortages in labour-intensive industries, during the late 1980s small and medium firms began to demand that the government should allow them to import foreign workers. However, trade unions opposed the import of foreign labour, arguing that migrant workers would lead to a deterioration in the level of wages and working conditions, and take jobs away from the local workforce. There was also no consensus on the issue of foreign workers among government ministries, since they had different views on the possible impact that migrant workers would have on Korean economy and society (Y-B. Park, 1994; Seol, 1999). On the one hand, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy and the Ministry of Construction argued that foreign workers should be imported to alleviate labour shortages, especially in the mining and manufacturing sectors. On the other hand, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Health and Welfare opposed the importation of foreign labour, arguing that the problem of labour



shortages could be resolved by utilising sectors of the domestic labour force, such as the female labour force.

Under these circumstances, the Korean government introduced the Industrial and Technical Training Programmes (ITTP) as a compromise in 1991. Based on the Japanese model of the Industrial and Technical Training Programme for Foreigners, the ITTP allowed foreigners to enter Korea as 'trainees', and not workers, for a period of six months with a possible extension of an additional six months, subject to the consent of the Ministry of Justice. Under the 1991 ITTP, the companies that could bring in foreign trainees were restricted to those meeting the following criteria: companies, in accordance with the Foreign Exchange Act, investing in foreign countries jointly with a foreign company; companies providing technical support to foreign countries based on the Foreign Technological Development Act; companies exporting industrial supplies to foreign countries based on the Import-Export Act; and companies recognised by the government ministries as legitimate for hiring foreign trainees (Seol, 2000b). In other words, only those workers who had been employed in Korean overseas companies were sent to Korea as trainees for apprenticeships of six months to a maximum of a year, and only those companies that established overseas branches through FDI or joint venture relationships with foreign companies were eligible to apply for hiring foreign trainees. However, whereas the 1991 ITTP benefited only those companies meeting the specific criteria – which tended to be relatively large-size companies with sufficient capital for overseas FDI – many small and medium firms facing severe labour shortages were not eligible for hiring foreign trainees. The Korea Federation of Small Business (KFSB) asked the government for an extension of the period of training and a loosening of the eligibility criteria for companies in terms of the ITTP. As a result, in

September 1992 the government permitted small and medium firms without overseas FDI to hire foreign trainees.

Nevertheless, there was still an insufficient number of trainees to supply manpower to small and medium firms, while the number of undocumented migrant workers dramatically increased to 82% of total migrant workers in 1993 (Ministry of Justice, cited in Seol, 2000b). In February 1993 the newly elected government decided to stop importing foreign trainees and attempted to crack down on undocumented migrant workers. Nevertheless, due to strong resistance from employers, in November 1993 the government changed its position and introduced slight amendments to the policy, which maintained the ITTP and allowed for an increase in the number of foreign trainees and an extension in the length of the training period from one year to a maximum of two years. The ITTP was placed under the supervision of the Korea International Training Cooperation Corps (KITCO) rather than of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy. The KITCO, an affiliate of the KFSB, was an imitation of the Japan International Training Cooperation Organisation (JITCO) (Seol, 2000b). Seol (2000b) points out that, being an affiliate of the KFSB, the KITCO tended to serve the interests of employers.

The government gave KITCO the right to exclusively conduct the process of importing and distributing trainees. While JITCO was composed of three different parts representing labour, business and government, KITCO was a subsidiary organisation of an employers' association and thus functioned to meet the interests of the employers. Because KITCO was working on behalf of the employers, it was inevitable that the ITTP would not be successful (Seol, 2000b:10).

The KITCO recruited trainees through 27 international manpower recruiting agencies in 14 Asian countries, including Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Iran, China, Vietnam, Thailand, Pakistan, the Philippines and Uzbekistan (Ministry of Labour, 2000, cited in J. Kim, 2003)<sup>30</sup>. Trainees had to be between 20 and 50 years of age and had to have no criminal records.

**Table 4.1 The Number of Migrant workers in Korea, 1987-2000 (Persons)**

| Year               | Total migrant workers | Skilled workers |                                   | Unskilled workers            |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
|                    |                       | Professionals   | Industrial and technical trainees | Undocumented migrant workers |
| 1987               | 6,409                 | 2,192           | 0                                 | 4,217                        |
| 1988               | 7,410                 | 2,403           | 0                                 | 5,007                        |
| 1989               | 14,610                | 2,474           | 0                                 | 12,136                       |
| 1990               | 21,235                | 2,833           | 0                                 | 18,402                       |
| 1991               | 45,449                | 2,973           | 599                               | 41,877                       |
| 1992               | 73,868                | 3,395           | 4,945                             | 65,528                       |
| 1993               | 66,323                | 3,767           | 8,048                             | 54,508                       |
| 1994               | 77,546                | 5,265           | 24,050                            | 48,231                       |
| 1995               | 142,405               | 8,228           | 52,311                            | 81,866                       |
| 1996               | 210,494               | 13,420          | 68,020                            | 129,054                      |
| 1997               | 245,399               | 15,900          | 81,451                            | 148,048                      |
| 1998 <sup>31</sup> | 157,689               | 11,143          | 47,009                            | 99,537                       |
| 1999               | 217,384               | 12,592          | 69,454                            | 135,338                      |
| 2000*              | 285,506               | 19,063          | 77,448                            | 188,995                      |

*Note:* As of December 31, each year, except July 31, 1992

*Sources:* 1987-1999, Ministry of Justice, cited in Seol, 2000b:8; \*2000, Ministry of Justice, 2005

J. Kim (2003) notes that the increasing popularity of the ITTP among small and medium businesses in the manufacturing sector paved the way for other industries. The government allowed the garment and footwear sectors to bring in

<sup>30</sup> Seol (2000:11) argues that as the KITCO had the rights to selecting those agencies, brokers in sending countries bribed staffs in the KITCO to be recruited, and as a result, the KITCO became 'a hotbed for many brokers' and bribery.

<sup>31</sup> The dramatic decrease in the number of migrant workers in 1998 was due to the economic crisis in 1997. Around 100,000 migrant workers left Korea at the end of 1997 alone (Seol, 2000). It is nevertheless interesting to note that the situation was reversed in a year later.

20,000 trainees in 1993 and 10,000 additional trainees in the following year. In 1995 even large enterprises in the footwear sector became eligible to hire trainees (Seol, 2000b). The government also introduced the ITTP in fisheries in 1996 and the construction industry in 1997 (J. Kim, 2003). By 1997, the total number of foreign trainees in manufacturing, fisheries and construction industries was 81,451 (see Table 4.1) and the training period was extended to a maximum of three years.

As more trainees entered Korea, the government's incompetence in managing the ITTP became apparent. Although there were continuous demands for migrant labour to fill labour shortages, rather than introducing an appropriate policy for importing migrant workers, the state maintained the ITTP, which had become a site for generating undocumented migrant workers. Under the ITTP significant numbers of foreign trainees escaped from their designated companies and worked as undocumented migrant workers in other companies, which paid them better wages. As many firms still experienced labour shortages, it was not difficult for the undocumented migrant worker to find a better-paid job. As Table 4.1 shows, this resulted in a dramatic increase of undocumented workers. In the absence of any willingness to make necessary policy reforms, the government repeatedly extended the repatriation period of foreign trainees as a desperate measure to alleviate the labour shortages. Lee and Park (2005:147) argue that the Korean government introduced the ITTP as 'a side door to bring in unskilled foreign workers'. They posit that the ITTP was a failure both in alleviating labour shortages and in cracking down on undocumented migrant workers. The following interview with a government official in the Ministry of Labour shows how the government failed to control the migrant workforce.

While the Korean government has stubbornly adhered to the prohibition of importing unskilled migrant workers, it has overlooked the problem of the severe labour shortages in small and medium firms. Even though many foreigners have entered Korea with tourist visas and are illegally working in those firms, the government does not have a plausible justification for the crackdown on the illegal employment because it is so obvious that there is no alternative supply of manpower for the firms apart from those illegal migrant workers. Repeatedly extending the repatriation date for undocumented workers during last 10 years, the government has been turning a blind eye to the problem of the control of migrant workers. (*Deputy Director of Foreign Workforce Policy Division, Ministry of Labour, interview with the author, August 2005*)

The increase in the number of undocumented migrant workers under the ITTP coincided with an increase in the number of human rights violations against both trainees and migrant workers. Even though foreign trainees have provided an indispensable workforce for essential industries in Korea, they have been treated as 'trainees' and this legal status has denied them rights as workers. Moreover, as J. Kim (2003) notes, most companies failed to provide constructive instructional and skill-training programmes. Even where they did, these skills were not easily transferable since there was no guarantee that the trainees would be employed in similar jobs in their home countries after the apprenticeship in Korea. Under the ITTP, trainees were often saddled with a large amount of debt after paying brokerage fees to recruitment agencies. The role of intermediaries in migrant institutions pointed out by Goss and Lindquist is evident in the process of recruiting trainees. Seol (2000b) points out that trainees pay between US\$2,000 and US\$8,000 for a

placement in Korea, and these excessive fees are charged by agencies that often bribe the KITCO to be appointed as the recruitment agencies for the ITTP. While trainees are working in Korea, the agencies deduct payment from trainees' monthly wages, which are in legal terms merely 'allowances'. Given the small monthly allowances they earn, it proves extremely difficult for trainees to pay back the debts. As a result, a significant number of trainees have left their designated companies to find better paid employment. Once they leave their sponsors, they become undocumented migrant workers and are forced to endure long working hours and poor working conditions, without proper legal protection<sup>32</sup>.

Under these circumstances, in January 1995 14 Nepalese trainees held a sit-in in front of the *Myong-dong* Catholic Church<sup>33</sup> in Seoul, protesting against unjust treatment and human rights abuses by their employers and the Korean government. This event drew public attention to the problem of the ITTP. During the protest (from 9 to 17 January 1995) over 38 human rights organisations and NGOs in Korea joined rallies and formed the Association for the Human Rights Protection of Foreign Industrial and Technical Trainees, which later became the Joint Committee of Migrant Workers in Korea (JCMK) (Seol, 2000b). The protesters argued that the ITTP was a 'modern form of slavery' that should be eradicated (J. Kim, 2003; Seol, 2000b; 2004).

In 1996 migrant workers and NGOs started a campaign for the Protection Act for Foreign Workers. In 1997 two major parties – including the ruling New Korea Party and the opposition National Congress for New Politics – submitted a bill, which would subsequently become the Employment of Foreign Workers Act

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<sup>32</sup> Further details of the employment condition of undocumented migrant workers will be discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>33</sup> The *Myong-dong* Catholic Church is the historically famous and popular site of non-violent protest in Korea.

(EFWA), to the National Assembly. The bill was intended to introduce 'the Employment Permit Programme for Foreigners'. Academics, human rights activists and policy makers considered the EFWA to be an urgent reform that would provide an alternative solution to the economic and social problems associated with the ITTP. The bill was however not passed by the National Assembly, on account of strong opposition from employers (especially the KFSB), government ministries and politicians. The KFSB and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy in particular, strongly objected to the reform of the ITTP, arguing that the Employment Permit Programme would increase the wages of migrant workers and consequently the cost of production, as migrant workers would be protected by the Labour Standard Act under the EFWA<sup>34</sup>. Undoubtedly, by paying low wages (strictly speaking, 'allowances') and not being bound by any labour related regulations, employers derive substantial benefits by hiring industrial trainees.

### The Working After Training Programme for Foreigners (WATP)

Finally, in April 2000 after a long dispute over the EFWA, the government introduced the Working After Training Programme for Foreigners (WATP) along with the ITTP. Once again, the WATP is managed by the KITCO under the auspices of the KFSB. It represents a mere extension of the ITTP. As the name indicates, the programme consists of two stages: two years of training and one year of paid

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<sup>34</sup> Opposing the EFWA, a senior official at the KFSB argued, 'with the introduction of the system, small firms' labour-cost burdens will rise by 400 billion to 500 billion won a year, further worsening their financial difficulties' (cited in Lee and Park, 2005:152). In an interview with a government official in the Ministry of Labour it was noted that:

At the present, there is a general consensus on the abolition of the trainee programme within the government, but we cannot yet make a decision on that because of the strong opposition from the KFSB. You cannot imagine how much the KFSB has exercised its power of influence over the government policy on the employment of migrant workers (*interview with the author, August 2005*).

employment. Under the WATP, foreign trainees, who pass skill tests after the two-year training, may work for one year as 'workers', thereby changing their 'trainee' visa into the 'working after training (E-8)' visa. During the period of working after training, migrant workers are protected by the Labour Standards Act, the Minimum Wages Act, the Industrial Accident Compensation and the Industrial Safety Act. In December 2000 the government revised the period of working after training to one year of training and two year of paid employment.

In 2002, following the instructions of President Kim Dae-Jung, the ruling New Millennium Democratic Party again proposed a bill for the EFWA. Lee and Park (2005) note that the bill was intended to safeguard the human rights of migrant workers. This reflected President Kim's belief that the violation of the human rights of migrant workers should not be allowed in Korea. The second attempt of the government to introduce the EFWA was massively supported by NGOs (including the JCMK) and civil society. The Ministry of Labour also released a policy report, calling for a reform of the current policy, which continuously generated human rights abuses and labour exploitation. The proposed EFWA bill was challenged again by the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy, the two opposition parties and the KFSB. Once more, owing to the strong opposition from employers and conflicting interests among government ministries, the bill was not even submitted to the Standing Committee of the National Assembly (Lee and Park, 2005).

After two failed attempts in 1997 and 2000, the EFWA bill was finally passed in August 2003 and was enacted in August 2004. Under the EFWA, the Employment Permit System (EPS) for foreigners was introduced. Praising the EFWA as one of 'the advanced pro-foreign workers legislation currently practiced in



the world', Lee and Park (2005:154) argue that 'the mobilisation of international human rights norms, the growth and the cooperation among Korean civil society groups and the strong coalition between government and these civic groups are key factors for this success'. It is however important to note that, under the EFWA, the ITTP and WATP still remain. Seol (2004) argues that the Korean government could not abolish the ITTP because it would be difficult to introduce the EPS unless the interests of the employers were protected to a certain extent.

While the influence and efforts of civil society and political actors on the reform of policy should not be underestimated, it can equally be argued that the state has strategically changed its position to solve the escalating problems in the control of migrant labour. The government began to recognise that the shortage of labour in the certain industries was not temporary but a permanent feature of the Korean labour market, attributable to the aging population and the higher educational attainment of young people that resulted in job and skill mismatches in the labour market. Until then, the government had turned a blind eye to the increasing number of undocumented migrant workers<sup>35</sup>. After 13 years of the problematic ITTP, establishing a constructive management system for migrant labour based on legal guidelines was an urgent matter for the government. The following interview with a government official in the Ministry of Labour illustrates the situation at the time of the introduction of the EPS.

In the case of Korea, the policy measure on the management of migrant labour was not introduced systematically. The EPS was introduced when the problems caused by the 'mutant' called the

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<sup>35</sup> By the end of 2002, 79.8% of the total migrant population were undocumented (Ministry of Justice, 2005)

ITTP had been already deeply festered and the number of undocumented workers reached 30,000 constituting 80% of the total migrant workforce. The foremost priority for the government was to curb the number of undocumented migrant workers at that time. (*Deputy Director of Human Resource Development and R&D, Office of the Prime Minister and Former Deputy Director of Foreign Work-force Policy Division, Ministry of Labour, interview with the author, August 2005*)

Following the passing of the EFWA legislation, the government made a considerable effort to curtail the number of undocumented workers. In an effort to utilise the existing migrant labour force, the government granted an amnesty for undocumented workers who had resided in Korea for less than four years at the time of March 31, 2003. According to official figures, the government's effort to reduce the number of undocumented workers was reasonably successful. By the end of 2003, the number of undocumented migrant workers reached 35.5% of the total migrant population, the lowest point since 1987. Around 64% of the total undocumented workforce (184,000 out of 289,239) were granted an amnesty during this period. This indicates that the decreased number of undocumented workers was mainly due to the legalisation of undocumented migrant workers. However, for undocumented workers who had worked for more than four years, there were two choices: voluntary departure or forced deportation. A government official in the Ministry of Labour explains that the government limited the period to only four years of residency because it was seriously concerned about the permanent settlement of those undocumented workers who had resided in Korea for a long-period of time. As Seol (2004) points out, very few voluntarily returned to their home countries and many remained in Korea and continued to work as undocumented workers. Except for a

very few, the majority of the respondents in this study are those undocumented workers who remained in Korea because they did not qualify for the 2003 amnesty.

### *The Current Policy on the Control of Unskilled Migrant Workers in Korea:*

#### *The Employment Permit System (EPS)*

#### The Principle of the EPS

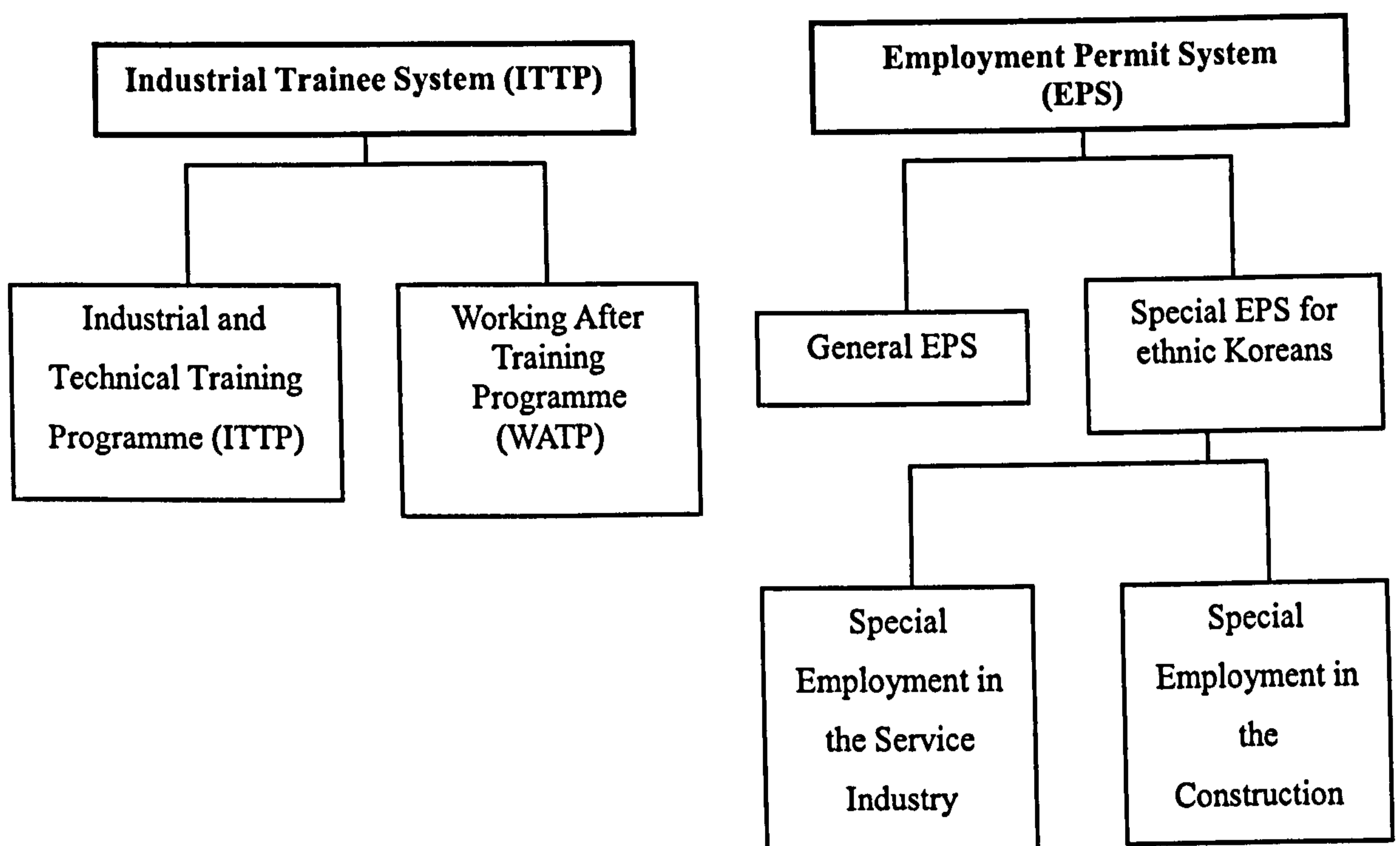
After one year of preparation, the Employment of Foreign Workers Act (EFWA), which stipulated the introduction of the Employment Permit System (EPS), came into force in August 17, 2004. The Korean government defines the EPS as follows:

The Employment Permit System allows employers who have failed to hire native workers to legally hire an adequate number of foreign workers and is the system that government uses to introduce and manage foreign workers in Korea in an organised manner (Ministry of Labour, 2007).

According to the EFWA, the term, 'foreign worker' refers to a person who does not have a Korean nationality and works or intends to work in business or workplace located in Korea with the purpose of earning wages' (Act No. 6967, the Foreign workers employment Act, annexed in Ministry of Labour, 2003). However, the definition is only applied to unskilled workers who are granted E-9 visas based on the Immigration Control Act, and professional or skilled foreign workers and

industrial trainees under the ITTP are excluded from the EFWA<sup>36</sup> (see Figure 4.1). As the name of the system indicates, the EPS (cf. the work permit system) allows employers to hire migrant workers, who are only permitted to work in the designated companies and have no rights to choose or change their workplace once they enter Korea.

**Figure 4.1 The Structure of the Foreign Workforce Management in Korea**



The basic principle of the EPS is that the importation of migrant workers should complement the Korean labour market. In other words, only businesses that are unable to employ native workers are allowed to hire migrant workers. The Korean government asserts that this is intended to prevent the deterioration of wages and working conditions, and a reduction of employment opportunities for local workers.

<sup>36</sup> According to the government policy plan, the ITTP is to be abolished by January 1, 2007. However, at the time of writing, there was no information on the initiation of the plan provided by the Korean government.

The basic principle of the EPS is that there should be a discriminatory measure in favour of local workers. For example, the safeguarding of the employment opportunities for local workers is given priority over the interests and human rights of migrant workers. (*Deputy Director of Foreign Work-force Policy Division, Ministry of Labour, interview with the author, August 2005*)

Following the principle of the EPS, all employers who want to hire migrant workers must initially advertise job vacancies in the Employment Security Centre of the Ministry of Labour or in the mass media. When the employer cannot recruit native workers after one month of the vacancy notice<sup>37</sup>, the Ministry of Labour acknowledges the labour shortage in the company and issues the employment permit. The employer then recruits suitable persons from the list of foreign job applicants at the Employment Security Centre.

Under the EPS, migrant workers are limited to work in five industries: manufacturing; construction; agriculture and livestock; offshore and coastal fishing; and service industries. The applicable industries and the number of migrant workers are regulated and adjusted by the Foreign Workforce Policy Committee, which falls under the control of the Prime Minister. The maximum period of employment is limited to three years.

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<sup>37</sup> The specified period of the vacancy notice has been reduced over the time, and the government has recently relaxed the rule that the companies can apply for the employment permit after three days of the job advertisement.

## The Sending Countries for the EPS

The Korean case illustrates that the state plays a significant role in the migration system. The intervention of the Korean state in the recruitment process of migrant workers presents a clear example of the institutionalisation of international migration. The government asserts that one of the main aims of the EPS is to eradicate the corruption associated with private recruitment agencies in the sending countries, which is closely related with human rights violations and the overstay of migrant workers. Under the EPS, the entire process of the employment of migrant workers – including the vacancy notice, recruitment and hiring – must therefore only be done by public organisations in both Korea and the sending countries. The Foreign Workforce Policy Committee selects the sending countries and decides the quota of migrant workers for each country. The rate of undocumented workers, preference by employers, irregularities in the recruitment process, and the political and economic relationships between Korea and the labour sending country are taken into considerations for the quota.

Once the sending countries are selected by the Foreign Workforce Policy Committee, the government of the sending country and the Korean government (i.e. the Ministry of Labour) sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Currently, six sending countries have signed a MOU<sup>38</sup>: the Philippines; Vietnam; Thailand; Indonesia; Sri Lanka; and Mongolia. Although the MOU between Korea and the

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<sup>38</sup> Considering that Chinese workers are the biggest group among the migrant population in Korea, it is rather surprising that China is not included in the list of sending countries. According to a government official in the Ministry of Labour (interview with the author, August 2005), China was initially selected as one of the sending countries, but was excluded from the list due to the lack of transparency of the Chinese system. The Korean government has suspended the decision on China until the Chinese government appoints a fair and appropriate public agency for sending workers to Korea.

sending country is not legally binding, the Korean government has decisive power to cancel the MOU whenever the sending country does not follow the agreement. Table 4.2 shows the list of public organisations in each country that recruit and send migrant workers to Korea. The EPS requires that a worker in the sending country who wishes to work in Korea should apply through the recruitment agencies (see Table 4.2) and satisfy the following requirements: be over 18 years old of age; have passed a medical examination; have no criminal record; and have passed the mandatory Korean language test.

**Table 4.2 The List of the Public Organisations in Six Sending Countries**

| <b>Country</b>  | <b>The Public Recruitment Organisations</b>                                     |
|-----------------|---|
| The Philippines | The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration                               |
| Vietnam         | The Centre for Overseas Workers   |
| Thailand        | The Department for Employment and the Overseas Employment Administration Office |
| Indonesia       | The Recruitment Committee for Indonesian Workers to Korea                       |
| Sri Lanka       | The Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment                                      |
| Mongolia        | The Mediation Bureau of Foreign Employment                                      |

*Source:* Ha and Choi (2005:146)

### The Special EPS for Ethnic Koreans

The special EPS for ethnic Koreans aims to provide preferential employment opportunities for ethnic Korean migrant workers in the construction industry and limited occupations<sup>39</sup> in service industry. The special EPS was developed from the previous 'Employment Management System', which was founded under the Immigration Control Act in 2002 and incorporated into the EPS in 2004. The aim of the special EPS is not only to alleviate labour shortages in the service and construction industries, but also to legalise the large number of undocumented ethnic

<sup>39</sup> These occupations include jobs in restaurants, business support, repair work in garages, social welfare service, cleaning, nursing, childcare and domestic work.

Korean migrant workers working predominantly in the service industry. While other foreign migrant workers are to a certain extent also allowed to work in the construction industry, the service industry is strictly limited to ethnic Korean migrant workers. Like the general EPS, the maximum period of the employment is limited to three years.

The special EPS is only applied to ethnic Korean migrant workers who are over 25 years of age and either descendants of Korean citizens or invited by closer Korean relatives. These migrants are granted 'visiting families' visas (F-1-4) in terms of the Immigration Control Act. Under the special EPS, the notion of ethnic Korean migrant workers differs from that of 'overseas Koreans', as defined in the Immigration and Legal Status of Overseas Koreans Act. According to the Immigration and Legal Status of Overseas Koreans Act, overseas Koreans are (a) those who had Korean nationality in the past, but have acquired the nationality of another country or (b) those who have acquired the nationality of another country, but either of whose parents or grandparents had Korean nationality in the past (Ha and Choi, 2005). These overseas Koreans normally enter Korea holding the 'Koreans overseas' visa (F-4) and can freely engage in any employment activities *except* unskilled manual labour. The Korean government is often criticised for discriminating against ethnic Koreans from China, Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in Central Asia. Until 2004, the Immigration and Legal Status of Overseas Koreans Act did not even recognise ethnic Koreans in China, Russia and the CIS as 'overseas Koreans'. It is still very difficult for them to be granted the F-4 visa. Moreover, the majority of ethnic Koreans from China, Russia and the CIS enter Korea to work as unskilled manual labour. The F-4 visa status and the prohibition of manual labour would therefore not give them any advantage.



### III. Migrant Women as ‘Strategic Agents’

As discussed above, apart from the ITTP until 2004 there was no other option for the legal employment of migrant workers in Korea. Even though special employment options in the service and construction industries (the Employment Management System) were opened up for ethnic Koreans in 2002, the initial quota of ethnic Korean migrant workers was less than 50% of the total number of ethnic Korean migrant workers who had already been working in the industries illegally<sup>40</sup>. Furthermore, as the number of undocumented migrant workers increased, the state started to impose strict immigration controls on visitors from the countries in which these undocumented workers came from. For example, unlike the current situation, until the early 1990s it was rather easy for a Filipina to enter Korea with a tourist visa. With limited legal employment opportunities and increasingly selective and stringent immigration controls, there have been visible structural constraints that leave foreigners with very little room to manoeuvre with respect to entering and working in Korea. However, there have been constant inflows of migrant workers to Korea and the numbers have been increasing every year. Why did those workers, particularly women in this study, decide to migrate? Despite increasingly stringent immigration controls, why did they decide to come to Korea? Through what kinds of migrant channels did they enter and find jobs in Korea? This section aims to find answers to these questions.

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<sup>40</sup> While there were 58,032 undocumented migrant workers already working in the service industry in 2002, the initial quota of ethnic Korean workers for the industry was only 25,000 (*Unpublished report, the Ministry of Labour, September 2002*).

## *The Decision to Move*

### Economic Motives

Undoubtedly, individual decisions to migrate are often based on an economic reason. All respondents in this study were partially driven by economic motives. In fact, when they were asked the reason for migrating to Korea, some women even looked at me peculiarly, seeming to wonder why I would ask such an obvious question. Jenny who left her son in the Philippines and came to Korea in 1994 stated:

I have never been married, but I got pregnant and gave birth to my first son. His father is a seaman and now lives in the US, but he does not support our son. You know, it is typical for a Filipino man. When I left my son in the Philippines, he was only 8 months old. I was really sad, but I was only thinking about my son's future. I did not want him to be a deprived street child being raised without a father. When I left, I was so determined to work really hard for his future. He is now 14 years old. For almost 14 years, I have supported him financially. I sent him to school and bought him a house in my hometown, Cebu.

Most of the responses to my question, "why did you come to Korea?", echoed those of Jenny. Women left home for Korea, expecting to earn money to support families and children's education. The majority of the respondents in this study were deeply committed to the financial support of their families and children left in their home countries. Many argue that such attitudes of migrant women are closely related to their roles in the family, following a sense of duty that stems from the strong bond of

family, loyalty for family members and filial piety, especially in Asian countries (Chant and MacIlwaine, 1995; Oishi, 2005; Parrenas, 2001; Paz Cruz and Paganoni, 1989).

Why did they choose Korea as their migrant destination? There were a number of reasons for economically motivated migrant women to come to Korea. The foremost reason was that it was relatively cheap and easy to enter the country. This reason was apparent for the workers who had entered Korea with trainee visas and among those who resided in Korea for more than eight years, i.e. who had entered with tourist visas when the immigration control had not been stringent.

Since 1992 when Korea and Vietnam established diplomatic relations, many Vietnamese have come to Korea to work. Also, getting a trainee visa is a safe and cheap way to enter the country. I am now undocumented, but came to Korea with a trainee visa. These days many people start to go to Malaysia and Taiwan, but Korea is still probably the popular destination for Vietnamese workers. *(Le, Vietnamese, factory worker, 5 years in Korea)*

I came to Korea in 1991 when a Filipina could easily visit Korea as a tourist without a visa. So I entered Korea as a tourist. It was quite easy for me because I came with my friend who worked for a travel agency in Manila and came to Korea for her business trips. I was lucky to come to Korea that easily without paying any money to a broker. *(Brenda, Filipina, domestic worker, 11 years in Korea)*

The situation has changed since the mid-1990s as the Korean government has enforced stricter immigration controls for visitors from developing countries in Asia. It would therefore be much harder to enter the country as a tourist, as Brenda did in

1991.

Nevertheless, compared to other destination countries, such as the United States and Japan, Korea is still very much more accessible and affordable, and relatively high wages mean that it remains one of the more attractive destination countries. It should be noted that this is directly related to the increasingly institutionalised business of migration in Asia, i.e. most of the respondents had paid the public or private brokerage services to obtain visas for entry to Korea. Often, the level of difficulty to get an entry visa to the country determines the costs of the service, and the costs subsequently influence the migrant's choice of destination. This is vividly illustrated in the following interviews.

We [*Nina and her husband*] worked in the USA for four years. We worked in a plastic manufacturing factory in Philadelphia. When our visas expired, we left America and went back to Indonesia. After 9/11, nowadays, for an Indonesian it has become so hard to get a working visa in the US. So we had to find an alternative country to work. Going to Japan is also very difficult for Indonesians. So, we came to Korea. Entering Korea is not as hard as entering the US or Japan, and doesn't cost you much. (*Nina, Indonesian, factory worker*)

In fact, I didn't know much about Korea before coming here as an industrial trainee. It didn't cost much to enter Korea as a trainee. That's why I chose Korea. If I went to Japan, I could earn more money, but it is almost impossible to go to Japan to work. The brokerage service is really expensive for Japan because it is tough to get a visa. Entering Japan is simply too hard. (*Shilani, Sri Lankan, factory worker*)

Oishi (2005) argues that female migration has become globally stratified. According to her, the reason why migrants in the United States, Canada and Europe tend to have higher socio-economic status, i.e. high levels of education and occupational status prior to migration, is partly attributable to demand-side factors, but also to the agency fees that migrants must pay. Therefore, middle class women are more likely to be in a position to pay the large brokerage fees required to enter the North America, Europe or Japan, whereas women from low-income families tend to choose cheaper options, by migrating to Hong Kong, Taiwan or Korea.

Women's decisions to migrate to Korea were also often facilitated by families, relatives and friends who were already working in Korea. Social networks provided information and resources, and therefore reduced the costs and risks of movement to a foreign country. In addition to the practical role, the social network also provided migrant women a 'security blanket' for living and working in a foreign country. For young single women in particular, the presence of families and relatives in Korea helped them to persuade parents, who often opposed their daughter's decision to migrate.

Before coming to Korea, I had just finished high school – I was only 20 years old. At that time, my brother was already working in Korea and suggested to me to come to Korea. Following his suggestion, I decided to come to Korea. I wanted to earn money. My parents also agreed with my decision, saying that because my brother was already there, I could go to Korea. If he had not been working here, I could not have dared to think to come to Korea. You know, it is really tough for a single woman to work and live alone in a foreign country. (*Hong Sam, Vietnamese, 26, factory worker*)

Through the establishment and expansion of social networks, migration becomes 'self-perpetuating' (Massey, 1990:8) and generates 'chain migration'. There were a number of cases of chain migration found in this study, particularly among Vietnamese and Sri Lankan groups of migrant workers. During a group interview with eight Vietnamese male and female workers, it became clear that most people either came to Korea through friends and families, or invited their friends and families to come to Korea and helped them to find work. One Vietnamese worker said in the interview that he helped ten friends from his village to come and work in Korea. The following case illustrates an example of the chain migration of a family from Sri Lanka.

A few years after I came to Korea as an industrial trainee, I invited two of my brothers to Korea. I also helped my cousins, including Lakshika [one of the interviewees] to come to Korea. Two years later Lakshika's husband joined her in Korea as well. My partner, Leo, helped them to find jobs and places to stay. (*Shilani, Sri Lankan, factory worker, 7 years in Korea*)

Once they come to Korea, migrants usually share the same house or live close-by in the same town. The Vietnamese workers who I interviewed shared the same house in a small village called Wao-ri, located in Hwa-Sung City, which is one of the satellite cities of Metropolitan Seoul. One respondent told me that, until recently, the village had been a home for the Vietnamese migrant community. It was similar to Shilani and her family who lived close by and worked in factories in Pyung-Taek City, in which many South Asian communities were found. This shows that as migration networks expand through social networks based on interpersonal ties of

family, kinship and community, they, in turn, lead to the establishment of migrant communities in the host country.

Lastly, among some of the respondents, a job preference was one of the decisive factors in choosing Korea as a destination country. As discussed in the previous section, the Korean government limits the range of industries open to the employment of migrant workers. As a result, migrant workers – except ethnic Koreans – are working predominantly in the manufacturing industry. A preference for a factory job paying a relatively high wage was one of the main reasons given by a number of the respondents in this study for coming to Korea.

Many Indonesian women go to Singapore or Hong Kong to work as domestic helpers. But those jobs do not pay much. Factory jobs in Korea pay far better. That's why I chose to come to Korea.  
*(Sandra, Indonesian, factory worker)*

Some women were, however, unwilling to take jobs involving domestic work, childcare or nursing, because these jobs required a personalised service and a direct relationship with the employer. This was noticeable among younger women who were more able to cope with physical challenge involved in other jobs.

I have never worked as a domestic worker before. I know that many Filipino women are working as domestic workers in many Asian countries, but I prefer working in a factory. If I were a domestic worker, I would have to do all house chores for the employer's family like a servant. But, in the factory at least I am treated as a 'worker'. In the factory where I work, my boss mops the floor and cleans his offices by himself! I feel that I have been treated equal. *(Jenny, Filipina, 34 years old, factory worker)*

I have worked as a child carer, but now I only work in a restaurant. Working in a restaurant is physically hard, but I am happier. I think that care work is much harder than working in a restaurant. It is not an easy job to look after somebody's child. The direct relationship with child's mother sometimes gives you constant mental stress.  
(*Soon-Sun, Korean-Chinese, 43 years old, waitress*)

There was also a concern over social prejudice toward certain occupations in which women were employed overseas. For this reason, some women chose Korea as a migration destination where they could take 'decent jobs' in factories. For example, in the following interview, a Filipina worker stated that in the Philippines – from which many women migrated to Japan as 'entertainers' or sex workers – people did not have a positive view of women 'going to Japan'.

Many Filipinas go to Japan. Although you could earn more money than working here, I didn't want to go there because in Japan most of Filipinas work as entertainers or sex workers. I'm proud of working here in a factory because if you are working in Japan as an entertainer, you don't get a good image from people in the Philippines. You can also go to Hong Kong or Singapore to work as a domestic worker, but salaries are not very good. You can earn twice more money in Korea. (*Jo, Filipina, factory worker*)

### Social Pressure

Apart from the economic motivation, women also migrate to escape from or to overcome problems at home. Brenda's case vividly illustrates why some women choose migration as a solution for the problem at home.



Actually, before coming to Korea, I did not have any plan to go abroad. I was a teacher. I was mainly teaching English, but also taught PE, Economic and Science in high school. I was happy with my job. However, there was trouble at my home. According to the local custom in my hometown [Baguio in the Philippines], the parent has to choose a partner for her/his child. At that time, my mother was nearly forcing me to marry somebody she chose for me. I really didn't want to get married following my mother's wish. So I decided to escape from the unwanted marriage and the only way to escape from that was coming to Korea. My sister also had the same problem, so she ran away to Singapore. (*Brenda, Filipina, domestic worker, 11 years in Korea*)

Scholars in the study of migrant women also point out that many Filipinas choose to migrate overseas to escape from problems such as domestic violence (Oishi, 2005; Parrenas, 2001). In the case of women who suffer from domestic violence, Parrenas (2001:67) argues that 'women, at least those with resources (such as networks and funds) emigrate instead of facing ostracism in the community against divorce or separation'. Divorce or remarriage for legally separated individuals are restricted in the Philippines. Also, the cultural emphasis on the value of family cohesion and the influence of Catholicism push those women to leave the Philippines.

According to my study, social pressure on woman was frequently one of the decisive factors influencing cross-border marriage migration. Chant and Radcliffe (1992) note that woman's migration for marriage is often associated with economic and social mobility. If it is not necessarily economic and social *upward* mobility, these women who have been working hard and supporting their families for many years may be looking for at least economic stability through marriage to men in more

affluent countries. However, according to my study, an economic motive was not entirely the decisive factor in marriage migration. Of the 31 respondents in this study, seven were marriage migrants – one from China and six from the Philippines. Having full-time jobs either overseas or in their countries, all seven women had previously been financially independent and some, especially those who had worked overseas, had enjoyed freedom and had been in a gainful position to support their families. As will be discussed further in Chapter 7, they were not necessarily poor before marriage nor did they marry men who were on a higher socio-economic status, since many of their husbands were rural farmers or urban manual workers.

Constable (2005:10) argues that to assume that woman's marriage migration is simply upward marital mobility is to overlook 'the contradictory and paradoxical social and economic patterns that are not necessarily linked to geographic mobility and to overlook interesting underlying questions about gender'. While the interviewees stated that marriage migration to Korea was their own decision, all had experienced a certain amount of social pressure associated with marriage.

When I was single, my life was completely different from now. I was a contract worker who registered with the government employment agency. So, whenever I wanted to go somewhere, I could go. If there was a job in Bangkok, within a minute I just decided to go there to work. It was easy. But, as I was getting older, my mother really wanted me to get married and so I could settle down. (*Carol, 40 years old, Filipina, domestic worker, 4 years in Korea*)

I got so much pressure from my parents. As I was getting older, they really wanted me to get married and have a family. I am the eldest daughter and at that time my brother and sister were already

married and had children. (*Geraldine, 37 years old, Filipina, part-time English teacher, 3 years in Korea*)

It was my own decision to migrate to Korea by marrying a Korean. At that time, I was divorced from my first husband and left my son in the care of his grandmother (my ex-mother-in-law). But, nowadays, I keep thinking why on earth I decided to do that [*In fact, only after a year and three months of her second marriage, she has filed a suit for divorce against her violent Korean husband.*] Probably, I got too tired of living as a divorced single mom in China. It was a tough job. (*Hyang-Lim, Chinese, 39 years old, Kitchen staff in a restaurant, 1 year and 7 months in Korea*)

For these women, migration to Korea by marrying a Korean man was a means of overcoming social pressure as well as a means of economic stability.

### Cultural and Historical Linkages

One particularly distinctive motive for ethnic Korean migrants in China to choose Korea as a destination country can be found in cultural and historical linkages to their 'homeland' Korea. As discussed in Chapter 2, in the 1910s and the 1920s Korean farmers and labourers left for Manchuria and even further up to Siberia in order to escape from famine and poverty. During the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), many Koreans – including intellectuals who participated in the national independence movement – fled from Korea to China as a result of the repressive Japanese rule. The number of Korean migrants in China also increased in 1950 when the Korean War erupted. The majority of today's ethnic Koreans in China are

descendants of those refugees and migrants from Korea<sup>41</sup>. Ethnic Koreans in China are well known for their strong commitment to the preservation of Korean culture, custom and language. This feature is closely correlated with one of Cohen's definitions of a diaspora: 'a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate' (Cohen, 1997:26). All of the Korean-Chinese respondents in this study – who were mostly third generation and are part of the Korean diaspora in China – spoke fluent Korean.

It was evident in the case of Korean-Chinese migrants that they had retained 'a collective memory and vision about their original homeland' (Safran, 1991).

The biggest reason why I came to Korea is my yearning for a homeland. Although I was born and have lived in China for all my life, I always had this yearning and wondered to see how my homeland, in which my parents were born, would be like. When I got a visa and realised that I could step my feet on Korean soil, my heart was throbbing with joy and excitement. Korea is my mother country. A homeland is like mother's bosom. I didn't come to Korea because I was poor in China. Of course, earning money was one of the reasons why I am here now. I just thought that like I worked hard in China, I would earn more money by doing the same in Korea. (*Soon-Hee, 70 years old, domestic worker*)

I didn't come to Korea because I was destitute. My family can be considered as the middle class in China. Then, one day, I came across an article about Korea in a monthly magazine published by the Communist Party. According to the article, Korea's

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<sup>41</sup> Ethnic Koreans are concentrated in northeastern China; 63% of them live in five counties of Jilin Province, 27% in Heilongjiang Province and 10% in Liaoning Province. The five counties constitute the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, which was established in 1952 (Olson, 1998).

development was a century ahead of China's. It described how much Korea is better off as compared to China. After I read the article, I decided to see with my own eyes how much my homeland was well off and developed. (*Choon-Ja, 66 years old, domestic worker*)

Their psychological links to 'homeland' Korea materialised after the development of diplomatic relations between two countries in 1992. They were able to physically return to the homeland for which they had longed. Meanwhile, their prosperous 'homeland' provided them with employment opportunities. For both of these reasons, Korea became one of the most attractive migrant destinations for these Korean-Chinese migrants.

In his concept of a diaspora, Safran (1991) argues that members of the diasporic group idealise their ancestral home and think that when conditions are favourable, either they, or their descendants should return. In the case of Korean-Chinese, even though they were second and third generations of the Korean diasporic group, they had often been told stories and memories by their parents and grandparents. Retaining those stories and memories about their ancestors' homeland, they believed that they should return to Korea even though their parents or grandparents were not in a position to do so themselves. For example, apart from the economic reason for her migration, Young-Sil, a 55 years old Korean-Chinese domestic worker, came to Korea to gratify her father's wish.

My father's home is *Namwon* [located in the south-west province]. He was born there. When the things got bad under the Japanese colonial rule, my grandfather left home and came to China with my father. My father passed away in the 1960s before the diplomatic

relations between China and Korea was established. So he could not return to his homeland before he died. It became his lifelong regret. His last wish was that on behalf of him we should visit Korea someday when it was possible. So I came to Korea to carry out his last wish. This was one of the reasons that made me decide to come to Korea. (*Young-Sil, 55 years old, domestic worker*)

### *Migrant Institutions*

After the decision to migrate based on the aforementioned reasons, in what ways have these migrants entered Korea? This section examines how migrants acquire their knowledge of structures and exploit available means to realise their ends in migrant institutions.

#### Private Recruitment Agencies: the Case of the ITTP

As discussed in the previous section, under the EPS the private recruitment agencies in the sending countries have been replaced by public or government agencies. The ITTP nonetheless remains unchanged and private recruitment agencies for industrial trainees are appointed by the KFSB. None of the respondents in this study entered Korea through any public or government recruitment agencies in their countries. This is because when the field research was conducted between April and September 2005, the EPS had only been enforced for a year. The respondents were therefore mostly undocumented and long-term residents in Korea, who had entered Korea before the introduction for the EPS. It was also difficult to find migrant workers who had recently entered with E-9 visas and who were available for the interview. This

section therefore only focuses on private recruitment agencies as an example of migrant institutions.

Goss and Lindquist (1995:337) argue that employers and recruitment agencies are important organisational agents 'who not only provide the employment opportunities that motivate migration but may also indirectly recruit workers and almost always exert indirect control over recruitment by setting qualifications for employment'. The indirect control of organisational agents on the recruitment of migrant workers mirrors the recruitment process of industrial trainees for Korean firms. As examined in the previous section, the recruitment of industrial trainees was supervised by the Korea International Training Cooperation Corps (KITCO), which falls under the auspices of the KFSB. The KITCO appoints 27 international manpower recruitment agencies in sending countries, which recruit workers, organise a preparatory training programme and send these workers to Korea. Thus, overseas employment opportunities for workers are indirectly in the hands of the private agencies contracted by the KITCO. With the entire recruitment processes controlled by the KITCO and private agencies in the sending country, employers achieve considerable 'time-space distancing', in Giddens' term, through migrant institutions (Goss and Lindquist, 1995).

All respondents who initially entered Korea with trainee visas were recruited through private agencies in their countries. Among the strictly limited channels available to potential migrant workers to enter Korea for employment, the ITTP is probably the cheapest and most secure route to Korea. However, the cost of migration varies among workers. Like the following Vietnamese worker, Thuy Duong, a few respondents were charged excessively high brokerage fees by their agencies.

In order to get a trainee visa I paid the agency about US\$7,000. In these days, you have to pay the agency between US\$10,000 and US\$12,000. The fee includes a flight ticket and other travel expenses. As you know, US\$7,000 is really big money in Vietnam. I was lucky that my uncle lent me money without interest. I paid him back only after two years. But, many people loaned money from the bank at high interest. Because of the brokerage fees and high interest, trainees escape from their sponsors and move to other factories paying them higher wages. With 300,000 *won* (US\$300) of trainee's wage, it takes ages to clear off the debts. (*Thuy Duong, Vietnamese, factory worker*)

Thuy Duong's interview supports Goss and Lindquist's account of private recruitment agencies: 'private recruitment agencies are organisational entities that depend upon access to specific bundles of allocative and authoritative resources and, most importantly, control over information that allows them to negotiate the modalities of interaction within the migrant institution' (Goss and Lindquist, 1995:337). The private recruitment agencies need sufficient capital to set up their businesses and to be contracted by the employers' organisation, the KITCO in the case of Korea. Goss and Lindquist (1995) note that in some countries, such as the Philippines, where the recruitment agencies must receive permission from the Philippines Overseas Employment Agency (POEA), they often have to obtain official authorisation from the state agencies and this process often requires political connections. All this undoubtedly increases the expense of their operation, which is passed onto the worker in the form of brokerage fees (Goss and Lindquist, 1995; Seol, 2000b).



## Private Brokers

Most potential migrants have neither the appropriate knowledge of the procedure for migration nor access to proper information on rules and regulations for overseas employment. As Goss and Lindquist (1995:340) point out, 'all individuals are situated in time-space, both in the sense of the physical location and in the sense of their social position, and their knowledge and social contacts are circumscribed accordingly'. Therefore, potential migrants seek individuals who have connections with potential employers, recruiting agents or government officials, and who may therefore assist them to obtain proper documents for entry visas and to eventually obtain overseas employment. Private brokers are essential actors in the migration institution. As Goss and Lindquist (1995:341) suggest, private brokers 'exploit the institution for their individual benefits but in so doing play roles as institutional agents by enforcing rules and distributing its resources'.

50% of the respondents in this study used private brokers to enter Korea, and interestingly, Korean-Chinese migrants constituted the majority of these. As discussed in the previous section, the Korean immigration Act grants specific privileges to ethnic Koreans in terms of the less strict entry control on a family visit<sup>42</sup> and in the form of employment opportunities in Korea. Certainly, Korean-Chinese migrant workers made the most of migrant channels available to them to enter Korea. The majority of the Korean-Chinese respondents initially entered Korea with a visa for a family visit (F-1).

It is however important to note that most of them are not in contact with their

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<sup>42</sup> Korean-Chinese people over the age of 60 can be easily granted a visa for a family visit (F-1) when they prove that they have families or relatives residing in Korea.

relatives residing in Korea. In this case, the role of private brokers is crucial in obtaining a F-1 visa. They have become active agents or 'fixers' in the migrant institution. Potential migrants are charged agency fees that cover all the formalities for entry to Korea, including obtaining passports, visas and travel arrangements. Private brokers use a number of personal networks for their business and some of the brokers themselves were once migrant workers in Korea (Seol, 1999). Goss and Lindquist (1995) note that successful returned migrant workers exploit valuable practical knowledge of procedures and contacts with institutional agents from their own personal encounters to facilitate the migration of others. Like many Asian countries, the process of migration in China is highly institutionalised. The following statement of a Chinese migrant worker illustrates how the system works.

Initially, I came to Korea with a business visa (C-2). I paid the broker about US\$10,000 to make that visa. Basically, there are two brokers – one in China and the other in Korea. Firstly, I had to show the broker in China that I had enough money for the brokerage fees in my bank account. At this point, I did not have to pay him any fees yet. Once I entered Korea, the other broker was waiting for me at the airport. As soon as I met the Korean broker who confirmed that I successfully entered Korea, I had to telephone the Chinese broker to tell him the pin numbers for my bank account. Until I called and told him my pin number, the Korean broker would not let me go. When the Korean broker confirmed that the money was successfully withdrawn by the Chinese broker, he let me off. (*Young-Sil, 55, domestic worker*)

The central part of the private brokerage service is obtaining entry visas, and this frequently involves the fabrication of official documents and the forgery of

passports. Most of the Korean-Chinese migrants who initially entered Korea with F-1 visas used private brokers, who helped them obtain visas with forged official documents and passports, as in the following cases.

I got a F-1 visa as a mother attending a daughter's wedding. I was lucky to find a woman who got married a Korean man and the broker made me up as a mother of that woman on her birth certificate. I was granted one month to stay in Korea, but I am still here. (*Hoe-ock Baek, 56 years old, domestic worker, 10 years in Korea*)

On the document I used for the visa application, I am a mother of a woman called 'Young-Sil Kim' who lives in Korea with her Korean husband. Actually, Young-Sil Kim's mother lives in the town where I am from, but she couldn't come to see her daughter because she was unwell – she is deaf. So I pretended to be Young-Sil's mother who was invited to see her daughter. (*Choon-Ja, 66 years old, domestic worker, 6 years in Korea*)

The name on my passport is not my real name. She is somebody who has her uncle living in Korea. I don't know who she is because it was the broker who found the person. (*Shin-Keum, 55 years old, restaurant staff, 4 years in Korea*)

On the other hand, for younger Chinese women, it is certainly difficult to pretend to be someone's mother as in the above cases. Alternatively, a 'fake marriage' with a Korean man, arranged through the private brokerage service, has been a popular choice among young Korean-Chinese women regaining legal entry to Korea (Seol, 1999). With increasingly stringent immigration controls on Chinese nationalities, marriage to a Korean national is one of the safest migrant routes to

Korea. In this case, the private brokers in China are closely connected with brokers in Korea. When a woman pays a private broker in China, the broker finds her a 'suitable' Korean man through a broker in Korea. After the woman registers her marriage with the Chinese authorities, she is granted an entry visa to Korea. Once she successfully enters Korea, she registers her marriage with the Korean authority. This then allows her to be engaged in paid employment without any restriction and, after two years of marriage, the migrant can be granted Korean citizenship. During the whole process, most migrant women hardly meet their 'virtual' husbands. For example, a following respondent, Hae-Hwa was one of Chinese migrants who entered Korea through a fake marriage and recently obtained Korean citizenship.

For young people like me, it is really hard to come to Korea to work. Fortunately, one of my relatives suggested to me that if I managed to get money somehow, he could help me to find a good Korean partner to get married, and this could allow me easily and legally to enter Korea. When I came to Korea, there were many young women like me who entered Korea through a marriage. It cost me about US\$1,200 for the brokerage service. Because I paid for the marriage, I don't live with my husband [*in the interview she never explicitly mentioned the word, a 'fake marriage'*]. Only because of a document-related matter, I met him a couple of times in China. Since I came to Korea, he [*her Korean husband*] has never contacted me or bothered me. I think that he is not a bad person. Because he was under financial hardships, he needed money, and he got some money by doing me a favour. I don't know how much he got paid. I am not particularly interested in it. (*Hae-Hwa, 27 years old, Chinese, restaurant staff, 3 years in Korea*)

Although the 'fake marriage' option is relatively infrequent among the migrant

channels to Korea, they posit an example of how a marriage becomes one of the lucrative businesses in the increasingly institutionalised migration system.

*Religious Organisation: the Case of Cross-border Marriage Migration*

The majority of cross-border marriages are arranged by private marriage agencies that usually operate the business in the form of a 'mail-order' service advertising and displaying photos and profiles of women on an Internet website. Nevertheless, private agencies or individual brokers are not the only actors in the migrant institution. According to the findings in this study, marriages between a Japanese or Filipina woman and a Korean man are often arranged by a religious organisation called 'the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification' – commonly referred to as the 'Unification Church' (H-K. Lee 2005). The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification was founded by the Reverend Moon Sun-Myung. The organisation stresses that it aims to build a peaceful world through 'true families' started by the 'blessing of marriage' (see [www.tongil.or.kr](http://www.tongil.or.kr)). The 'blessing of marriage' is taken in the famous form of a transnational mass marriage. As one of its main activities, it operates matchmaking and dating services across the world through the web-based 'True Love Matching Service'. Although the organisation was initiated in Korea, its religious influence within the country has not been significant since its beliefs and practices have been rarely approved within Korea. However, the Family Federation International has actively extended its influence abroad by establishing a large number of local churches in over 185 countries worldwide. Its activity is particularly noticeable in the Philippines and there are several Unification churches in Manila.

Six respondents in this study, mostly Filipina migrant women, met their husbands and got married through the arrangements made by the Unification Church. Most of the marriage migrants had friends and relatives who had already married Korean men through the organisation. The following examples suggest that an extensive network of cross-border marriages is being established through the Unification Church.

My best friend got married to a Korean man through the Unification Church. She wanted me to marry a Korean man so that I can live close by her in Korea. We were really close to each other in the Philippines, like sisters. But, since she left to Korea to live with her husband she became very lonely. She thought that it would be nice for us to live close by each other and brought a guy (who is now my husband) with her to the Philippines to introduce to me.  
*(Geraldine, Filipina, domestic worker, 3 years in Korea)*

I got married through the Unification Church. I didn't know about the Church. I didn't know much about Korea. One day, I met a Filipina in my village who told me, "You know? A Korean man is kind and will love you." She was also married to a Korean who was very nice and sending her money regularly from Korea. Then, I thought that a Korean man would be kind like her husband. She told me that I could get married to a Korean man through the Unification Church. So, I got married. But, the reality is heart breaking. Now, I know that not all Korean men are nice and kind.  
*(Lisa, Filipina, factory worker, 5 years in Korea)*

My older sister has already married to a Japanese man through the Church. She invited me to join the Church. I'm Catholic, but my religion didn't matter with joining the Unification Church.  
*(Marilou, Filipina, factory worker, 3 years in Korea)*

Although those women met their husbands and got married through the Unification Church, this does not mean that they have converted from their religion – i.e. Catholic in most Filipina cases – to the Unification Church. Both Filipina wives and Korean husbands regarded the Church as an inexpensive marriage agency. The Unification Church provided virtually all of necessary arrangements for the couple, from the matchmaking service and a marriage ceremony to the paperwork required for entry visas for Filipina wives.

Although we got married through the Unification Church my husband and I are not really into that religion. He doesn't believe in any religion and I am Christian. It was my husband's sister who got him involved in the church. My husband was 42. His sister was worried that he was getting older without a wife. Although we still do not appreciate the religion, it was really convenient for us to get married through the Church because it did all the necessary paper work for us. We didn't have to fuss about difficult paperwork to get me into Korea. (*Geraldine*)

I got married through the Unification Church. But, I don't believe in that religion. I am Catholic, and my mother-in-law and my husband are also Catholic. We just got married through the church, and it was and still is nothing to do with our religious belief. (*Zenaida, Filipina, unemployed – previously domestic worker, 2 and half years in Korea*)

However, the marriage service provided by the Church is not free of charge. The costs of the marriage, air travel and paperwork for an entry visa are paid by a husband. The case of cross-border marriage migration will be examined further in Chapter 7.

## **Conclusion**

International labour migration is ‘the outcome of a complex combination of individual actions and social structures’ (Goss and Lindquist, 1995:344). As seen in the second part of this chapter, measures to control the entry of migrant labour have changed continuously according to the interests of the state, the state apparatuses and businesses. In the face of strong resistance from businesses and the state apparatuses, the Korean state has attempted to extend its authority over the influx of migrant workers. In reaction to the continuous flow of irregular migrants and the increasing numbers of undocumented workers, the state strategically imposes strict rules and regulations, thereby increasing structural constraints on the process of international migration. However, the increasingly selective and restrictive measures on the immigration control in Korea have not successfully controlled irregular migration, but rather increased the likelihood of migrants seeking alternative migration routes and placed additional pressures on migrants to turn to illicit businesses, which involve additional costs and a higher risk of exploitation.

At the same time, ‘knowledgeable agents’ undertake strategic action within the migrant institution. As seen in the decisive factors influencing the migration of women and their choice of migrant channels, unequal distributions of social knowledge, power, rules and resources between women and men make women opt for different strategic uses of resources. Migrant women use their knowledge of structures to realise their ends. Even though social knowledge and power are unequally distributed and may put individuals in a ‘weak’ social position, individuals tend to maintain some sense of autonomy and capacity for strategic action.

Last but not least, in order to acquire knowledge of the rules and access to



resources, individuals require assistance from other individuals who interpret the rules and distribute the resources within the migrant institution. In this case, both the potential migrants and recruitment agencies or private brokers draw selectively on institutional rules and resources and exploit them in pursuit of their own interests. Those practices become institutionalised and inevitably reproduce the system of migration. Migrant women who draw selectively on institutional rules and resources in pursuit of overseas migration therefore engage in what Giddens calls the 'dialectic of control' and their 'sedimented' practices become highly institutionalised. This, in turn, forms a gendered process of international migration that is reproduced and transformed over time. In the next chapter, I turn to examine how these migrant women are mobilised in the Korean labour market once they have successfully gained entry.

# **Chapter 5**

## **The Transnational Sexual Division of Labour: Implications for the Migrant Labour Market in Korea**

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter, it was examined how potential migrants act strategically to find overseas employment by using different migration channels within the institutionalised migration system. This chapter explores the ways in which women migrant workers are engaged in certain types of occupations in the labour market once they have entered Korea. As noted in Chapter 2, Korea has passed through a 'migration transition' from a labour sending to receiving country, as a result of industrial, demographic and international political changes, as well as increasing cultural/social linkages between Korea and other Asian countries. It was shown that there is a systematic link between the globalisation of production of Korean firms and the influx of Asian migrants to Korea. It was also noted that as industrialisation has proceeded in Korea, domestic wage levels have risen and there have consequently been serious labour shortages in the manufacturing industry owing to the demographic transition and the restructuring of the workforce in the local labour market. While Chapter 2 provided a rather comprehensive overview of these transitions, which have led to the inflow of migrant workers into Korea, this chapter focuses on the changing production and employment patterns in Korea, which have increased the demand for migrant workers in certain sectors of the economy and generated continuing flows of migrant workers.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. First, it conceptualises the transnational division of labour and its implication for labour migration. In order to examine employment patterns and the characteristics of migrant workers in the Korean labour market, it is important to look at how the restructuring of the Korean economy has brought changes to the industrial structure and employment patterns in the labour market, and thereby located the country in a different position in the international division of labour. Changes in the industrial structure have also generated demand for migrant workers in certain sectors of the economy. The chapter therefore scrutinises the restructuring process of the Korean economy and labour market and the manner in which the migrant labour force has become indispensable for sustaining the country's economic growth. The second section explores how the changes in the Korean female labour force corresponds with the transnational sexual division of labour and the increasing flow of women migrant workers into the country. Finally, based on the analysis of the empirical data, the third section examines the gender and racialised division of labour in the Korean labour market. It looks at two industries – the manufacturing and service industries – in which women migrant workers are heavily concentrated. It then discusses state policy toward women migrant workers in Korea.

## **I. The Transnational Division of Labour and Labour Migration**

### *Critique of the New International Division of Labour*

The theory of the New International Division of Labour (NIDL)<sup>43</sup> was devised by a number of German scholars to explain the global relocation of industrial capital from the core to periphery establishing ‘world-market factories’ where manufactured goods are produced by cheap and unorganised labour (Ernst, 1980; Fröbel, *et al.*, 1980). Analysing case studies of selected developing countries where the Federal German textile and garment factories were relocated in the 1970s, Fröbel and his colleagues show how the NIDL creates a new and mainly young female working class, which is paid very low wages and which is employed under highly exploitative conditions (Fröbel, *et al.*, 1980). The NIDL theorists observe that production facilities are divided into different skills and tasks and those different parts of production are spatially redistributed across the world.

In the NIDL, newly industrialising countries (NICs) adopt the strategy of export-oriented manufacturing as an alternative to import-substitution strategies for development (Cohen, 1987; 2006). In the 1970s and the 1980s governments in NICs, such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea and Taiwan started to attract foreign investment by establishing export-processing zones (EPZs) and by providing unorganised cheap local labour and generous tax holidays. These world-market factories in Asian EPZs were owned and operated by local contractors. For example, Korean subcontractors ran factories for Reebok, L.A. Gear and Nike in Pusan – the second largest city in Korea –, which was known as ‘the sneaker capital of the world’ during the 1980s (Klein, 2000:224).

The key feature in the NIDL is the ‘footloose’ nature of globally mobile

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<sup>43</sup> Cohen (1987) argues that the NIDL theorists took over ‘the vocabulary of world system theory’ (for the discussion of world system theory, see Chapter 1), such as the concepts of the ‘core’ and the ‘periphery’. Also, for Cohen, the NIDL theorists basically followed the line of analysis suggested by the critique of dependency theory (Warren, 1980) and the depiction of ‘peripheral capitalism’ suggested by Amin (1974).

capital, which enables transnational companies to easily relocate their production lines to countries providing cheaper labour. This creates 'the race to the bottom syndrome', a tendency towards increased downward pressure on wages and capital-labour relations in world-market factories that become more exploitative and oppressive.

The NIDL certainly offers a crucial theoretical tool to understand the contemporary map of the globalisation of production, and despite the 30-year time lag, some of the analyses of NIDL theories are still applicable to the process of global production and to capital-labour relations in today's world-market factories. However, Cohen (2006:157) argues that while NIDL theory provides 'a major key to understanding some of the processes of capital accumulation in the modern world order, there are nonetheless some major limitations and omissions that inhere in the theory'. Cohen offers a sharp critique of NIDL theory on two aspects: conceptual problems and historical insensitivity.

Cohen points out the conceptual ambiguity of the term, 'the division of labour'. Different meanings of the notion lead to different discussions. Originally, 'the division of labour' was used to describe sectoral divisions in the economy; to define the occupational and skill structure of the labour force; and to refer to the organisation of tasks, which was characteristically dictated by management (Cohen, 2006). In addition, Cohen (2006:158) identifies three 'more recent' meanings of 'the division of labour'. First, he argues that references to gender or racialised divisions of labour indicate a new sensitivity to the ethnic composition of the labour force and to the role of women in production and reproduction. Second, there is a spatial division of production and product (although he admits that this may be far from 'new'). Third, he notes the process of contracting out production lines into domestic,

peasant, or household units, which has always been prevalent – especially among female casual workers – both in the developed and developing country.

Cohen (2006:159) argues that multiple meanings of ‘the division of labour’ raise the question of ‘the relative weight, or significance, of the different phenomena grouped under this particular label’ and that there is a paradox in the measurements deployed by the NIDL theorists to evaluate changes in the international division of labour. He continues that the NIDL theorists’ use of ‘measures of the migration of *capital*’ (the aggregate trade and investment figures) ‘to measure changes in the division of *labour*’ can lead to ‘misleading impressions’ (Cohen, 2006:159). For example, he remarks that NIDL theory tends to focus more on changes in the location of manufacturing production, rather than on ‘changes between sectors (in particular the movement from industry and agriculture to service and information) within the metropolitan economies’ (ibid.). Accordingly, as Cohen argues, this misleadingly omits the possibilities for the migrant and immigrant labour force working in the service sector in the metropolitan economies. Whereas NIDL theory focuses on the relocation of manufacturing sectors to the developing country and the subsequent ‘de-industrialisation’ and job losses due to the factory closures in the developed country, it does not provide a conceptual tool to explain the industrial transformation – or an ‘economic recomposition’, as Sassen-Koob (1983) indicates, – in the metropolitan cities that has generated different sectors demanding both the professional and low skilled migrant workforces.

Another conceptual problem of NIDL theory argued by Cohen is that the theory is excessively economic-centred. Neglecting the social and political relations in the process of production and only relying on the discussion of aggregate trade and investment flows, NIDL theory reproduces ‘the weakness of excessive

economism' which can be found in classical political economic theories, such as dependency theory and world system theory (Cohen, 1987:232). Cohen states that:

[a]ll that happens can, in such a view, be explained by the logic of capital without seriously taking into account independent institutional forces, the contradictions between merchants, national capitalists, transnational corporations and governments, or the political and social protests by those who fall victim to the logic of capital. Inter- and intra-class conflict within and between metropolitan, semi-peripheral and peripheral societies hardly make an appearance (Cohen, 2006:161).

In this regard, NIDL theory does not fully explain the significant role of strong states, i.e. of the role played by Asian NICs, initially in inducing foreign investment from developed countries for the export-oriented development strategy and later in encouraging the foreign investment of their multinational firms, which resulted in the relocation of their production lines and substantial capital flows into developing countries providing cheap labour. Also, a notable case in Korea is the impact of social and political struggles – i.e. democratisation and the militant labour movement – on the country's economic restructuring process, which should not be underestimated. NIDL theory relying on the logic of capital highlights the power of capital, but fails to take into account the power of the social and political dynamics that significantly influence the international division of labour.

Cohen's second critique of NIDL theory is its historical gap. Cohen's critique basically starts with the question: 'How new is the "new" international division of labour?' (Cohen, 1987:233). Cohen states that:

[t]here is no way of determining this from the theory itself, as no historical comparisons with other international divisions of labour are provided. It is as if the NIDL theorists boarded a time machine in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to arrive at Hong Kong and Singapore late last night, without bothering to land at any of the intermediate airports – notable those marked on the historical maps as ‘imperialism’ and ‘colonialism’ (1987:233).

I concur with Cohen’s argument that the distinction between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ international division of labour is not a very useful one because historical patterns associated with imperialism and colonialism have deeply affected to the contemporary reality. After continuous and rapid changes to the map of global production, the ‘new’ aspects depicted by the NIDL theorists cannot be considered ‘new’ any more today. Cohen, therefore, remarks that it is preferable to use the expression ‘the changing international division of labour’ (Cohen, 2006:161). Within the changing international division of labour, Cohen (1987; 2006) identifies four sequential phases<sup>44</sup> in terms of the form of hegemonic capital: the mercantile, industrial, imperial and transnational divisions of labour. Interlinking these four historical phases, he argues that the appellation ‘new’ is misleading in that it fails to recognise ‘the indelible heritage of the past’ (Cohen, 2006:161). He notes that the mercantile, industrial and imperial phases have produced the current geography of the global population and production facilities, such as Africans in the Caribbean and the USA, Italians in Brazil and Indians in South Africa, which is a ‘silent and determinant datum informing migration in the period of modern capitalism’ (Cohen, 2006:162).

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<sup>44</sup> For details of the features of these phases, see Cohen, 1987: 233-241.



### *The Transnational Division of Labour and the Migrant Workforce*

Identifying the above mentioned limitations of NIDL theory, Cohen (2006:162) uses the term 'transnational division of labour' in order to embrace changes in international divisions of labour and 'different forms of labour utilisation' that are not depicted in NIDL theory. More importantly, he argues that the transnational phase of the division of labour has implications for the contemporary process of international labour migration. The key point in the discussion of the transnational division of labour is using measurements of the movements of labour in order to indicate subsequent developments in the international division of labour. In other words, changes in divisions of labour reflect the patterns of migration and vice versa. Cohen (2006) notes that one of the visible shifts in international migratory patterns is labour migration to the oil-rich countries. The large scale development projects in the Arab and other OPEC countries after the 70s oil-price boom has attracted labour migrants from neighbouring countries and South Asia. Along with managerial and professional labour, the development boom in those oil-rich countries has demanded unskilled migrant labour in construction and service sectors.

Cohen's concept of the transnational division of labour provides useful insights into changes in production and employment patterns in industrialised countries (i.e. 'the old metropolises' in Cohen's term), which generate continuing flows of migrant workers. Cohen (2006) notes that although much manufacturing production relocates to Asia and results in the increasing movement of labour, there are also steady demands for labour in industrialised countries, particularly in the service sector. According to him, the transnational division of labour is characterised by: 'a further shrinking of agricultural employment in the advanced capitalist

countries; a stabilisation or slight drop in manufacturing employment in these countries; an increase in information-related employment; and a growth in strategic world cities of service employment' (Cohen, 1987:251). All the shifts of employment from the agricultural and manufacturing to the service and information sectors in the industrialised economy have implications for the flow of migrant workers – in particular the large number of unskilled workers from developing countries. Therefore, unlike NIDL theory, such insights provided by the notion of the *transnational* division of labour help to explain changing aspects of divisions of labour in the developed as well as developing economies and, more importantly, changing patterns in the movements of labour.

The transnationalisation of capital and changes of production, especially in developed countries, and the implications thereof for the growing demand for migrant labour are underlined in the work of Sassen-Koob (1983). Cohen (2006:166) states that Sassen-Koob 'advances a theory, which in important respects should be laid side by side with NIDL'. In particular, it is important to note Sassen-Koob's emphasis on the growth of employment demand in the service sector as a feature of the contemporary division of labour.

The technological transformation of the work process, the decentralisation of manufacturing and of office work, in part made possible by the technological transformation of the work process, and the transnationalisation of the economy generally, have all contributed to the consolidation of a new kind of economic centre from where the world is managed and serviced (Sassen-Koob, 1984b:140, cited in Cohen, 2006:166).

Referring to the cases of New York and Los Angeles, Sassen-Koob (1983:176)

argues that the relocation of the manufacturing sector from the developed to developing countries of the world has been a major factor in the decline of traditional industries in the economies of old industrial centres. Along with the transnationalisation of capital, this has generated a rapid expansion in the demand for 'advanced specialised services', such as legal, managerial, financial, and technical services. The production of these advanced services is disproportionately concentrated in a few global cities at the core, such as London, New York and Los Angeles (Sassen-Koob, 1983; Sassen, 2002). Sassen-Koob's argument implies that even though goods are produced in the world-market factories of developing countries, the production and products are managed and controlled in a 'new kind of economic centre' at the core. In other words, while designer cloths and electronic goods are manufactured in factories in Guangdong, China, these products are designed, developed and distributed by the metropolitan cities in Europe, the United States and Asian NICs.

One of the key features highlighted by Sassen-Koob is a shift in the employment pattern and social structure of New York and Los Angeles that is the prominent growth of both the high paid professional and the low wage, 'dead-end' jobs. Sassen-Koob (1983:176-177) argues the international division of labour generates a decline in old industrial centres but, at the same time, generates 'an economic *recomposition*' to the benefit of a few global cities and high-income professional workers in these cities. On the other hand, an expansion of 'advanced services' – occupied by the professional workforce – demands an expansion of low-wage ancillary services, such as clerical, cleaning, delivering, repairing and caring. Here, it is worth noting the latter feature of employment in the global cities. Cohen (2006:166) remarks that this characteristic constitutes 'a surprising and important

finding in that conventional wisdom and other assumptions about restructuring'. Many observers assume that 'de-industrialisation' in the cities of developed countries would mean a more extensive decline in low wage jobs, but in fact these jobs have not disappeared, but have been 'available for the more dispossessed segments of the labour force' such as women, ethnic minorities and migrants (Cohen, 2006, 167). Today, we still witness an expansion of low-wage jobs associated with growing sectors rather than with declining ones in global cities.

Sassen-Koob (1983:177) argues that 'the new migrations to the core are primarily associated with this recomposition, rather than with the decline of traditional economic sectors as is usually argued in the migration literature'. The migrant workforce becomes the chief source of supply for low wage service jobs generated by technologically advanced service sectors, because migrants are cheap, willing to work for 3D jobs and less likely unionised. According to Sassen-Koob (1983), for the same reason, there is, in fact, a reorganisation of the work process in the declining manufacturing sector and this makes a city like New York competitive with other locations. Noting the example of an expansion of Chinese-owned manufacturing shops in New York's Chinatown, she posits a trend towards the operations of sweatshops and industrial home-working replacing unionised factories. Companies have the option of locating factories not only overseas, but also in areas with high immigrant populations such as New York and Los Angeles (Sassen-Koob, 1983). The migrant workforce, in this context, becomes 'a factor promoting location of plants and shops in core areas' (Sassen-Koob, 1983:199). Undoubtedly, there has been a feminisation of both the supply of jobs and the labour force in these manufacturing shops as most of the jobs are low paid and typically associated with women (migrant) workers.

On the whole, in the transnational division of labour, as Smith (2001) argues, the dichotomy between 'global economy' and 'local agency' is rather misleading. In this sense, world system theory's classification of economies into core, semi-periphery and periphery is simplistic as, by means of the international movement of labour, the core and periphery of the world system co-exist within a single country and even a single metropolitan area, like global cities. Hardt and Negri (2000:256) remark that 'just when the proletariat seems to be disappearing from the world stage', the proletariat shifts geographically and 'in each society and across the entire world the proletariat is the ever more general figure of social labour'. Korea is no exception for this tendency. As we will see in the following sections, the restructuring of the Korean economy has generated the coexistence of the core and periphery within a single territory. In the next section, we will focus on changes in the Korean economy related to the transnational division of labour, and the implication of these changes for the increasing flow of labour migrants into the country.

#### *A 'Recomposition' of the Korean Economy: Implications for Labour Migration*

As the NIDL theorists argue, during the 1970s and the 1980s Korea successfully altered its development strategy from import-substitution to export-oriented growth and became one of NICs in Asia. As mentioned above, by establishing export-processing zones (EPZs) in major cities, Korea promoted substantial 'world-market factories' for labour-intensive manufacturing production. However, during the late 1980s the rapid industrialisation of Asian NICs changed the feature of the international division of labour. The multinational corporations (MNCs) of Japan and Asian NICs began to locate the labour-intensive parts of their overall operations in

developing countries in other parts of Asia, thus *creating* 'world-market factories'. As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, Korea is not an exception in this process. Klein's study (2000) vividly illustrates this changed division of labour. As mentioned above, Pusan in Korea was once 'the sneaker capital of the world'. However, between 1987 and 1992, 30,000 factory jobs in Pusan were lost, and in less than three years one-third of jobs in the shoe factories had disappeared (Klein, 2000). For example, in 1985 Reebok produced almost all its sneakers in Korea and Taiwan, but by 1995 'nearly all factories had flown out of Korea and Taiwan' and 60 % of the company's production had relocated to Indonesia and China (Klein, 2000:224).

In the transnational division of labour, with neighbouring China growing rapidly as a global manufacturing hub, Korea has lost its competitive edge in manufacturing-driven economic growth. Alternatively, Korea has strived to maintain its international competitiveness through its economic transformation from old manufacturing industries to high tech and knowledge-based service industries. The notable example is the transformation of cities, such as Incheon and Pusan, which were once EPZs at the centre of world manufacturing. These cities have been renamed as 'the free economic zones (FEZs)' and are being developed into global cities. Songdo City in the Incheon FEZ is currently the largest privately run global city development project in Korea. Lee, the CEO of the Incheon FEZ Authority, states that FEZs are part of Korea's survival strategies to cope with rising competition with other countries in the global economy. They are expected to develop 'the nation's knowledge-based new growth engines', replacing manufacturing businesses (H-S. Lee, 2006). By 2020, Songdo City will be developed as Asia's new financial and logistic hub hosting Asia-Pacific multinational headquarters, global businesses and a knowledge-based information technology

complex (H-S. Lee, 2006; Hwang, 2006). Foreign companies locating in the FEZs, will be granted generous reductions in or exemptions from national and local government taxes of up to 100% during the first three years of business and up to 50% during the subsequent two years (Korea IT Times, 2006).

Even though industrial structures and economic profiles vary among countries, Korea nevertheless reveals a similar tendency towards changing occupational profiles, as evident in the global cities identified in Sassen-Koob's work. For example, there have been constant decreases in the employment rate in the agriculture/fishery and manufacturing industries in Korea. In the manufacturing industry, the employment rate decreased from 27.8% in 1987 to 17% by 2006 for the first time (Oh, 2007; KLI, 2007). On the other hand, from an employment perspective, there has been a rapid growth in the service industry in Korea. The employment rate in the service industry was 62.5% in 2001 and increased by 65% in 2006 (Oh, 2007). Interestingly, while there is a visible increase of the employment of local workers in the advanced service sector, such as information technology (IT), finance, insurance and real estate, there is a decrease in the employment of local workers in the personal service sector such as hotel, restaurant, entertainment, housekeeping and care.

Oh (2007) notes that from an employment perspective it seems that 'de-industrialisation' started in Korea during the early 1990s. However, he argues that the 'de-industrialisation' of the Korean economy has not yet happened in reality, since the contribution of the manufacturing sector to the country's GDP is still substantial. There has been a steady increase in manufacturing production and in 2001 it accounted for 33.4% of GDP, contributing to the country's economic recovery after the financial crisis of 1998. Nevertheless, there have been noticeable changes in

different sectors of the manufacturing industry. While there has been a dramatic decline in labour-intensive manufacturing production, such as garments and leather, there has been a steady increase in the forms of manufacturing production that require both labour and capital investment, such as machinery, electronics and chemicals.

From the data presented above, one can easily notice the contrast between the decline of employment in the manufacturing industry and the continuing substantial weight of manufacturing production in the Korean economy. With the rapid decline of the employment in manufacturing, the operation of the industry has been sustained by alternative forms of labour, notably local irregular workers and migrant workers. As seen in Chapters 4, the strictly selective Korean immigration policy for migrant labour is used strategically to restrict migrant labour to the specific industries – manufacturing, construction, agriculture/livestock, offshore/coastal fishing and service industries – that suffer from labour shortages. At the same time, the employment of Korean workers becomes increasingly concentrated in the advanced service industry. This is well described in the following response by Sassen-Koob to Petras' argument.

Border enforcement emerges as a mechanism facilitating the extraction of surplus value by assigning a status of formal or informal powerlessness to foreign workers generally and criminally to illegal immigrants (Petras, 1980, cited in Sassen-Koob, 1983:184).

The recomposition of the Korean economy therefore generates substantial increases in the employment of local workers in the advanced service sector, while



simultaneously forcing the manufacturing industry – and increasingly the personal service sector – to rely on the supply of migrant workers from developing countries. These migrant workers therefore constitute a labour reservoir in the transnational division labour.

To what extent is the recomposition of the Korean economy in the transnational division of labour relevant to migration of female workers to Korea? While the theory of the transnational division of labour provides us with a valuable account of the relationship between industrial restructuring and international migration, Cohen's account is basically lacking in gender sensitivity. Thus, taking a gendered account, the next section will discuss the transnational sexual division of labour and its implication for the Korean case.

## **II. The Transnational Sexual Division of Labour**

### *The Convergence of the Transnational and the Sexual Division of Labour*

One of the key features of the transnational division of labour is the 'feminisation' of the labour force. Whether in the manufacturing factories of EPZs in developing countries or in the service industries of developed countries, women are increasingly participating in the global labour force. It is important to note that 'feminisation' refers not only to the increasing numbers of women workers, but also to the types of jobs and employment structures. Numerous studies by feminist scholars show the prominent relationship between the international division of labour and the sexual division of labour (e.g., Chant and McIlwaine, 1995; Mies, 1998; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly, 2001). For instance, women workers are mostly concentrated in

labour-intensive manufacturing sectors, such as garments, textiles, shoes and electronics, and within these sectors the sexual division of tasks is prevalent. Also, employment structures have been 'feminised' in the sense that it is increasingly casualised and flexibilised. Women are increasingly engaged in informal and home-based work, which is less secure, less (or mostly not) protected and lowly paid.

Mies' (1998) account for the 'feminisation' of the labour force in the transnational division of labour is based on her concept of 'housewifization'. Mies' 'housewifization' is a double-sided notion. On the one hand, women are the 'optimal' labour force for the global capitalist accumulation process because they are 'universally' defined as 'housewives' and not as workers (Mies, 1998:116). With women seen as housewives, their contribution to production (much less reproduction) is not considered to be 'free wage labour', but rather an 'income-generating *activity*' (ibid.). Mies argues that the 'housewifization' of women enables the capitalists not only to exploit women's cheap labour, but also to gain political and ideological control over women workers, who are less likely to be unionised. Therefore, being housewifized and marginalised, women become the 'optimal' labour force in the global production. Mies (1998:116) remarks that:

[t]his tendency is based on an increasing convergence of the sexual and the international division of labour; a division between men and women – men defined as 'free' wage-labourers, women as non-free housewives – and a division between producers (mainly in the colonies and mainly in the country-side) and consumers (mainly in the rich countries or the cities).

On the other hand, Mies makes the point that within this division there is a

further division between women as producers and as consumers. In this sense, women in the West become 'real' housewives who consume the products produced by women workers in the Third World. As Mies (1998:134-135) highlights in her study of the women lace-makers of Narsapur:

the working-class women in our countries [the West] can afford a lifestyle formerly only possible for bourgeois women because poor women in India make these things for a wage below their own subsistence level.

She continues that 'this relationship thrives on the definition of women as housewives at both ends of the globe' (Mies, 1998:135). On the other side of the international division of labour, while women in the West are increasingly losing their jobs on production lines, they are being mobilised as 'housewives, consumers and sex objects' in marketing strategies for the sale of commercial products produced by Third World women (Mies, 1998). This echoes Eisenstein's (1996) observation that women in the West are used to symbolise the market's consumerist possibilities for women in the Third World.

According to Mies (1998:120), the universal 'mystification' of women as housewives is 'not an accidental side-effect of the new IDL, but a necessary precondition for its smooth functioning'. Housewifization makes women's labour in global production invisible and marginalised, and justifies low wages and exploitative labour conditions. At the same time, it 'gears their attention to a sexist and patriarchal image of women, namely the 'real' housewife supported by a man' (Mies, 1998:120). On the whole, Mies' 'housewifization' thesis highlights the convergence of the transnational and the sexual division of labour, which is a

valuable account with significant implications for the discussion of the feminisation of labour migration and the 'optimal' utilisation of women migrant labour forces in advanced economies.

### *Korean Women in the Transnational Division of Labour*

Between the 1960s and the early 1980s, Korean women workers were highly 'housewifized' and certainly were the 'optimal' labour force in the transnational division of labour, producing large proportions of garments, textiles, shoes and electronics for exportation to the world market. Young and inexperienced women workers, often recruited fresh from rural areas, were mobilised for the country's export-oriented development strategy because they were considered docile and obedient, and therefore suitable workers for the labour-intensive, low paid and exploitative production sectors. In 1970 92% of women in the production sector were employed in the manufacturing industry and within manufacturing 80% of women were working in the labour-intensive light manufacturing industry, notably garments and textiles (K. A. Park, 1995). In the same year more than 70% of textile workers were women (ibid.). These manufacturing products produced by women workers constituted over 45% of the total exports of the country in the 1970s (The Korean United Women Workers' Association, 2000). Considering their roles in the successful export-led development, the contribution of Korean women workers to country's rapid industrialisation cannot be over-emphasised.

As seen in Chapter 2, with the introduction of the heavy and chemical industries (HCIs) as the core component of the country's development strategy, the transformation from a labour-intensive to a capital-intensive industrial structure was

intensified in Korea. During this period, export commodities became more capital-intensive and the Korea's export structure reached a turning point, as manufactured exports shifted decisively towards skill-intensive products such as motorcars, steel, electronics, shipbuilding and machinery. While women's labour in the light manufacturing industry remained substantial, women workers were almost completely excluded in HCI – which became the country's core industry. With industrial restructuring, the occupational structure of sectors employing women workers has also changed. The growth of the production sector slowed down in the 1980s, reflecting the decline of labour-intensive manufacturing industries, while simultaneously the service and clerical sectors continued to grow rapidly. With expanded educational and economic opportunities for women in the 1980s, women's employment shifted to the area of clerical and administrative work. K. A. Park (1995) notes that changes in the structure of the female labour force are evident in the age distribution of women workers. According to K. A. Park (1995), in 1970 the 15-19 age group constituted the largest proportion of economically active women followed by the 20-24 age group. The percentage of the 15-19 age group among the population of economically active women nevertheless fell dramatically by 1980, and dropped even further by 1991, to become the smallest among all age groups. K. A. Park argues that this rapid decrease of the young female labour force was mainly due to an increased period of schooling. Export-led industrialisation therefore brought economic and educational opportunities to women, reducing the proportion of teenage women workers in the labour force by the late 1980s<sup>45</sup>.

Barrientos *et al.* (2004) describe the shift in female employment from the

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<sup>45</sup> However, this tendency caused shortages of young, single women workers and this, in turn, an increasing demand for married women workers in the manufacturing industry (K. A. Park, 1995).

manufacturing into service industries in East Asian countries such as Japan and Korea as the 'de-feminisation' of the manufacturing industry. Large-scale manufacturing industries, facing tightening labour markets and increasing real wages, started to adopt automation of production or to relocate their production lines to neighbouring countries providing cheaper labour. Thus, the decline in female employment in manufacturing is a part of the restructuring processes within the transnational division of labour. However, as we will see later in this chapter, the manufacturing industry has not in fact 'de-feminised', but rather remained deeply feminised. While local women no longer work on production line, the jobs in manufacturing industries are being occupied by migrant women from poorer countries.

At the same time, there have been noticeable shifts in the occupations of Korean women in recent years. Between 1990 and 2001, the population of the women workers in the manufacturing industry has declined by 10.6% – from 28.1% to 17.5% (Kuem, 2003). On the other hand, since the 1990s the proportion of women employed in the service industry has dramatically increased from 51.5% in 1990 to 71.4% in 2001 (ibid.). Kuem (2003) argues that women's increasing employment participation is directly related to the concentration of the Korean women's labour force in the service industry. This trend also has implications for the absorption of the large proportion of the female labour force in manufacturing into the service industry. In the next section, we will examine how these changes in the Korean women's labour force imply the gendered and racialised division of labour in the Korean labour market.

### **III. The Gendered and Racialised Division of Labour in the Korean Labour Market**

#### *The Migrant Labour Market*

As seen in Chapter 4, Korean state policies aimed at controlling the inflow of migrant workers reflect the interests of state bureaucrats, politicians, businesses and local workers. The labour market for unskilled migrant workers is tightly managed by the state. The Korean state strictly controls the number and the period of the residence of migrant workers and very narrowly limits the range of industries available for migrant labour. As noted in Chapter 4, the Korean government is also very selective with respect to labour sending countries. In his dual labour market approach to international migration Piore (1979) observes that migrant workers become the reserve army of labour by supplying the secondary segment of the labour market and helping to secure the jobs of local workers in the primary labour market. The use of migrants in the secondary labour market therefore provides ‘a reason why [non-immigrant] workers, as well as their employers, might have an interest in the continuation of the migration process’ (Piore, 1979:41, cited in Bauder, 2006:20).

Nevertheless, the dual labour market approach, which divides the labour market into primary and secondary segments (Gordon *et al.*, 1982; Piore, 1979; Reich *et al.* 1973), provides a rather limited account of the labour market situation of migrant workers. As Bauder (2006) argues, neither primary nor secondary labour markets are as homogenous as the dual labour market theory implies. In particular, within the secondary labour market increasingly occupied by the migrant labour force, migrant workers are not widely dispersed across occupations, but they are

concentrated in certain occupations and niche industries. Within these occupations, migrant workers are employed at low wages, in precarious jobs – which local workers are reluctant to take on – and without proper labour protection. In the sample of this study, with the exception of cross-border marriage migrants, most of migrant workers are temporary sojourners who are “target earners” (Bauder, 2006:21), i.e. aiming to earn and save a certain amount of money in Korea before returning home. Indeed, the periods of residence in Korea for some workers – especially many Korean-Chinese workers who have stayed over five years – would seem to be rather longer than what might be considered ‘temporary’. The common reason for the long-term residence is debt, due to brokerage fees, and unreasonably high interest rates. Thus, even if the working conditions and the intensity of labour are exploitative, their tolerance levels are inconceivably high. Moreover, the undocumented status of workers makes them vulnerable to exploitation and maltreatment by employers and Korean co-workers. If the employment conditions become intolerable, migrant workers simply leave the job and move to another one, rather than resisting the situation. Or if wages are lower than they expected, they stay longer or work more shifts to meet their target earnings. Undocumented migrant workers are vulnerable, and for this reason they are valuable for the labour market.

Migrant workers become ‘flexible labour’ within the secondary labour market and thereby create ‘the migrant labour market’. Bauder (2006) notes that the use of migrants as secondary labour helps explain the cyclical demand for a migrant labour force. The demand for migrant workers continues until the cyclical and seasonal jobs in the secondary labour market are filled, but the demand declines in periods of economic slowdown (Bauder, 2006). In Korea the state regulation of the migrant labour force explicitly illustrates the country’s use of migrants as flexible



labour. For example, the Korean government set an annual quota for migrant workers in the service industry. In an interview, a government official in the Ministry of Labour stated that:

The Korean government sets a strict quota within the boundary in which the number of migrants does not take jobs over local workers. Normally, the quota is set at within 1-2% of economically active population. So, if the unemployment rate increases, the quota for migrants goes down. Because service and construction industries are particularly susceptible to the unemployment rate, the quota for the migrant labour force can be always changed (*Deputy Director of Foreign Work-force Policy Division, Ministry of Labour, interview with the author, August 2005*).

In the migrant labour market, the education and skills attained by migrants in their home countries are often irrelevant to their employment prospects. Even highly educated and experienced migrant workers are most likely to work in occupations, which do not require their specific skills. Rather, the employment of migrant workers is decided by employer preferences in terms of ethnicity, gender and age.

### *The Gendered and Racialised Division of the Migrant Labour Market*

In the segmented labour market unskilled migrant women are employed in a limited range of occupations. With narrow occupational options and limited opportunities for further training, women migrant workers are in a weak position in the labour market and therefore unable to bargain for better employment positions. The 'feminisation' of the labour force is evident in certain industries, such as the manufacturing and

service industries. While recent changes in the employment profile of Korean workers seem to indicate the 'de-feminisation' of the manufacturing industry, certain manufacturing sectors remain deeply feminised. As discussed in chapter 2, a significant number of manufacturing sectors in Korea have not relocated overseas, but have been increasingly operated by subcontractors in Korea. Those subcontracting firms are mostly small and medium businesses, which have overcome their serious labour shortages by employing migrant workers. Although male migrant workers in the manufacturing industry still outnumber their female counterparts in Korea, the gendered division of labour between male and female migrant workers is evident. For example, in the manufacturing industry female migrant workers tend to be concentrated in textiles, garments and leather industries – which were previously dominated by Korean women workers – while their male counterparts are concentrated in chemical compound, rubber goods and plastics industries. In the sample of this study, 16 out of 31 women migrant workers are working or used to work in the manufacturing industry. The majority of those women are employed in electronic assembly factories, with a few in garments, metal and plastics factories.

In the service industry, the gendered division of labour is more apparent. In 2005 women migrant workers in the service industry constitute 85.8% of the total migrant labour force (Ministry of Labour, 2005). As seen in Table 5-1, migrant women are predominately employed in catering, care and domestic work. The numbers in the following Table merely represent the numbers of ethnic Korean migrants who have *legally* obtained the special employment permit. The total number of migrant workers who have applied for the special employment permit is 20,254 in total and among them 16,034 are migrant women. Considering the large number of undocumented workers who are already working in the industry, the total number of

migrant workers in the service industry would be far higher. In the sample of this study, 16 out of 31 migrant women are employed in the personal service sector, including catering, hotel cleaning, private care and domestic work.

**Table 5.1. The Number of Migrant Workers Employed under the Special Employment Permit System**

|            |           | Caterin<br>g | Cleanin<br>g | Public<br>servic<br>e | Sewage/wast<br>e disposal | Car<br>mechani<br>c | Private<br>nursin<br>g care | Domesti<br>c service |
|------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Femal<br>e | 5,81<br>1 | 4,961        | 32           | 6                     | 13                        | -                   | 225                         | 574                  |
| Male       | 1,01<br>5 | 785          | 25           | 5                     | 154                       | 7                   | 24                          | 15                   |
| Total      | 6,82<br>6 | 5,746        | 57           | 11                    | 167                       | 7                   | 249                         | 589                  |

*Source:* Ministry of Labour, unpublished data (2005)

The migrant labour market is also divided by nationality. One of main factors in the racialised division of migrant labour is the state regulation of the labour market for migrant workers. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Korean government introduced the special employment permit system for ethnic Koreans in an attempt to provide preferential employment opportunities for ethnic Korean migrant workers in the service and construction industries. These two industries are restricted to ethnic Korean migrant workers. A government official in the Ministry of Labour explains the reason as follows:

The jobs in the service industry require employee proficiency in Korean and cultural similarity to deal with people. In this case, foreigners with dark skin would be hard to be employed in service jobs. For example, Filipinos seem to have a good chance because they speak English, but they are unlikely to be employed because they lack cultural similarity due to the racial difference. For this

reason, the government restricts the service jobs only to ethnic Koreans who speak the language and look similar to Koreans (*Deputy Director of Human Resource Development and R&D, Office of the Prime Minister and Former Deputy Director of Foreign Work-force Policy Division, Ministry of Labour, interview with the author, August 2005*).

It is questionable whether ‘cultural similarity’ should be one of the qualifications for service jobs, such as cleaning or serving in restaurants. It is also hard to justify the relation between phenotypical appearances and cultural similarity. Underneath the regulation of the migrant labour market, there are serious implications for the mythical assumption of homogeneity of Korean society and xenophobic attitudes of Koreans towards ‘foreigners’. The sample of this study also shows a similar racialised division of labour: all Korean-Chinese migrants worked in the service industry and, except for three Filipinas, the rest of the migrants worked in the manufacturing industry. As will be discussed further below, within the same industry jobs are differentially allocated on the basis of nationality and wages vary between different nationalities.

### *The Empirical Analysis*

#### 1. Manufacturing Industry

##### Worker Profiles

12 out of 31 respondents in this study were currently working in the manufacturing

industry and three others had previously worked in this industry. The nationalities of the respondents were Filipina, Vietnamese, Sri Lankan and Indonesian. Except for the two Filipinas, who were marriage migrants, and two Indonesians, who had been granted an amnesty in 2003, all of them were undocumented. There were three Korean-Chinese workers who used to be employed in the manufacturing sector before moving to service industries. The majority of respondents employed in the manufacturing industry worked in subcontracting firms, producing electronic products, notably mobile phone handsets. Nevertheless, since migrant workers tend to be mobile and frequently shift between factories, many of them had also previously worked in various factories producing garments, leather, metal or plastics.

#### Gender Relations and the Racialised Division within the Migrant Labour Force

Although there is a variation between industries, most factories are subdivided into a series of different departments or production-line sections: pre-assembly, assembly, post-assembly/finishing and packing. Women workers tend to be concentrated in certain sections of the production line and the gendered division of labour within factories is therefore apparent. For example, in garments factories – as one would expect – the majority of women are employed in the assembly section consisting of machine-operated sewing. Similarly, in electronics, workers in the assembly line are predominantly women. The jobs in this section usually involve the fitting, moulding and splicing of electrical components. The other heavily female-dominated department is post-assembly or finishing. In fact, the majority of the respondents worked in this post-assembly section, which involved quality control, i.e. checking the finished products and removing the faulty ones.

The following case of a Filipina worker shows a clear example of gender segmentation in a manufacturing factory.

The factory where I'm working is producing keypads and screens for mobile phones and other small electronic goods. I pick faulty products at the end of the assembly line. There are many Filipinos in the factory. On the ground floor assembly line, there are 40 woman workers, including 8 Filipinos. On the first floor packing line, there are about 35 women workers, only Koreans and Chinese. And on the Second floor, there are only Korean male workers who work as machine operators. It is very clear about men's jobs and women's jobs in the factory. Men tend to do physically hard work, and women do the jobs requiring close and careful attentions.  
*(Marilou, 30, Filipino)*

As seen in Marilou's factory, maintenance departments and engineers are reserved exclusively for male workers, because men are thought to be physically 'stronger' and more adept at heavy and technical jobs. Another respondent also stated that there was a clear division of labour in the factory. She described her husband's glass factory where only male workers were producing and cutting glass, which was physically demanding labour. On the other hand, female workers in the glass factory tended to work only in the finishing department, when they checked the finished products. The explanation given for women's concentration in the assembly and post-assembly sections is the usual stereotype of women workers being 'more meticulous' and 'careful' on the job. Chant and McILwaine (1995) remark that women comprise over 90% of operatives in the assembly section, which is regarded as the 'most tedious' set of tasks in the factory, because they are thought to be more patient and to have a higher boredom threshold.

Wages and working hours are different between female and male migrant workers. In an interview with a couple from Indonesia, the wife – working in a mobile phone assembly factory – was not happy with her job because she earned less than her husband despite working longer hours. Her job involved injection moulding for mobile phone handsets. While her salary was about US\$860 per month and additional US\$4 per hour for overtime, her husband – who sprayed paints on electronic products – earned US\$1,100 per month. According to data provided by H-K. Lee (2003a), on average women migrant workers work 62.9 hours and men 60.7 hours per week. Although women workers work almost two hours longer than their male counterparts, their average monthly wage is about US\$20 less than men's. However, many women workers in this study responded that because their jobs in the factory were not as hard as men's, relatively lower wages for women workers were explicable.

My first job was packing electronic goods in a manufacturing factory. It was hard because some electronic goods such as fans were too heavy for me to handle. Putting them in boxes and finishing packing were a hard job. Then, I moved to a different factory where I did injection moulding. The job was easier than packing. But, it was not an easy job for women. Now, I am working in the mobile phone assembly factory. Comparing other jobs I've done before, it is the easiest job. It is woman's job. So salary is not as high as man's job. Some men are doing really hard and dangerous jobs in factories. (*Sandra, 37, Indonesian*)

According to Marilou's interview above, in her factory workers are allocated to the shop floor based on their nationalities. While Filipina workers are only

working in the finishing department on the ground floor, Korean and Chinese workers are in the packing department on the first floor. For employers, hiring workers with the same nationality or with a similar cultural background is justified in terms of productivity and efficiency on the shop floor, as it makes them easier to manage and control. One of the respondents from Sri Lanka stated that:

I am working in the factory producing cosmetic bottles with 6 other women workers from Sri Lanka. We cook our lunch together and became close friends. Like my boss, employers normally prefer to hire a group of workers having same nationality because they speak the same language and share the same culture. (*Lakshika, 27, Sri Lankan*)

Employers also tend to give preference to certain nationalities.

I assemble mobile phone sets in the assembly line in the Incheon industrial complex. There are 5 Indonesian women workers in my factory. Our boss prefers to hire Indonesian women workers because we are obedient. We do as we are told. If the boss says, "Do this" to Korean-Chinese workers, they often disobey. (*Nina, 41, Indonesian*)

The preference for specific nationalities may nevertheless vary between employers. In general, employers prefer to hire Korean-Chinese migrant workers due to the workers' command of Korean. In fact, some of the Filipina and Vietnamese respondents mentioned in their interviews that Korean-Chinese workers were normally treated differently from other migrant workers within the factory. These respondents stated that the Korean-Chinese workers' competence in Korean provided them with an advantage in building rapport with Korean co-workers and managers



on the shop floor and employers. On the other hand, like Nina's employer, some employers may avoid hiring Korean-Chinese workers because wages are generally higher than other migrant groups<sup>46</sup> and they are considered to be relatively 'less obedient'.

### Wages and Working Conditions

Women migrant workers work for very low wages and for very long hours under poor working conditions. A majority of the respondents worked weekends because they got paid for overtime. Many women complained about tiredness due to the nature of their jobs, which were repetitive and required a great deal of concentration for long hours. Women working for quality control in the finishing department are placed under particular stress because they get blamed for faulty products in the end. Workers are usually assigned daily quotas of products to assemble or quality-check, and if those quotas are not met at the end of the day, they have to complete their jobs by working overtime without additional pay.

The following interview data illustrate women migrant workers' archetypal jobs in the factories.

My job is very hard, but O.K. At least, for this job I can sit while I'm working. But, it's very tiring. Until the conveyer belt stops, you have to keep working. You cannot talk or think other things in your head. You really have to concentrate on finding faulty ones on the moving conveyer belt. I work eight hours a day – between 8.30

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<sup>46</sup> For example, according to the data provided by H-K. Lee (2003a), while Korean-Chinese workers' average monthly wage is 620,000 *won* (US\$620), Vietnamese workers' average monthly wage is 520,000 *won* (US\$520).

a.m. and 5.30 p.m. with one hour lunch break. If I work overtime, it finishes at 8.30 p.m. I earn 1,200,000 *won* (US\$1200) including overtime payment. If you don't work overtime, you'll get paid 900,000 *won* (US\$900). I work overtime on Sunday for an extra income. I want to stay at home at weekends, but I work for money. I work on Sundays from 2 to 5 o'clock in the afternoon. *(Marilou, 30, Filipino)*

I'm inspecting faulty products in an automobile accessories manufacturing assembly. I work for 10 hours per day - from 8.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. with a 30 minute lunch break. I also work on Saturdays till 2.30 p.m. My monthly salary is only 800,000 *won* (US\$800). My job is very tiring. I check faults in very small nuts and bolts, which are parts of cars. I do about 10 boxes – one box contains 500 nuts and bolts. My job needs concentration for all day. My eyes hurt. If I don't finish the checking 10 boxes, I cannot go home and have to do unpaid overtime to finish. *(Lisa, 36, Filipino)*

I work as a machine operator in the mobile phone manufacturing factory. I assemble a screen into a mobile phone handset. The factory is a subcontractor of major mobile phone companies in Korea. I work 12 hours a day – from 8.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. It's hard and tiring. I'm the only one doing this job in the factory. So it's quite stressful because I've got a responsibility for faulty products. If there is a faulty screen, it's my fault. So you have to carefully concentrate on your job. At the same time, I have to do the job in speed. My monthly salary is 1,000,000 *won* (US\$1,000). It is four months' salary of a military general in the Philippines. *(Jo, 45, Filipino)*

I feel stressed because my supervisor always tells me to do my job quickly. Koreans are short-tempered. They want us to do everything at speed. This causes many faulty products in the

factory. When the boss finds out many faulty products, he blames us. (*Sandra, 37, Indonesian*)

It is worth noting that not all women migrant workers are employed in traditional 'women's jobs. I found that some of the respondents also worked or had previously worked in physically demanding and precarious production, such as furniture, metal and plastic. Migrant workers often work without proper protection or safety instructions. Industrial accidents are common in these industries. One respondent who was employed to sand wood in a furniture factory complained about breathing dust while she was doing her job. Also, surprisingly many women worked in metal industries, where they moulded metal to make bath tops or other metal components. One Filipina worker described her previous work in a foundry as the hardest job she had ever done. One Korean-Chinese woman, who previously worked in a factory producing metal furniture, cut her finger with a metal press machine. Women migrant workers often took jobs in these industries because they were misinformed about the particular job assigned to them in the hiring process, and because these jobs paid relatively better than other factory jobs, such as assembly and quality control.

As the majority of women workers were undocumented and worked without proper contracts, they were in a vulnerable position. None of the respondents in this study were members of trade unions. Therefore, even though they were aware of their longer working hours and lower wages when compared to Korean co-workers, they tended to passively put up with these unfavourable conditions. As mentioned above, most of the respondents were 'target earners'. Their primary aim was to earn and send money to their family back home. Rather than attempting to change the

present condition – for instance by complaining to their employers or asking for a pay raise – their preferred act of resistance was to move to another factory with slightly better pay and conditions.

### The Dilemma of Industrial Trainees

As seen in Chapter 4, under the Industrial and Technical Training Programme (ITTP), foreigners are allowed to enter Korea for training in Korean firms. While they do the same work as other ‘workers’ in manufacturing factories, they do not receive any training. They are ostensibly ‘trainees’ in terms of their legal status, and for this reason do not have the same rights as regular workers. Owing to extremely low wages and poor employment conditions, many trainees escape from their designated companies to find better-paid jobs in other factories. Trainees frequently suffer verbal abuse, such as swearing and racist or sexist insults. One respondent was hit by a Korean co-worker because she did not respond to his question. Under these circumstances, trainees often choose to leave their sponsors and become undocumented. The following two respondents had entered Korea as ‘trainees’, but worked as undocumented workers after escaping from their sponsor firms.

I came to Korea as a trainee. I worked day and night for long hours, but my monthly wage was only 280,000 won (approx. US\$280). Although the company provided me free accommodation and food, it was still a very low wage and work was really hard. I had almost no money left when I sent most of my wage to my family in my country. So I decided to escape the factory after two years. Since then, I have shifted from one job to another a few times. (*Thuy Duong, 29, Vietnamese*)

When I was a trainee, I worked in a cloth factory. I didn't know how to sew, but because I couldn't speak Korean I couldn't understand the instruction. So I had to learn by myself by looking at how Korean workers were doing. Because the work was really hard with a very low wage, I quit the factory after one year and moved to another factory. (*Hong Sam, 26, Vietnamese*)

However, for some of the women trainees, escaping from the designated company was not an easy option. With a lack of competence in Korean and being in a foreign country, they had no choice but to stay in the job until their contracts end. When they were deployed to isolated factories in suburban areas, it was difficult for them to obtain information on alternative jobs, which were more likely to be available in metropolitan cities.

When I came to Korea as a trainee, I was deployed in a factory in Jinju [a small city in the south west province]. Although it was really hard work and the wage was bad, I stayed in the job until my three-year training contract terminated. I wanted to quit, but I didn't know where to go. I was afraid of moving to another new place in this foreign country where I had nobody. I think that it was harder for me because I was a woman. (*Shilani, 30, Sri Lankan*)

On the other hand, many trainees tend to be forced to stay in their designated companies. Being aware of the tendency for a large number of trainees to escape from their sponsor companies, employers often try to manage the workforce in a manipulative manner. The following experience of two Korean-Chinese workers illustrates why the industrial training programme is commonly criticised as 'modern

day slavery’.

We worked in a textile factory for two years as trainees. It was one of big Korean fashion companies. Both of us knew nothing about sewing before coming to Korea. We started to work straight after very brief induction. For the first six months, our monthly wage was 540,000 *won* (US\$540). Even though the work was hard and a wage was low, we couldn’t move to another factory because except small monthly allowance (100,000 *won*), rest of our wages were automatically paid into our bank accounts. Employers made us unable to get hold of the savings during our contract. We received them when we left the job after two years when the training contract ended.

We worked for 12 hours a day from 7am to 7pm. After 5pm, Korean workers could claim overtime pay, but we were not entitled to receive overtime pay until 7pm. The manager in the factory was a Korean man who always swore and shouted at us.

There was no freedom. It was an apartment type factory: an office and shops on the ground floor; factories on the first and second floors; and workers’ accommodation on the fourth floor. After midnight, we were locked inside the building. Then, nobody could go out. If you went out and returned after midnight, you were fined 5,000 *won* (approx. US\$5), which would be deducted from your next month’s wage. This was all because the employer worried that we could escape from the factory at night. There were total 120 migrant workers in the factory and most of them were Korean-Chinese trainees like us. There was one Vietnamese woman who was undocumented, but paid a lot more than us. We didn’t realise that our wages were much less than other migrant workers who are mostly undocumented. As we were confined in the factory, we

didn't have much contact with the outside world. When we finished our training contract, we decided never to take a job paying a low wage. (*Dani and Myung-Hwa, 25 and 22, Korean-Chinese*)

## 2. Service Industry<sup>47</sup>

### Worker Profiles

As mentioned above, migrant workers employed in the service industry are predominantly women. Eight out of 31 respondents were employed in the service industry in the formal sector. However, it is important to note that among those workers some were also employed as part-time domestic workers in private households. Some of the data examined in this section are also based on interviews with the respondents who were employed in domestic work, but who had previously worked in the formal service sector. All the respondents employed in the service industry were Korean-Chinese migrants, who were mostly undocumented and long-term residents in Korea. The majority of the respondents were employed in catering, involving table waiting, cleaning, washing-up and kitchen assistance. Some had also previously worked as hotel cleaners. Compared to workers employed in private households, workers in this sector tend to be relatively young (ages between 20s and 40s). Although the pay in catering is better than in domestic work, as the labour intensity is higher in this sector, migrant women tend to move to domestic work when they get older.

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<sup>47</sup> Here, the service industry refers to service jobs in the formal sector, such as cleaning and catering services. Service work, especially care and domestic work in private households will be examined in Chapter 6.

## Wages and Working Conditions

Those workers having worked in hotel cleaning expressed negative views on the job, owing to long working hours and the intensity of labour. In fact, among the respondents hotel cleaning was regarded as a notorious job, which they all wanted to avoid. One of respondents described her previous cleaning job as follows:

I have worked as a cleaner in a small hotel in the outskirts of Seoul. I found that job on the local paper, but left the job after one week. Cleaning hotel is one of the hardest jobs. If somebody offers me a job in hotel, I would never take it again. There were 50 rooms in the hotel, which should be cleaned by only three of us. My job was to clean all toilets in hotel rooms. There were so many glasses in each toilet and I had to clean them every time when guests checked out the room. The work was endless for all day. Although it was hard labour, I was paid 120,000 *won* (US\$1,200) for working 16 hours a day. Compared to the cleaning job, working in a restaurant is much better. (*Sin-Keum, 55, Korean-Chinese*)

On the other hand, employment in catering was generally regarded preferable among Korean-Chinese workers, because the wages were higher than those in manufacturing jobs and less different from those of Korean workers. The monthly wage of the respondents in this study was in the range of 1,200,000 and 1,300,000 *won* (US\$1,200 - 1,300), while Korean workers in the same industry were paid about US\$100 more per month than migrant workers. Most workers lived in the accommodation provided by employers, which was often a small room shared with other migrant workers. The working hours varied between workers, depending on the types of restaurants. The full-time migrant workers interviewed in this study



normally worked 12 hours a day in restaurants. Many respondents stated that, unlike factory work, they were allowed a break during the working hours when restaurants were less busy. However, as these workers commonly lived in the restaurant, they often worked during non-business hours, arranging tables, sorting out cutlery, folding napkins or washing vegetables before and after opening hours.

Migrant workers tend to work in large restaurants, which can more easily provide them with accommodation. Generally, catering in Korea is distinct from other cultures. Working in large restaurants demands greater intensity of physical labour for long hours due to cultural uniqueness. Customers expect to be served their orders with great speed – even if they are not in a fast-food restaurant – and especially during lunch hours. Korean cuisine is made up of a number of different dishes including main dishes and several small dishes, which are normally served at the same time. More importantly, unlike Western restaurants, the layout of tables and seating in most Korean restaurants is arranged in rooms without chairs – i.e. customers take off their shoes and sit on the floor. This means that each time workers serve customers they have to take off their shoes and carry all the dishes into the rooms.

I once worked in a traditional Korean restaurant. Korean food is normally served on heavy porcelain plates. And the restaurant was big and had many rooms on multiple floors. It was physically demanding to go up and down the stairs carrying all the dishes with a big tray. I had to do that about 20 times per table. I was so exhausted especially during the dinner when you had to serve several tables at once. (*Hyang-Lim, 39, Korean-Chinese*)

## Gender Relations and Racial Discrimination in the Service Industry

Apart from the physical challenges of the job, service work requires workers to deal with customers. Owing to the nature of service work, there are certain patterns of gender relations and the racialisation of the workforce in the service industry. Firstly, gender and age divisions of labour are apparent in catering. Young and well-presented women migrant workers are predominantly deployed to jobs involving table waiting. Accordingly, catering work is divided in terms of ages. It is evident among the respondents that while young women did table waiting, older women tended to work in the kitchen where they were 'invisible' to customers. Secondly, many respondents stated that they experienced communication problems with restaurant customers. Although Korean-Chinese workers have a good command of Korean, due to cultural differences workers commonly face difficulties understanding modern Korean, which often contains English terms. On the other hand, customers often find it hard to understand the foreign accents of Korean-Chinese workers. As these problems often result in wrong orders and customer complaints, some restaurants are reluctant to hire Korean-Chinese workers for table waiting. Many respondents stated that they felt insulted when they found many restaurants explicitly indicating 'No Korean-Chinese workers' in their job vacancy advertisements in local newspapers.

The gender relations and the racialisation of the workforce in catering have significant implications for sexual and racial harassment, which are frequently experienced by women migrant workers employed in restaurants. Many respondents reported sexual and racial harassment by customers. As most Korean restaurants are licensed, women migrant workers are often distressed with having to serve drunken

customers late at night. Since Korean-Chinese workers' accent is noticeable, their Korean-Chinese identity becomes a target for sexual and racist comments by drunken or uncouth customers. More importantly, given her undocumented status, when a migrant worker is sexually harassed by a restaurant manager or an employer, she is reluctant to confront the situation. The following case illustrates how, under difficult situations – such as harassment –, migrant women could be located in a vulnerable position due to their undocumented status.

When I was working in the previous restaurant, there were 12 Korean-Chinese women including me sharing the accommodation provided by the restaurant. The restaurant manager kept harassing us [Korean-Chinese women employees]. For example, he rang our lodgings every night and talked to us in turn on the phone for 3 or 4 hours. All of us were in distress day and night because of his behaviour. After putting up with him for a long time, we finally decided to report him to our boss. But, just before we talked to the boss, he resigned by himself with an excuse of his ill health. After that, one night while we were sleeping, three immigration officers raided our accommodation. Immediately, 12 of us were arrested on that night. We found out that it was the manager who reported us to the immigration bureau. He knew that we were undocumented and our lodgings were located in the basement where there was only one exit, so there was no way out. (*Soon-Sun, 43, Korean-Chinese*)

Soon-sun was confined in the immigration detention centre for 24 days and, with the help of NGOs, was released after being granted a postponement of her deportation.

Many respondents complained about discriminatory treatment based on their Korean-Chinese identities. Migrant workers experienced unfair treatment from their employers and Korean co-workers in the restaurant. While Korean-Chinese workers

were in a relatively advantageous position in terms of payment and employment opportunities within the migrant labour force, according to the findings in this study, they showed the lowest level of satisfaction with respect to their relationship with local workers and Korean employers in the workplace. Being Korean descendants, Korean-Chinese workers have a high level of expectation to be treated equally as 'local Koreans'. However, in reality many Korean-Chinese workers experience racist attitudes on the part of local people and as a consequence, their identities become confused. This, in turn, results in their feelings of disillusionment and resentment towards Korea. For example, Soon-Sun who had been arrested by the immigration authority (see the interview above) commented that since the incident, she had felt anger and born a grudge against Korean people.

When working in the restaurant, I often experience discrimination against Korean-Chinese workers. Many Koreans despise the Korean-Chinese with no reason. Hard and dirty work is always assigned to us in the restaurant. Korean co-workers and our boss do not usually talk to Korean-Chinese workers. As soon as I feel despised by Koreans, I just quit my job and move to another one. I left the previous restaurant because of that. For this reason, I have never worked in the same restaurant for a long period. (*Bong-Sun, 52, Korean-Chinese*)

I still believe that 95% of Koreans are good people, but it was the rest of them who upset me. If I work hard, Koreans demand me to work harder. In the previous restaurant, the employer who was a woman of my age always called me a 'Chinese bitch'. There were also Korean women workers in the restaurant, but she only called us [Korean-Chinese employees] using the words. I was a cook in the Kitchen and was frequently offended by her racist comments. I

had put up with her insults for 15 days and decided to quit. (*Soon-Hee, 70, Korean-Chinese*)

Since I came to Korea, I feel that I become a bad person. Because I have gone through so many unpleasant experiences of Koreans, I have so much anger and hatred against some Korean people. It is not easy to forgive. When I worked in a restaurant, I was once accused for stealing money from the counter. At that time, I was not paid wages for two months because the restaurant was not doing well. When I asked the employer to pay me overdue wages, the employer got angry and said to me, “after you stole money from us, how could you demand me to pay you overdue wages now?” Eventually, I reported the employer to the Ministry of Labour and got paid all the wages. For 50 years, I had lived with integrity in China, but I was really sad to be contempt like that in Korea. (*Sin-Keum, 55, Korean-Chinese*)

### *State Policies towards Women migrant workers*

Under the Employment Permit System (EPS), migrant workers have the same rights as Korean workers. In principle, when a foreigner is regarded as a ‘worker’<sup>48</sup>, she or he is entitled to the three basic labour rights of unionising, collective bargaining and collective action. Migrant workers are also protected under the Labour Standards Act, the Minimum Wages Act and the Industrial Safety and Health Act. Accordingly, migrant workers have access to four forms of national insurance: the National Health Insurance; the Industrial Accident Compensation; the Employment Insurance; and

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<sup>48</sup> Article 14 of the Labour Standard Act defines a ‘worker’ as ‘a person engaged in whatever occupation offering work to a business or workplace for the purpose of earning wages’.

the National Pension<sup>49</sup>. In addition, state policy specifies four types of EPS insurance. The employer must provide the Departure Guarantee Insurance (for severance pay) and the Guarantee insurance (for overdue wages) to the migrant employee, while migrant workers are expected to insure themselves by means of the Return Cost Insurance (for return flight ticket) and the Casualty Insurance (for accident and death unrelated to work). The employment contract period of the EPS is one year at a time and the maximum period of employment in Korea is three years. A change in business or workplace of the migrant worker is strictly prohibited. Dependent family members of migrant workers are not allowed to enter the country.

Chapter IV, Article 22, of the Employment of Foreign Workers Act (EFWA) specifies that an employer shall not give unfair and discriminatory treatment to migrant workers 'on grounds of their status'. It is however very doubtful whether this provision is followed in reality. First of all, industrial trainees are not recognised as 'workers'. According to the Immigration Control Act, their legal status is strictly that of 'trainee' and industrial trainees under the ITTP are therefore excluded from the Employment of Foreign Workers Act (EFWA). As mentioned in the previous chapter, during two years' working period granted under the Working After Training Programme (WATP), migrant workers are protected by the Labour Standards Act, the Minimum Wages Act, the Industrial Accident Compensation and the Industrial Safety Act. However, this provision does not cover the full period of their employment, i.e. during the first year of their apprenticeship these provisions are not applied because they are in the 'training' period. On the whole, even though they do the same work as other migrant workers do, trainees do not have the same

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<sup>49</sup> The National Pension is however based on the principle of reciprocity. Thus, it is only applied to migrant workers from countries that apply it to migrant workers in their own countries. The pension is not applied to workers from Vietnam and workers from Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Thailand are provided with a lump sum payment when they leave.

rights as legal migrant workers. Secondly, in terms of the Labour Standards Act, those who work with an undocumented status are, in principle, recognised as 'workers'. However, while an undocumented migrant worker can claim her or his right, the labour supervisory authority that handles the problems of workers is required to report their 'illegal' status to the Immigration Bureau. In addition, the three basic labour rights are less likely to be applicable to undocumented migrant workers in practice. In most cases, the majority of migrant workers work in small firms where labour unions hardly exist. Although they may freely join general trade unions, their public activities and official memberships are restricted to a great extent because, being 'illegal' migrants, exposing themselves could result in deportation.

In principle, women migrant workers are eligible for the paid maternity leave of 90 days and the unpaid childcare leave to take care of an infant child aged less than one year. The majority of women migrant workers are however not aware of their legal protection. Even though they acknowledge their rights, it is difficult for them to exercise these rights as most of migrant women are employed in small firms, which are generally not sympathetic to these provisions. Moreover, because of their illegal status, undocumented women migrant workers cannot benefit from Maternity Protection under the Equal Employment Act. A government official from the Ministry of Labour describes the situation of women migrant workers employed in small businesses as follows:

Undocumented women migrant workers do not have any right for the maternity or childcare leave. While their labour related rights could be protected under the Labour Standards Act, they are not eligible for the maternity protection. Even when they are legal migrant workers, if they are employed in small firms hiring less

than 10 employees, those rights are hard to be applied. In small businesses, even Korean women workers are difficult to exercise those rights. (*Deputy Director of Foreign Work-force Policy Division, Ministry of Labour*, interview with the author, August 2005)

Undocumented women migrant workers find themselves in a blind corner in terms of state policies. A government official from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family stated that:

In pursuit of gender equalities in the workplace, we recommend and propose policies towards women workers and 'gender' related issues, such as the protection for irregular women workers and the effective implementation of the maternity protection, to the Ministry of Labour. However, as the Ministry of Labour is in charge of the matters regarding 'workers in general', including 'migrant workers', we cannot interfere with their affairs. Besides, our ministry views that if a woman migrant worker is illegal, she does not have legal rights to be protected. (*Deputy Director of Family Support Division, Ministry of Gender Equality & Family*, interview with the author, August 2005)

The two ministries seem to shift the responsibility for issues concerning undocumented women migrant workers to each other. While the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family has shown serious interests in support for cross-border marriage immigrants and their families in Korea, women migrant workers are excluded in any of its undertakings because they are 'workers' who are not the concern of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. On the other hand, because they are 'illegal' migrant workers, the maternity protection for these women workers is of no concern



to the Ministry of Labour.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, through international labour migration, social and spatial dichotomies are reconfigured. In the *transnational* division of labour there is a blurring of the dichotomy between 'global economy' and 'local agency'. The transnationalisation of capital and changes in production – especially in developed countries – increasingly demand unskilled migrant labour in order to sustain the positions of these countries in the global economy. Generating 'the migrant labour market', migrant workers become 'flexible labour' within the secondary labour market and, as a result, the core and the periphery have come to co-exist within a single country. Given limited labour protection and the ineffective implementation of state policies toward migrant workers, Korea has been able to reduce possible economic and social costs, while, at the same time, enjoying the benefits of the significant economic contribution of migrant workers.

This chapter has highlighted the extent to which the migrant labour market is segmented by gender, class, race and age. It has also underlined the gendered and racialised state regulation of the migrant labour market. Through the feminisation of labour migration, the sexual division of labour has been extended to the transnational level. It has been shown that migrant women are mainly concentrated in certain occupations – such as labour-intensive manufacturing work and service work – which have been traditionally reserved for local Korean women. Gender relations and racial discrimination in the workplace, along with conflicting state policies have been noted. The chapter has also drawn attention to the unlawful treatment of women

migrant workers owing to their 'multiple vulnerability' as women, migrants and undocumented workers. The feminisation of labour in the aforementioned occupations has significant implications for the sexual division of labour in the private and public spheres. Given the occupational segregation by gender in the labour market, for many women, migration may simply transfer them from one form of patriarchy to another, leaving gender relations within the family and society essentially unaltered. This argument will be further developed in the next chapter, in which the gendered and racialised division of social reproductive labour is examined, by way of a case study of migrant care and domestic workers.

## Chapter 6

### The Transnational Division of Social Reproductive Labour: Migrant Care and Domestic Workers

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter, it was argued that the feminisation of labour migration has resulted in a gendered and racialised segmentation of the transnational division of labour. As discussed earlier, the restructuring of the Korean economy has led to the 'de-feminisation' of the *local* manufacturing labour force and to an increase in the participation Korean women in the service industry. Migrant women have filled the gap in the labour-intensive manufacturing and certain service sectors, which had traditionally been reserved for local women. The feminisation of labour migration has significant implications for the existing sexual division of labour in the private and public spheres. By means of the international migration of women, the sexual division of labour has also been extended to the transnational level. The sexual division of labour cannot be fully understood without considering the sexual division of reproductive labour, since the sexual division of social reproductive labour interacts with and reinforces the sexual division in the labour market. In the case of Korea where the sexual division of reproductive labour has been robustly imposed by traditional social and cultural norms, the interpenetrative relations between women's reproductive and productive labour is particularly interesting. This chapter examines in what ways the traditional sexual division of reproductive labour in the private sphere has been extended into the transnational level, through the commodification

of reproductive work that is increasingly done by migrant care and domestic workers.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. Firstly, it discusses why it is important to consider the interpenetrative relations between reproductive and productive labour in the discussion of the sexual division of labour in general. The second section then examines the economic and social implications of the commodification of reproductive work that is increasingly done by migrant women. It identifies changes in the Korean family structure and the economic participation of married women both of which have increased the demand for paid reproductive labour in Korea. It also considers the specificity of the Korean case, where – compared to other Asian countries – there are relatively fewer migrant domestic workers employed in the Korean household. Third, by analysing the empirical data it examines a number of central issues related to migrant care and domestic labour: working conditions; class relations between employers and migrant workers; racial prejudice against migrant domestic workers; the emotional aspect of care work; and state policies on migrant care and domestic workers.

## **I. Interpenetrative Relations between Reproductive and Productive Labour**

The feminist concept of social reproduction challenges the traditional Marxist approach to social reproduction. Laslett and Brenner (1989:383) argue that for traditional Marxists social reproduction is viewed as ‘the perpetuation of modes of production and the structures of class inequality inscribed within them’. Criticising the limited scope of the Marxist definition of social reproduction, Laslett and Brenner argue that social reproduction refers to mental, manual and emotional labour ‘aimed at providing the historically and socially, as well as biologically, defined care

necessary to maintain existing life and to reproduce the next generation' (ibid.). Viewing the recreation of life as a form of work and a kind of production, Laslett and Brenner (1989:383) define 'the organisation of social reproduction' in terms of 'the varying institutions within which this work is performed, the varying strategies for accomplishing these tasks, and the varying ideologies that both shape and are shaped by them'. The social organisation of reproductive work is 'the set of social relationships through which people act to get it done' which is 'central to the organisation of gender relations and gender inequality' (Laslett and Brenner, 1989:383). Therefore, social reproduction does not merely refer to societal reproduction of class relations, but also to the 'creation and recreation of people as cultural and social, as well as physical, beings' (Glenn, 1992:4) and the perpetuation and reproduction of systems of gender relations.

The significance of and the value of reproductive labour done mostly by women in the household has been central to feminist understandings of patriarchy (Little, 1994) and resulted in a tendency to question the androcentric distinction between productive and reproductive work in the public and private spheres. Relations of production could not exist without being reproduced. In capitalist societies, the unpaid domestic work of women converts wages into a means of subsistence without which waged workers could not continue to engage in productive work (Laslett and Brenner, 1989; Luxton, 1980; Smith, 1987). For example, Elson (1999) argues that labour markets are gendered institutions operating at the intersection of the productive and reproductive economies. She states that:

as feminist economists have pointed out, unpaid, unmarketed caring activities are also critical for the functioning of the

“productive economy”, since they reproduce, on a daily and intergenerational basis, the labour force which works in the productive economy. Moreover, feminist economists have argued that unpaid caring activities entail work, even though they are not market-oriented (Elson, 1999:612).

Elson further argues that although labour markets operate at the intersection of the productive and reproductive economies, they fail to acknowledge the contributions of the reproductive economy. Women who carry out most of the work in the reproductive economy are disadvantaged, since the benefits produced by reproductive economy are treated as ‘externalities’ and therefore not reflected in market prices and wages (Elson, 1999:612). Furthermore, labour market institutions are built on the premise that women should bear the burdens of the reproductive economy. From this point of view, ‘labour market institutions are not only bearers of gender, they are also reinforcers of gender inequality’ (Elson, 1999:613). Yeoh and Huang (1998:583) also note that ‘negotiations in the reproductive sphere are as crucial as, and cannot be divorced from, those within the productive sphere in producing hierarchies and matrices of domination and subordination which undergird gender relations’. Therefore, the sexual division of reproductive labour interpenetrates with and reinforces the sexual division in the labour market.

While reproductive labour has long been commercialised, the organisation of reproductive work has mostly remained in the private sphere and constructed as a ‘female job’. Paid domestic labour has a significant implication for the asymmetrical and intersecting relations of gender, class and race. Glenn (1992) observes that without challenging the gendered division of reproductive labour, white middle-class women in the United States have historically freed themselves from reproductive

labour by hiring another woman – an immigrant, a working class woman, a non-white woman or all three – to perform domestic work. Accordingly, ‘reproductive labour has divided along racial as well as gender lines and that the specific characteristics of the division have varied regionally and changed over time as capitalism has reorganised reproductive labour, shifting parts of it from the household to the market’ (Glenn, 1992:3).

Focusing attention on the case of migrant care and domestic workers extends Glenn’s argument of the ‘racial division of reproductive labour’ to the international level. The migration and engagement in paid domestic work of women from developing countries have constituted the transnational division of reproductive labour. Given the interpenetrative relations of reproductive and productive labour, an adequate analysis of the transnational division of labour should consider not only the transnational division of productive labour as discussed in the previous chapter, but also an account of the transnational division of reproductive labour. Parrenas (2001:62) describes the transnational division of reproductive labour as ‘the international transfer of caretaking’, which refers to ‘the three-tier transfer of reproductive labour among women in sending and receiving countries of migration’. In her study of Filipina domestic workers in Rome and Los Angeles, Parrenas (2001) observes that while middle-class women hire the low-wage services of migrant Filipina domestic workers, migrant Filipina domestic workers, at the same time, hire the even lower-wage services of poorer women left behind in the Philippines<sup>50</sup>. In this case, increasingly commercialised reproductive labour in one country is closely linked with reproductive labour in another country and migrant domestic workers are

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<sup>50</sup> Parrenas’s discussion of the international transfer of caretaking bears a closer parallel to the concept of global care chains, which is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

in the middle of 'the three-tier hierarchy of the international transfer of reproductive labour'. Parrenas (2001:72), therefore, argues that 'the migration of women connects systems of gender inequality in both sending and receiving countries to global capitalism', and this process occurs in 'the formation of the international division of reproductive labour'.

## **II. Economic and Social Implications of the Commodification of Reproductive Work**

Yeoh and Huang (1998:584) note that 'the growing number of Third World female migrants who cross geopolitical borders to take up paid reproductive work has major economic, social and political implications for both sending and receiving countries'.

[G]overnments of sending countries are primarily concerned with enhancing the women's remittances as measures to overcome deficits in balance of payments, rather than with drawing up policies on wages and conditions of service to protect these women in the sphere of paid work. Similarly, in receiving countries, state policy often treats foreign domestic workers as no more than a form of commodified labour to be bought and sold in the open market, and a short-term solution to the crisis of social reproduction in newly industrialising countries (Yeoh and Huang, 1998:584).

One of the rapidly increasing flows of migrant women within the Asian region has been that of women from developing countries migrating to work as paid domestic workers in the newly industrialising countries, where female migrants are in demand



as substitutes for reproductive labour, as a result of the increasing number of local women entering the productive economy.

In Korea, women's paid employment participation has increased continuously from 28% in 1960 to 45% in 1988, 48.3% in 1995 and 50.3% in 2006 (Hwang, 2003; KLI, 2007; K. A. Park, 1995). In particular, there has been a steady increase in the employment participation of married women. While single women's employment participation was 10% higher than that of married women in the 1980s, in 2000 married women's economic participation accounted for 48.7%, which was 1.7% higher than that of single women. Furthermore, in 2005 married women's economic participation increased to 53.6% (National Statistical Office, 2006a). Hwang (2003) argues that the main reason for women's – especially married women's – increasing employment participation is changes in the patriarchal social norms of Korean society. In the past, it was 'natural' for a woman to stay at home once she got married, and the paid employment of single women therefore constituted a 'temporary phase' before marriage. On the other hand, the recent increase in the employment participation of women in Korea has coincided with the higher educational attainment of Korean women. During the last decade, the rate of women's attendance in higher education has increased ten times. In 2000, 44% of female high school graduates entered colleges or universities, compared with 47.4% of their male counterparts (Hwang, 2003). The higher educational attainment of women has partly influenced the change in women's attitudes toward continuing their careers after marriage. Whereas in 2006 50.8% of women responded that they would continue their careers regardless of marriage and having children, in 1988 only 16.7% of women considered continuing their careers after marriage and 17.8% of women in the same year responded that they intended to give up their careers after

marriage (National Statistical Office, 2007a).

Also, since the late 1980s there have been a series of institutional and legal changes, which have encouraged the employment participation of women. In 1987 the Gender Equality Employment Law, which was later amended as the Equal Employment Act in 2001, was introduced, and in 2001 the Ministry of Gender Equality (later renamed as the Ministry of Gender Equality & Family) was established. While the effectiveness of legal protection and gender related policies are admittedly still questionable in many respects, the employment participation of women is increasingly acknowledged as economically and socially valuable and significant for the Korean economy.

As a result of the growth of married women's employment participation in the last decade, the dual-income household has become a common family model in Korea. Dual-income families have become an economic necessity for the individual household, particularly for young families in urban areas, owing to rising housing prices and living expenses. At the same time, the nuclear household has become the dominant family structure in Korea. In 2005, the average number of family members per household was 2.83 (*Hankook Daily newspaper*, 2007). In 2005, among 12,490 Korean households 71.7 % were nuclear units constituting by either married couples or parents and unmarried children, whereas three-generation cohabitation accounted for 5.7% (National Statistical Office, 2007b). The recent change in the attitudes toward responsibility for the care of the elderly is remarkable. According to an official social survey, in 2006 46.3% of respondents expressed the opinion that the elderly should support themselves, whereas in 1998 8.1% of the respondents expressed the same opinion and 89.9% of the respondents stated that children should take care of aging parents (National Statistical Office, 2007a).

Nonetheless, while women's participation in paid employment has increased, the burden of reproductive labour carried by women in the private sphere has not disappeared. In fact, in the conventional sexual division of labour Korean women now face a double burden of accomplishing both non-paid reproductive work and paid employment. The nuclear family system involves more roles for mothers in childcare and housework, when compared with the traditional system where grandparents or co-habiting extended kin were present to share childcare responsibilities. Moreover, the redistribution of economic responsibility has not necessarily been accompanied by a redistribution of domestic and caring responsibilities between couples in dual-income families (Drew, *et al*, 1998). Choi (1994) points out that despite women's achievement in education and economic participation, the idea and practice of sexism and paternalism strongly persists within the family and society in Korea. Most working women have taken jobs due to economic necessity and their employment in the paid economy has not changed the patriarchal structure of the family. Toiling at home and work increases the burden on women without producing any progressive change in gender roles in the family and society. Under these circumstances, middle-class women with college degrees tend to stay at home after marriage, often against their wishes (Choi, 1994). This is one of the major reasons why, despite women's high education attainment, the level of married women's economic participation in Korea is lower than that in other newly industrialising countries in Asia.

Along with those changes in the family structure, the absence of appropriate state welfare provisions has also put a great deal of strain on women. Marchand and Runyan (2000) suggest that in the process of global economic restructuring, the private realm becomes 'hyperfeminised' in relation to the state and the market. As

was found in the case of Korean women, the global economy demands that women simultaneously carry out both their productive and reproductive labour under conditions of limited public welfare provision. Regarding this, Marchand and Runyan (2000:15) argue that there is 'contradictory rhetoric and public policies' in the United States where 'women are caught between neoliberal rhetoric which casts women as the "new entrepreneurs" by devaluing women's traditional family roles and neoconservative views which emphasise "family values" and cast women as selfish and irresponsible if they do not fulfil their mothering roles'. This, in turn, leads to 'a crisis in social reproduction' (Brodie, 1994:58).

In Korea where patriarchal Confucian culture<sup>51</sup> is acutely embedded in the social, economic and political relations, 'care' is predominantly a 'personal' matter – concerning women in the family. In Confucian culture, the family is regarded as the primary social institution, which is responsible for the economic and social welfare of family members in the individual household. This certainly explains the lack of state welfare provision for care in Korea. Traditionally, care was the responsibility of the extended family. Similarly, care for the elderly is the foremost indicator of filial duty in Korea and this is conventionally considered to be the duty of the daughter-in-law – particularly with respect to the first son's wife. Although many Korean working women still leave their children in the care of grandmothers, as more middle-aged women now have careers in paid employment or engage in social activities after retirement, daughters have to look for alternative carers for their

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<sup>51</sup> Chun (2003) argues that the influence of Confucianism provides the key to understand and explain the nature of Korean thoughts and the 'Korean character' in the every aspect of the society. According to Chun (2003:68), 'the teaching of Confucius were first introduced into Korea from China during the Yi Dynasty in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and although it ceased to be the official, state-endorsed, creed in 1894 its tenets had so permeated Korean society that its influence remains strong to this day'. In particular, the Confucian emphases on women's submissive roles and rigid patrilineal kinship relations are 'more Confucian' in practice than their Chinese origins (Chun, 2003).

children. Nor can these daughters readily undertake elder care while they have their own careers. With the absence of a public care regime provided by the state, the care burden devolves to individual women – many of whom turn to commercial care and become ‘private consumers’ (Runyan, 1997:26) of commodified care work.

As Pettinger, *et al* (2005:7-8) correctly argue, the commodification of care work not only affects individuals and households, but also has ‘global ramifications’ as it is the migrant labour force which makes up for ‘the care deficit’ in developed countries. Compared to many countries in East Asia, migrant domestic workers constitute a relatively small number of the total population of migrant workers in Korea. This tendency can be explained by a number of reasons: the relatively lower level of the employment participation of married women; a lack of state welfare provisions; and the Korean immigration policy, which prohibited the employment of domestic workers in private households until 2002, when the special EPS for ethnic Koreans was introduced (see Chapter 4). Recently however, Korean women have increasingly relied on paid care work carried out by migrant domestic workers. In her study of the relations between female employers and migrant domestic workers in Taiwan, Lan (2006) argues that both Taiwanese female employers and migrant domestic workers are engaged in what Kandiyoti (1991) calls ‘patriarchal bargaining’, a concept that explains how women work out different strategies to maximise security and optimise life options under various forms of patriarchal oppression (see Chapter 1). Lan’s following account aptly describes how various ‘patriarchal bargaining’ strategies are devised by different groups of women in the transnational sexual division of labour: ‘some women ease the gendered duty of domestic labour by hiring a maid, but others escape gender constraints at home by becoming one’ (Lan, 2006:15). Lan’s account is closely related to the case of middle-

class Korean women, who increasingly seek to ease the burden of domestic duties by employing migrant women.

### **III. The Empirical Analysis: Migrant Care and Domestic Workers**

#### *Worker Profiles*

Eleven out of 31 respondents in this study were employed as domestic workers in private households. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a few of them also worked in the service industry in the formal sector. Most respondents found their jobs through their social networks or through employment agencies. These agencies required commission fees, which were usually 10% of worker's monthly wage. The majority of the respondents were live-in workers. These respondents worked mainly as nursing-carers for the elderly, child-carers or domestic workers. All of the Filipina respondents were employed by American professionals residing in Korea<sup>52</sup>. Two of them worked as child carers for American families in Seoul and one had left her job due to pregnancy.

Unlike migrant domestic workers in other newly industrialising countries in Asia, migrant domestic workers in Korea tend to be middle-aged Korean-Chinese women. The main reasons for the popularity of Korean-Chinese migrants as domestic workers in Korean households are language and 'cultural similarity'. More

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<sup>52</sup> The Korean immigration regulation allows foreign professionals – including foreign diplomatic/consular personnel and expatriates employed in foreign firms – to hire foreign domestic workers. Once they are employed by foreign professionals, migrant workers are issued a 'visit and stay with family visa (F-1)' and restricted to work with the contracted family. Most of migrant workers employed by foreign professionals are English-speaking Filipinas. Among the three Filipina respondents, two were marriage migrants who were not restricted to any paid employment and one worked as a domestic worker with a F-1 visa.

importantly, Korean employers prefer Korean-Chinese migrants – who are mostly middle-aged married women – to young Filipina workers – who have predominated the domestic service sector in other Asian countries. In this study, except for three Filipina migrants, the rest of the migrants working in the domestic service sector were Korean-Chinese the age of over 50. Many of the respondents had worked in hotels or restaurants prior to their current jobs, but as they got older they chose private care work over cleaning or catering work in the formal sector. While the foremost reason was the general view of employers that middle-aged women were more experienced in domestic work and child caring, this age preference was also explained in terms of the concern of female employers about having a young domestic worker living in her home. The following employer who hired a 49 year old Korean-Chinese migrant explained the reason why she avoided hiring a young domestic worker.

I am reluctant to hire a young domestic worker. Once I was about to hire a 36 years child carer because I thought that a younger person would work better. But, one of my friends told me to think again. After all, I started to doubt how well a 36 year-old woman could take care of my baby. My husband is 36 year old, and he is not very good at looking after my son. (Laugh) And my friend told me a story of her friend who employed a young carer. One day, she came back home and saw that her husband and the carer were watching T.V. sitting on the sofa. Obviously, it was not like something going on between them, but the next day she fired the worker because she did not like the picture of her husband and the young woman sitting together in her living room. If that was my husband, I would not like the picture either. Although our carer is

not young, husband does not seem comfortable to be around her at home and neither the carer. (*Hong, 30, Housewife*)

### *Wages and Working Conditions*

Care work - whether it is caring for the sick or for children – generally demands 24-hour labour. The time required for care is spread throughout day and night, often outside normal working hours depending on the needs of the individuals being cared for. More importantly, as care work is centred on an intimate relationship with people, it involves emotional engagement as well as physical tasks. In the case of childcare, migrant workers are required to deal with both the individuals whom they care for and those who hire them. Migrant workers employed in other jobs responded that although private care paid better and involved less labour intensity, they chose their current jobs – either factory work or catering work – over care work owing to the stress of dealing with intimate relationships. Also, migrants who were not employed in care work tended to argue that working for somebody in the private household made them more conscious of the class difference between the employer and the worker. One Filipina worker stated in her interview that she chose factory work because she did not want to work “as a servant in somebody’s private house”.

The respondents caring for the sick mostly worked for old people suffering from Alzheimer’s. All of them were live-in care workers, as migrant workers preferred to live in employers’ homes to save money for accommodation and food. Their patients also generally needed to be nursed 24 hours a day. Wages for live-in carers for the sick were between 1,800,000 *won* (US\$1,800) and 2,100,000 *won* (US\$2,100). Wages of the respondents varied between patients depending on the



condition of a patient and the experience of a worker. Employers are normally children of the patients, who are not able to take care of their sick parents for 24 hours. While the number of private nursing homes is increasing slowly, sending sick parents to a nursing home is not a popular choice among young Korean people. Owing to the influence of Confucian culture, sending sick parents to a nursing home is considered contrary to filial duty, which demands that children should be responsible for taking care of their elderly parents. More importantly, despite the rapidly increasing number of elderly people in Korea, there is a lack of proper state welfare provision for the aging society. Under these circumstances, the relationship between employer and migrant care worker in this study was to some extent complementary. Employers tended to be appreciative and, in some cases, even grateful, to migrant workers for caring for the patients, in contexts where they as children could not perform their duty to their sick parents.

Most problems and hardship experienced by migrant carers are likely to be caused by patients' conditions. Owing to the nature of Alzheimer's disease, carers have to deal with patients suffering both in terms of limited physical mobility and mental disorder. Thus, unlike other patients, caring for Alzheimer's patients usually entails constant attention. One respondent mentioned that she suffered from sleep deprivation when she took care of a 74 year old, because the patient did not sleep during the night. Many respondents also experienced verbal abuse, in the form of swearing and shouting from patients. Although carers understood that verbal abuse and volatile or violent behaviour were both unintentional and common symptoms of Alzheimer's, they nevertheless admitted that this was the hardest part of the job.

For one and half years between 1998 and 1999, I had taken care of an old woman suffering from Alzheimer's. The second daughter of the patient asked me to care for her sick mother, and I agreed. But at that time she did not mentioned about her mother's condition in detail. She just said that because her mother is not physically mobile due to serious back pain, she wanted me to cook for her and clean the house. But when I arrived at the house, I realised that I had to take care of an Alzheimer's patient who could not even go to the toilet by herself. It was really hard work and I was paid only 550,000 *won* (US\$550) a month.

*[Author: Then why didn't you quit immediately but continued to work?]*

Actually, at that time, I had no choice because it was during the financial crisis. There were not many jobs available, especially for migrant workers. So, even though the wage was very low, I was really desperate. Beside I got free accommodation and food.

The old woman had eight children but they didn't live with her. So there was no one to take care of her. When the children visited their mother on holidays, they paid me little extra cashes. (*Seok-Bok, 61, Korean-Chinese*)

Before this job [child care], I worked as a carer for an old male Alzheimer's patient. But, I left the job only after three months because it was hard to deal with the patient. The employer [patient's daughter-in-law] told me that I was the carer who had worked for the longest in that house. There had been five carers before me. I was told that some Korean carers could not stay for the job even for one day. The patient's condition was quite severe and he also had a strange behaviour of stripping off his clothes in front of people. (*Soon-Hee, 70, Korean-Chinese*)

The majority of the respondents were employed as child carers for middle-class Korean families. In general, migrant workers took care of infants and small children. Employers were either young mothers who had professional careers or young middle-class housewives who had newborn babies. The monthly wages for child carers were between 1,000,000 *won* and 1,200,000 *won* (US\$1,000-1,200). Taking care of younger children – infants and toddlers – paid more. Most live-in carers were allowed a day off at the weekend once a fortnight. As most of them were live-in carers, their working hours were not fixed. Workers were not usually provided with a separate room, but tended rather to share the rooms with children.

Migrant child carers in this study were commonly expected to do domestic chores, including cleaning, laundry, ironing and cooking. Additional domestic work was in fact part of a child carer's job, especially when the carer was a migrant worker. In most cases, domestic work was tacitly agreed between employers and migrant care workers. Most of the respondents doing domestic chores while taking care of children considered it to be an inevitable duty. One employer stated in her interview that apart from the cheaper cost, she preferred to hire a Korean-Chinese care worker because Korean care workers were very particular about the tasks that they would or would not be prepared to do. Macdonald (1996:248-249) points out that domestic workers experience 'two primary sets of demands for invisible labour: to tailor their work to meet flexible "family norms" and to display a perpetually deferential demeanour'. Macdonald notes that as domestic work is the performance of personal services, it becomes difficult to distinguish 'between work-related duties and those necessitated by the eccentricities of certain employers' (Dill, 1988:35, cited in Macdonald, 1996:249).

### *Class Relations and Racial Prejudice Against Migrant Care Workers*

Eisenstein (1996:63) argues that 'race is engendered while gender is racialised' and 'the sexual division of labour is racially encoded along class lines'. This argument aptly describes the relations between employers and migrant care workers in Korea. Korean-Chinese care workers are racially stereotyped as being more submissive and having a more deferential attitude. Moreover, employers believe that because Korean-Chinese migrants are in an economically desperate situation they will do whatever they are told as long as they are paid adequately. The racial stereotype of Korean-Chinese migrant women also reflects the hierarchical relationship between the employer and the migrant worker. This hierarchical relationship is conspicuously presented in linguistic terms. While employers are addressed with respectful terms like 'Madam' and 'Sir', domestic workers are universally called '*Azumma*' in Korean. The original meaning of the word '*Azumma*' is merely a middle-aged married woman, but when it is used in a private household it signifies a woman employed for domestic work. In the following interview, an employer with a six-month-old son explained why she decided to hire a Korean-Chinese child carer.

The foremost reason for hiring a Korean-Chinese *azumma* is because it is cheaper than hiring a Korean *azumma*. Also, Korean-Chinese *azummas* have a number of attributes that complement the shortcomings of Korean *azummas*. Because Korean carers are normally middle-age women who are much older than young mothers like me, it is difficult to order them to do something. It is not comfortable to manage an *azumma* who is older than you. But, once they are employed and paid well, Korean-Chinese *azummas* treat respectively me as a 'Madam'. Korean *azummas* often act like

mothers-in-law, given the reason that they are older than me and know much better about caring babies than me. But, Korean-Chinese *azummas* are submissive. That's why young mothers prefer Korean-Chinese to Korean carers. (*Hong, 30, housewife*)

Korean employers commonly held Korean-Chinese domestic workers in contempt, describing them as culturally and socially backwards and uncivilised. The employers' racial prejudices against Korean-Chinese workers are largely influenced by the anti-communist/socialist attitude, which is pervasive in Korean society.

It is a serious misjudgement to think that the Korean-Chinese and the Korean are homogeneous. We don't share the same culture. Rather, it is correct to think that the Korean-Chinese are just Chinese people who can speak Korean a little better than other migrants and understand a bit of Korean culture. They [the Korean-Chinese] don't have a good manner. For example, when my husband comes home from work, our *azumma* is just sitting on the sofa so comfortably without bowing him politely. Because of their socialist culture, they are really assertive and straight talkers. I think that they are unflinching. Seeing that they came all the way to Korea to earn money, they would never be starved to death. They are tough people. So, I try to avoid confrontation with them because if they were cross with me, they would repay me in some ways. Who knows? And all they care about is money. They easily quit and move to the next house paying more money. They don't have affection toward people. The behaviours and attitudes of Korean-Chinese workers clearly show that they have grown up in the socialist country. (*Hong, 30, Housewife*)

There was also a common prejudice among employers that the Korean-

Chinese had no sense of hygiene. In an interview one of the employers complained that her Korean-Chinese worker's unhygienic life style got on her nerves – especially when the worker took care of her baby. One live-in child carer expressed her feeling of humiliation in the following incident.

Because my employer does not want me to go out with her baby, I cannot normally go for grocery shopping for my food. One day, I asked a friend of mine who were also working as a child carer in the neighbourhood to bring me some vegetables. When my employer came home after work, she saw the vegetables, which I stored in the refrigerator. She asked me where those were from and I explained that my friend brought them over for me. Then, she became furious and said to me, “what are you going to do, if your Korean-Chinese friend gave my baby a harmful virus when she came into my house?” (*Seok-Bok, 61, Korean-Chinese*)

Some employers directly instructed Korean-Chinese workers about hygiene, dress and make-up. An employer stated in an interview that women employers did not want their domestic workers to wear V-neck t-shirts or short trousers because these clothes were not suitable, either to take care of children or to do domestic chores, and they also made their husbands embarrassed. Employers did not, on the other hand, want their workers shabbily presented in their homes. Many respondents stated that they started to wear make up for the first time while working in Korea, because employers preferred them to be well presented in moderate dress and make-up.

## *Emotional Engagement in Care Work*

Care cannot be quantified in terms of physical labour. Care workers are guided by an ethic of care and are expected to work that exceeds the physical tasks involved. When domestic work involves childcare, migrant workers often become attached to the children they look after. Wolkowitz (2006:166) argues that the worker's subjective experience of working with people may 'lead her to feel more powerful than is warranted by her structural position'. She cites Bartky's argument:

a woman responsible for "feeding egos and tending wounds" in her personal relations, though "ethically and epistemologically disempowered by the care she gives", often experiences the outflowing of care she gives as a "mighty power" (Bartky, 1990, cited in Wolkowitz, 2006:166).

Despite the contempt and oppression experienced in relations with employers, migrant carers were often emotionally rewarded and empowered by providing love and care to the children.

I am taking care of a 16 month-old baby. I have been doing this job since the baby was only 3 month-old. He is so pretty and lovely. I feel like being young again when I am with him. I am on a summer break at the moment, but I want to go back to work because I miss him. He is like a grandson to me. He didn't eat much before. He was really fussy about his food. But now he eats a full bowl of rice. I am proud of myself for raising him as a healthy baby. His mother is so happy for that. (*Choon-Ja, 66, Korean-Chinese*)

On the other hand, this emotional attachment and sense of loyalty to the children often put child carers in a difficult position to negotiate wage raises and better working conditions and made it more difficult to leave the job.

I am taking care of employer's two children. Because the work is too hard, I want to quit. But, I am hesitating at the moment. I am so attached to these children. The older child who is 6 year-old has taken to me by calling me 'grandma'. I feel sorry to abandon the children by leaving this employer. (*Soon-Hee, 70, Korean-Chinese*)

Unlike middle-aged Korean-Chinese domestic workers, younger Filipina domestic workers tended to face another emotional dilemma. Three of the Filipina domestic workers interviewed were also young mothers. They provided physical work and emotional attention to the employers' children that might otherwise go to their own children at home.

I'm working for an American Jewish family in Seoul. The father is a major of the US Military based in Seoul. My main job is taking care of the employer's daughter. My work is organised according to the daughter's morning and afternoon routine. I clean the house and do some chores while the daughter is at a nursery school. When she comes back from the school at 11 a.m., there are reading time, painting time and playing time. Whenever I do these things with her, I'm thinking about Soo-jin, my daughter. I cannot do these things with her. I read for her at night, but not for very long. I am putting more efforts for the major's daughter. But, I'm doing this job for a financial reason – I'm doing for my kids' sake and for my family's happiness. (*Carol, 40, Filipina*)



These Filipina workers took care of their employers' children while their own children were in the care of others. Accordingly, a 'care chain' was established (Hochschild, 2001; 2002). In Carol's case, her two children were looked after by her Filipina friend, who lived in the neighbourhood while she was working for the major's daughter. The following case is similar to that of Carol. Brenda also worked as a domestic worker for an American employer, who was a US diplomat in Korea. She took care of the employer's two children. In Brenda's interview it is interesting to observe multiple layers of care chains and the bitter reality of care gaps between those who can and those who cannot afford paid care work.

While I am at work, I leave my daughter with a friend of mine – a Filipina. My friend takes care of my daughter as well as other Filipino workers' children while we are working. I pay her 350,000 *won* (US\$350) a month. She actually gave a birth of her third child, but she sent her baby to the Philippines because of this care work – if her baby is here with her, she could not take care of our children. Sending her own child to the Philippines to take care of other children...yes, it is quite irony, isn't it? I thought about bringing a carer from the Philippines, but it was not possible to provide a proper visa for the carer. (*Brenda, 37, Filipina*)

'The hierarchy of womanhood' (Parrenas, 2001) in terms of race and class is represented in the global care chain. Global care chains indicate the extent to which the transnational division of labour links women in an interdependent relationship and the extent to which 'the transfer of reproductive labour moves beyond territorial borders to connect separate nation-states' (Parrenas, 2001:78).

## *State Policies towards Migrant Care and Domestic Workers*

The state policy toward migrant domestic workers manifestly reflects a naturalised dichotomy between productive and reproductive work in the public and private domains. The Labour Standards Act is not applicable to migrant domestic workers. The official reason for excluding domestic workers from the Labour Standards Act is that the contract between the employer and the domestic worker is recognised under the Civil Act.

Due to the unique form of their employment, domestic workers cannot be recognised as 'workers'. In order to apply the Labour Standards Act and the Minimum Wage Act, the employment must be supervised by the state authority. But, because domestic work is taken place in the autonomous private domain, the state cannot intervene. Unlike the relations between the business and the wage labourer in the public domain, the relations between the employer and the domestic worker is regarded as personal affairs. It is not a labour contract but a social contract between two individuals. So, it becomes civil affairs and if there was a problem, the case should be forwarded to a civil trial. (*Deputy Director of Foreign Work-force Policy Division, Ministry of Labour, interview with the author, August 2005*)

However, none of the respondents were employed by means of written contracts. Most of the respondents stated that they did not perceive the lack of a written contract as necessarily disadvantageous. Without the binding force of contracts they may leave a job for a better one. Those workers who found their jobs through employment agencies did not have written contracts with the agencies either.

Employment agencies also did not get involved in problems or disputes between the employer and the migrant worker.

It is a discrepant feature of policy that while the state strictly regulates the entry and placement of migrant domestic workers, it officially refuses to recognise them as 'workers' and to legislate domestic work. This significantly highlights a gendered aspect of the patriarchal state whereby reproductive work is conventionally restricted to the private household and defined as merely 'domestic *service*' done by women, as opposed to productive work in the formal sector. As Chin (2003:60) argues, there is a persistent assumption that the performance of care and other aspects of housework is an individual's – in particular a woman's – personal responsibility 'within the innermost sanctum of society' and the state shies away from intervening in the private realm.

## **Conclusion**

With the commodification and transnationalisation of care work, the boundaries between work in the public and private spheres becomes blurred. The increasing number of migrant women employed in paid domestic work, care and service work has opened up debates on public and private work and drawn attention to the 'global reshaping of reproductive work' (Pettinger, *et al.*, 2005). While the notion of private work as *unpaid* service in the household is obscured by *paid* domestic work, the conventional assumption and practices of domestic work as women's duty is unchanged. While the state encourages middle-class Korean women to pursue their careers in the formal sector to sustain the country's economic growth, responsibility for housework and the care of children and the elderly is still regarded as women's

responsibility. By maintaining the patriarchal idea that care and domestic work are women's personal responsibilities, the Korean state responds to the function of reproduction and to the need to maintain the household by importing migrant women – rather than by providing proper state welfare provision. The state therefore manipulates both local and migrant women to fulfil its own need for sustaining economic and social development. Consequently, just as the feminisation of migrant labour in the manufacturing and service sectors has significant implications for the sexual division of labour in the public sphere, the traditional sexual division of labour in the private sphere remains intact.

Gendered and racialised state policies toward women migrant workers are demonstrated in its contradictory approach to migrant domestic workers. While the state stringently regulates the entry and allocation of domestic workers, it refuses to consider them as 'workers' and legalise domestic work. In this way, migrant domestic workers become 'visible bodies' to be controlled by the state, but perform 'invisible work' in the private realm (Chin, 2003). On the whole, women migrant workers in Korea are 'outsiders within' the core economic and social structure of the country. They play crucial economic and social roles, but remain socially and politically marginalised in Korean society. As Anderson (2000:191) argues, 'migrant domestic workers are enabling female citizens to participate in the public sphere, thereby taking full advantage of their rights attached to their citizenship status, but they themselves are often formally denied citizenship rights'. While migrant domestic workers solve the care deficit and sustain social reproduction for national development, they are treated as disposable labour and temporary residents. In the next chapter, I will explore how the immigration status of these migrant women signifies the social structural division in terms of citizenship rights and how this

structure is 'embodied' in terms of race and ethnic divisions in Korea.

# Chapter 7

## Contesting Citizenship of (Im)migrant Women: Gender, Racialisation and the Embodiment of Rights

### Introduction

As mentioned earlier, the central aim of this study is to avoid the simple addition of 'gender' to the discussion of the experiences of migrant women. The transnational sexual division of labour, accelerated by international migration of women, is 'racially encoded along class lines' (Eisenstein, 1996:63). As seen in Chapters 5 and 6, despite their vital economic and social roles, migrant women are marginalised and their labour is rendered invisible in Korea. The experiences of migrant women can be adequately explained, not simply by noting the gendered structure of society, but also by considering race, ethnicity and class. For example, although a Korean-Chinese woman and a Filipina woman can be represented as the same group under the label of 'migrant women', the experiences of the two women would vary in terms of race, ethnicity, nationality and class. A synchronized understanding of gender, race and class helps us to see the systematic exclusion of and discrimination against migrant women.

This chapter examines how gender, race and class are socially constructed and embedded in the institutional structure, which results in different experiences for different groups of migrant women. Immigration status signifies the social structural division in terms of citizenship rights, and this raises the question of how this structure is 'embodied' in terms of race and/or ethnic divisions (Morris, 2002). The

unequal and discriminatory treatment experienced by migrant women in Korea is generated through the differential granting of rights by the state, which cannot be understood without considering of interconnections of racialisation, nationalism, class and gender.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. In the first section, I present an integrative framework for analysing how gender, race and class are socially constructed factors in the interlocking system of multiple discriminations experienced by migrant women. The second section explores the discussion on racism and the racialisation of migrant workers. It attempts to apply an integrated framework for dealing with gender, race and class to the analysis of the racialisation of migrant workers in the specific context of Korea. The third section examines to what extent Korean nationalism fosters racism. It discusses how the Korean 'nation-state' is characterised and fortified by a national identity based on a myth of 'common origin' and 'cultural homogeneity'. In particular, it closely looks at how the ethnicity of Korean-Chinese migrant workers is politicised and constructed as 'others'. Taking marriage immigrants as a case study, the final section then critically examines the issues relating to the citizenship of (im)migrant women in Korea. It examines in what ways the gendered nature of citizenship implies exclusion and racialisation based on gender and class.

## **I. An Integrative Framework for Examining Gender, Race and Class**

In order to explain the institutional structures positioning migrant women as visible bodies and invisible workers in the host society, it is necessary to bring gender, race and class into the same frame of analysis. Glenn (2002) remarks that labour and

citizenship are intertwined institutional arenas in which non-white American women have contested their exclusion, oppression and exploitation. She argues that to examine how labour and citizenship constitute or are constituted by race and gender, 'we must conceptualise race and gender as interacting, interlocking structures and then consider how they are incorporated into and shaped by various social institutions' (Glenn, 2002:6). For Glenn, the first challenge in conceptualising 'interacting, interlocking structures' is to bring race and gender within 'the same analytic plane' (ibid.).

Earlier feminists have attempted to bring race and gender into the same analytic frame by observing the two as separate, independent factors. Beale (1979) introduces the term 'double jeopardy' to describe the dual discriminations of racism and sexism that subjugate black women (King, 1988). Adding economic class oppression as a third jeopardy, Lindsay (1979) argues that triple jeopardy, the interaction of sexism, racism, and economic oppression, is 'the most realistic perspective for analysing the position of black American women; and this perspective will serve as common linkage among the discussions of other minority women' (Lindsay, 1979:328 cited in King, 1988:46). King (1988) notes that the triple jeopardy of racism, sexism and economic oppression is widely accepted and used in the conceptualisation of black women's status in the United States. Triple jeopardy is now also commonly used to describe migrant women's disadvantaged positions in the host country.

However, treating gender, race and class as separate and independent axes does not embrace the simultaneous and interlocking systems of oppression experienced by migrant women. King (1988) also criticises that the concept of triple jeopardy does not fully deliver the dynamics of multiple forms of discrimination.



Unfortunately, most applications of the concepts of double and triple jeopardy have been overly simplistic in assuming that the relationships among the various discriminations are merely additive. ... This simple incremental process does not represent the nature of black women's oppression but, rather, I would contend, leads to non-productive assertions that one factor can and should supplant the other (King, 1988:47).

In this regard, the additive concept of triple jeopardy could easily overlook the fact that gender, race and class have in fact simultaneous and interdependent effects on discrimination and oppression.

Rejecting an additive analysis of gender, race and class, a number of feminists offer integrated concepts such as 'multiple jeopardy', 'intersectionality', 'the simultaneity of oppression', 'interlocking structures of oppression', and 'racialised gender' (Brewer, 1993; Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; Glenn, 1992; King, 1988). For instance, emphasising the multiplicative and interlocking relationships between various discriminations, King (1988) introduces an interactive concept of 'multiple jeopardy'. In King's understanding of multiple jeopardy, the equivalent formulation is racism multiplied by sexism multiplied by economic oppression<sup>53</sup>. Similarly, arguing that gender, race and class should be understood as simultaneous forces and theorising must be historicized and contextualised, Brewer (1993) introduces the concept of the simultaneity of oppression (and struggle). She highlights that avoiding additive analyses (gender + race + class) leads to an

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<sup>53</sup> King (1988) illustrates the sexual exploitation of black women in slavery as a historical example of multiple jeopardy. Black women workers not only suffered the same tough physical labour and violence as their male counterparts, but were also subject to sexual exploitations such as rape. Moreover, black women workers were faced with burdens of reproductive labour such as 'breeding new slaves' to maintain cost effectiveness in a slave economy (Potts, 1990).

understanding of the embeddedness and relationality of race, class and gender, as well as the multiplicative nature of these relationships: race x class x gender (Brewer, 1993:16).

Such interactive concepts provide an integrated framework, analysing one to see gender, race and class as socially constructed and intrinsic to each other. In particular, Glenn (2002:7) adopts a social constructionist approach to examine how gender and race are intrinsically constituted such that 'gender is racialised and race is gendered'. She argues that social constructionism provides an alternative notion 'to biological and essentialist conceptions that rendered gender and race static and ahistorical' (Glenn, 2002:7). Glenn highlights the structural concepts of racial and patriarchal social orders, which provide the key to her integrated framework on gender and race.

There are important points of congruence between the concept of racial formation and the concept of socially constructed gender. These convergences point the way toward a framework in which race and gender are defined as mutually constituted systems of relationships – including norms, symbols, and practices – organized around perceived differences. This definition focuses attention on the processes by which racialization and engendering occur, rather than on characteristics of fixed race or gender categories (Glenn, 2002:12).

According to Glenn, the processes of racialisation and engendering take place at multiple levels: 1) representation (the deployment of symbols, language and images to express and convey race and gender meanings); 2) micro-interaction (the application of race/gender norms and spatial rules to organize interaction within and

across race/gender boundaries); and 3) social structure (rules regulating the allocation of power and resources along race and gender lines). In Glenn's framework the processes constituting race and gender take place in various aspects of social life and at all levels of political, economic and social structures. Race and gender are relational and involve representations and material relations. They are also constituted through power relations. Glenn (2002:15) also discusses how class formation in the United States continues to 'be infused with racial as well as gender meanings'.

Acker (2006:39) nevertheless argues that Glenn 'does not theorise class in a way that is comparable to her theorising of gender and race'. Conceptualising class as also socially constructed, gendered and racialised, she argues that 'class is gendered and gender is produced through class by adding processes of racialisation' (Acker, 2006:45). Acker (2006) therefore introduces the notion of gendered and racialised class practices as an alternative to conceptualising gender, race and class as intersecting or interlocking systems or structures. The term, 'gendered and racialised class practices' signifies that gender and racial divisions and inequalities are generated as part of the material and ideological (re)construction of class practices and relations.

Acker (2006) distinguishes between 1) class practices, which are activities that organise and control production and distribution; 2) gendering and racialising processes, which shape class practices and 3) effects of gendered and racialised class practices, which are diverse forms of inequality such as gender and racial segregation in employment, unequal distributions of power, types of work and wages. She gives an example of employers in certain restaurants who tend to hire young, white women as waitresses. Similarly, gendered and racialised practices in employment are also

found in the cases examined in the previous chapters: restaurant owners in Korea who have difficulties hiring local women tend to hire young Korean-Chinese women as waitresses instead. On the other hand, in Korean manufacturing firms, supervisors or managers on the shop floor are mostly Korean male workers. Accordingly, these gendered and racialised practices generate a gender- and racially stratified workforce (Acker, 2006). Acker also remarks that the effects of these practices change over time and vary between localities and nations.

Importantly, Acker (2006:50) points out that the naturalisation of inequality ‘influences subsequent gendering and racializing processes as assumptions about what is natural shape perceptions and actions’. Therefore, influences between gendering and racial effects and practices are reciprocal. Likewise, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992:18) argue that ‘gender and racialised ethnic divisions are both underpinned by a supposedly “natural relation”’. For gender, necessary social effects are postulated at the base of sexual difference and biological reproduction. For ethnic and racialised groups, the natural boundaries of collectivities or the naturalness of culture are assumed. This naturalisation of gender and racialised/ethnic groups then affects the legitimatisation of class inequalities and class processes affect racialisation and engendering practices (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). The reciprocal relations of gender, race and class are evident in the racialisation of women migrant workers, which results in the unequal distribution of material resources and power.

The application of an integrated framework allows the discussion of gender, race and class to be historicized and contextualised. As the concept of gender covers historical differences across racial/ethnic groups and class, racialised/ethnic groups are historically and locally defined in different ways. The diversity of

racialised/ethnic groups must be considered. Moreover, the experience of racism is heterogeneous in terms of class, gender, generation and citizenship-status even within the same racialised/ethnic group.

## **II. Conceptualising Racism in the Korean Context**

### *Looking beyond the Black-White binary*

Hall (1992:255) argues that racism operates by constructing 'impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constructed categories'. However, the binary categories of racism are considerably complicated by diverse ethnic categories, which are distinct from each other in terms of histories, cultures and experiences (Hall, 1992). Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992:15) also point out that the dichotomous categories of 'Blacks as victims, and Whites as perpetrators of racism' tend to homogenise the nature of racism, without considering the different experience of women and men in different classes and ethnic groups. Moreover, the Black-White binary fails to take account of different articulations of racism towards Jews, the Irish, migrants, refugees and various ethnic minorities. Criticising the static notion of Black identity, hooks (1991:20, cited in Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992:102) emphasises more 'fluid notions of black identity' from 'marginal perspectives' and 'assertions of identity that bring complexity and variety to constructions of black subjectivity'.

In the black-white binary, 'black' and 'white' should not be understood as essentially fixed oppositional categories. Understanding racism beyond colour, Miles (1989, cited in Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992:15) points out that the executors of racism are not only whites, and blacks can be racist. This is apparent in the example

of tensions among Asian American groups in the United States (Glenn, 2002). Glenn argues that there is a division along ethnic, class, generation and political lines between long settled Japanese and Chinese immigrants and more recently arrived Filipinos and other Southeast Asians. Among new Asian immigrants, rich and poor groups are also 'racialised' within the black-white binary in the United States (Ong, 1996 cited in Glenn, 2002:11). According to Ong's observation, well-educated professional Chinese immigrants are 'whitened' and assimilated into the American middle class, while poor Khmer immigrants, often reliant on welfare, are 'blackened'.

However, it is important to note that even though these middle class Chinese immigrants are 'whitened', this does not mean that they do not experience any racist practices from the dominant white group. In the United States 'white' has been primarily in opposition to 'black', but it can also be positioned in opposition to various 'other' ethnic groups, such as Mexicans, Chinese and Vietnamese (Glenn, 2002). This complex reality cannot be reasonably explained by the fixed Black-White binary. The limitation of the fixed dichotomy in elucidating racism becomes more apparent when we look at the Korean case in which the clear binary of black and white is absent. Ethnic Koreans can be positioned as the dominant 'white' against various 'other' ethnic groups residing in Korea, but the black-white binary does not reflect the complexity of racial boundary constitution in the Korean context. For example, even though Korean-Chinese migrant workers are, strictly speaking, ethnic Koreans, they are not identical in meaning to the dominant category 'white' in Korea. As discussed in the earlier chapter, unlike other overseas ethnic Koreans, the Korean-Chinese are not even legally recognised as ethnic Koreans. There is pervasive racism against the Korean-Chinese and to a certain extent the racialised connotation of 'blackness' has been attributed to them in relation to native Koreans.

On the other hand, the Korean-Chinese appear to be 'raceless' in relation to other non-Korean ethnic minorities.

Here, the concept of 'relationality' is more useful to explain the complexity of the race relations in the Korean context. Glenn (2002) argues that race and gender categories are positioned and, therefore, gain meaning in relation to each other. In other words, woman as a category gains meaning in relation to man and black in relation to white. The category 'Korea-Chinese' is constructed in relation to both native Koreans and non-Korean ethnic groups, and draws different meaning from each relation. In this case, meaning is constructed in terms of dichotomous opposition or contrasts (Glenn, 2002).

Oppositional categories require suppressing variability within each category and exaggerating differences between categories. Since the dichotomy is imposed over a complex "reality", it is inherently unstable. Stability is achieved by making the dichotomy hierarchical, that is, by according one term primacy over the other. ... The opposition also disguises the extent to which the categories are actually interdependent (Glenn, 2002:13).

Glenn argues that in race and gender dichotomies, the dominant category is rendered normal while the other is problematic, i.e., white appears to be 'raceless' and man appears to be 'genderless'.

### *The Social Construction of 'Race' and 'Racialisation' of Migrant Workers*

The term race is generally used to signify physical variations, notably skin colour, which were used by 19<sup>th</sup> century scientists to identify distinct physical types (Miles,

1982). Thus, race is categorised on the basis of phenotypical differences, and to a certain extent social significance and meaning are constructed by racial categorisation. According to Miles (1982:157), the concept of racial categorisation is used to refer to ‘a process of delineation of group boundaries and of allocation of persons within those boundaries by primary reference to inherent and/or biological characteristics’.

Miles (1982) argues that conventional notions of race and race relations, which merely indicate relations between ‘races’, are problematic and that racism should be contextualised within economic, political and ideological relations. He points out that it is an error to refer to phenotypical variation by using the term ‘race’. Physical differences between people can only gain socio-economic significance ‘if they are given social recognition and if social interaction is structured by such recognition’ (Miles, 1982:20). Miles suggests that it is, therefore, more appropriate to use the term social construction of ‘race’ or racial categorisation.

It is sociologically significant to scrutinise the social meanings attributed to differences classified on the basis of physical variation – rather than the differences *per se*. Miles (1982) argues that ‘race’<sup>54</sup> has no biological reality but is a social construction. The main analytical task is, therefore, ‘to identify the conditions for the generation and reproduction of the idea of ‘race’, which is to explain why certain sorts of situation and relations appear (i.e. are socially constructed) as ‘race relations’” (Miles, 1982:43). It is also insufficient to simply recognise the social

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<sup>54</sup> Miles (1982) use the terms ‘race’ and ‘race relations’ in inverted commas as he claims that the concepts of race and race relations have neither descriptive utility nor analytical value. He argues that common sense discourse – that is the world of everyday/political discourse identifying a ‘race/race relations situation/problem’ – has come to structure and determine academic discourse so that it too admits to the existence of ‘races’ and ‘relations between races’ (Miles, 1982:3). Therefore, ‘their continued academic utilisation serves to legitimate their continued utilisation in the everyday world’ (ibid.). However, disagreeing with Miles, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992:2) argue that ‘from a sociological point of view, ‘race’ denotes a particular way in which communal differences come to be constructed and therefore it cannot be erased from the analytical map’.



categorisation of 'race' as being the basis for the generation and reproduction of racism, and one should therefore inquire 'why that process of categorisation has occurred only in specific context and at specific points in historical time' (Miles, 1982:204).

In his analysis of the political economy of migrant labour in Britain, Miles (1982) provides arguments for the social construction of race and the political and ideological determinants of racism. For him, the basis of racism lies not in the attribution of meaning to phenotypical difference, but in the economic, political and ideological conditions that construct the attribution of meaning. Miles emphasises that the generation and reproduction of racism should be understood as a process labelled 'racialisation'. For Miles, racialisation is grounded in material production, which is also closely related to ideological and political relations. In particular, the economic relations associated with the emergence of British capitalism – by means of the colonial exploitation of slave/indentured labour – have an ideological legacy (i.e. reproducing inferior imagery of the African), which should be taken into account when examining racialisation in contemporary Britain. However, he also highlights that racism is generated and reproduced as a real phenomenon and is not simply an ideological imposition of the ruling class in the logical pursuit of its economic interests (cf. Cox, 1970). He argues that by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century racism within the dominant class had become a systematised and scientific racist ideology, and was subsequently reproduced within the working class.

By the end of the nineteenth century ... an explicit set of ideas and arguments (i.e. racism) ... had a circulation throughout the class structure of Britain. These ideas ... postulated the existence of 'races' by reference to phenotypical characteristics and had their

prime focus upon persons who were the victims of British colonialism. The idea of 'race' was therefore materially grounded in the production relations of British capitalism and 'demonstrated' simultaneously the inferiority of the colonial subjects and the superiority of the British 'race' by reference to colonial exploitation (Miles, 1982:120).

Miles (1982:184) argues that racialisation becomes 'the site of subsequent struggles between classes and of the formation and reproduction of class fractions'. The term 'class fractions' refer to the main lines of division within class boundaries resulting from the coincidence of different positions in terms of economic, political and ideological relations within previously identified class relations (Miles 1982; Phizacklea and Miles, 1980). There are different interests within classes, which lead to struggles between class fractions. Miles bases his argument on the Marxist view: 'as an ideological process, racial categorisation must arise upon and within the context of a material process of production' (Marx, 1971:20-21, cited Miles, 1982:157-158). He suggests that the process of racial categorisation is secondary to the essential process of class formation, unless the boundaries established by the process of racial categorisation are coincidental with class boundaries. Nevertheless, he cautions that the process of racial categorisation and its effects should be analysed according to a particular historical and material context as there have been a few exceptions to the causal relationship between class formation and racial categorisation – such as the case of South Africa and of the slave mode of production. According to Miles, the process of racial categorisation then affects the allocation of materials and other rewards to groups categorised within the class boundaries established by the dominant mode of production. Such effects, however, do not

change the existing structure of production relations since the fractionalisation occurs at the level of relations between individuals occupying positions which share the same structural relationship with the other main classes (Miles, 1982:159). Under these circumstances, capital has specific interests deriving from the use of migrant labour and the racialisation of migrant workers, and results in the creation of a racialised fraction within the working class. Miles goes beyond an economically determined Marxist understanding of racism by claiming that the ideology of racism and the practices of racial discrimination are 'central components' of the formation and reproduction of class fractions, which has determinate effects on ideological, political and economic relations (Miles, 1982:184).

In the case of class fractionalisation in Britain, Miles illustrates three main characteristics of the labour migration from the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent in the period after 1945. First, the majority of those migrants who came to Britain were engaged in wage labour, they entered production relations in a proletarian class position. Second, these migrant workers were employed in certain sectors of production, which were suffering from labour shortages. They were employed mainly in declining industries – e.g. textiles and metal manufacturing industries – that had become less competitive on the world market. These migrant workers were paid low wages owing to tight profit margins in the industries. As native workers withdrew from these sectors of the economy in a period of full employment, migrant labour became replacement labour, filling a particular position in production – manifested in the form of manual labour, low wages and unfavourable working conditions. Third, migrant labour was recruited from colonies and ex-colonies. Given that racism as an ideology was an element of British national culture, which served as a rationalisation of colonialism, those migrants were 'not

entering a neutral ideological context when they came to Britain to sell their labour power' (Miles, 1982:165). Those migrants therefore occupied a structurally distinct position in the economic, political and ideological relations of British capitalism – one situated within the boundary of the working class, and constituting a racialised fraction of the working class.

Miles (1982) further remarks that the concentration of migrant workers in the disadvantaged labour market is an indication of racial discrimination and has its own ideological effect of generalising the particular 'suitability' of 'racialised' labour for low skilled, low paid manual jobs. In this case, physical appearance becomes equated with a disadvantaged position in the labour market. 'Negative connotations of "blackness" come to overlap with and reinforce the negative connotations of much semi- and unskilled manual work' (Miles, 1982:172). The process of racialisation has subsequently led to the reproduction of material inequality and disadvantage of migrants. This process coincides with the ideological and political significance attached to phenotypical differences. Consequently, the material disadvantage of the migrants misleadingly appears as disadvantage caused by 'race'.

Miles' study of the social construction of 'race' and the racialisation of migrant labour provides a valuable account for understanding racism in Korea. Although his study is focused on Britain in a specific historical period, Miles' analysis is still closely relevant to the process of racialisation of migrant workers in Korea. When we look at the racial and economic stratification of the labour market – as examined in chapters 5 and 6 – this process is evident. Negative connotations associated with 'Southeast Asian' or 'Korean-Chinese' workers come to overlap with the negative association attributed to unskilled manual waged labour in 3D sectors in Korea. Labelling them as 'migrant labourers' has political and ideological

implications associated with their phenotypical differences. The following statement by a male migrant worker from Sri Lanka illustrates how a migrant worker is stereotyped as an 'unskilled manual labourer' based on his/her phenotypical difference.

I have been living in Korea for 9 years and working as a glasscutter in the same factory for 5 years. I am now one of the most experienced employees in my workplace and am responsible for training a couple of Korean trainees who call me 'brother'. But customers usually don't know about this, especially new customers who don't know me. When they enter the factory to order glass cutting, they approach to my trainees but never to me. For them, I am just a foreign worker who cannot speak Korean and do the job as told. [*He fluently spoke Korean and this interview was held in Korean*]. Then, those customers are usually very surprised when my trainees ask me to confirm the order. [*laugh*] (*Leo, 32*)

Unequal wages and unfair treatment between native and migrant workers within the same economic sector illustrates the racially fractionalised nature of the working class in Korea. Han (2004) remarks that migrant workers, in particular those from Southeast Asia, are picked on in unjustified quarrels by their Korean co-workers and are often targets of violence in the workplace. According to Han, Korean workers located in lower class positions in Korean society try to establish a dominant position over migrants through discriminatory treatment, which occasionally involves violent behaviour towards migrant workers. In Han's interview data with a Korean owner of a small manufacturing firm, who had been a manual worker during the 1970s and 80s, he points out that Korean workers – who had long been working under exploitable conditions and low wages during Korea's rapid

industrialisation and fought for their labour rights for three decades – often (ironically) do not understand why the current predicament of migrant workers in Korea should be seen as a ‘problem’. Compared to the ‘old days’, these Korean workers perceive that migrant workers have far better conditions, and as migrants from a poor country they should endure difficulties, just like Korean workers did in the past (Han, 2004). The racialisation of migrant workers is partly constructed by this prevailing sentiment on the part of Korean workers, and influences the formation and reproduction of racialised fractions in the working class.

Miles’ theory of racialisation and racism as ideology is nevertheless of limited utility in understanding the racialisation of migrants in the Korean context. First, his theory focuses largely on the single, ‘racialised’ fraction within the working class without considering other elements affecting fractionalisation. Although he acknowledges this and suggests that ‘additional bases of division’, such as ‘sex, skill levels, manual/non-manual labour, religious belief and country of birth’, can support the formation of class fractions (Miles, 1982:187), he does not discuss these elements further in his book. As argued in the first section, the gender aspect should not be considered ‘an additional base of division’ but as a simultaneous base along with racialisation. As noted in the discussion of women migrant workers in the service sector, those workers are racialised and sexualised in the allocation of jobs in the labour market and in relations with their employers. Phenotypical differences and gender are decisive factors in the employability of migrant workers in the service sector as was evident in the extract from the interview with a government official in the Ministry of Labour: ‘foreigners with dark skin would be hard to be employed in service jobs. For example, Filipina migrants seem to have a good chance because they speak English, but they are unlikely to be employed because they lack cultural

similarity due to racial difference' (see Chapter 5).

Second, Miles' theory focusing on the economic, political and ideological determinants of racism does not take into account cultural forms of racism, or what is termed 'neo-racism' or 'new racism' (Balibar, 1991a; Barker, 1981; Solomos, 1989). New racism refers to 'racism without races' (Balibar, 1991a: 21), which is not based on the pseudo-biological concept of race, but on cultural differences. Citing Solomos (1989), Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992:14) argue that 'the most common forms of racism are to be found not as explicit ideologies or discourses of biological inferiorisation, but as different forms of exclusion, on the basis of a group not belonging to the culture of origin of the dominant ethnic group within the state apparatus'. Certainly, the discriminatory treatment of Korean-Chinese or Chinese migrants is not based on supposed racial categorisation, but on the cultural boundary constructing them as 'outsiders' who cannot belong with Korean nationals. In this case, the notion of cultural difference, rather than the notion of physical difference, is the basis for excluding and discriminating against those migrant groups.

On the whole, racism is to be understood in a broader sense as 'modes of exclusion, inferiorisation, subordination and exploitation' on the basis of phenotypical difference or a set of boundaries that is constructed between those who can and those who cannot belong to a particular construction of a collectivity or population in different social and historical contexts (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992:2). The experience of racism varies among different class, gender and ethnic groups. This heterogeneous nature of racism requires an examination of the ways in which difference and exclusion on the basis of class, gender and ethnicity incorporates racialisation and are entangled in producing racist discourses and practices. Furthermore, as Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) indicate, racism is not

only about beliefs, but also related to the imposition of those beliefs – or of cultural hegemony as *Weltanschauung* – resulting in a denial of rights or equality to certain groups. Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992:15) argue that exclusionary practices, which are formulated in the categorisation of individuals into groups, are ‘endemically racist’, even if they are unintentional. This aspect of racist practices is commonly defined as institutional racism and needs to be included in the analysis. Therefore, for an adequate analysis of racism, it is important to embrace the intersection of class, gender, ethnicity and the practices of the nation-state, which naturalise the hegemony of one collectivity to the exclusion of the ‘other’.

### **III. National Identity and Constructing ‘Otherness’**

#### *Korea, a ‘Nation’ Based on the Myth of ‘Common Origin’*

In a Korean language dictionary, ‘nation’ is defined as ‘the social group with a common ethnicity or a common territorial origin sharing historical destiny, cultural tradition, in particular, language, religion, history and a way of life’ (Shin and Shin, 1989:1290, cited in Ju, 2004:244). Here, it is explicitly stated that ‘nation’ is based on the precondition of both ‘common origin’ and ‘common destiny’ of the ‘common ethnicity’. This manifests itself in members of the ‘nation’ having a sentiment of collective, mutual identity, which has emerged as strong cultural unity. The national collectivity is constructed in the basis of ‘common origin’, and one typically joins the collectivity by being born into it.

Historically, Korean national identity has been articulated in terms of both ethnic and cultural homogeneity based on a ‘pure blood’ ideology. ‘Nation’ was the



mythical entity that made up for the void of the state during the Japanese colonisation and, the 'nation' has therefore become manifested in 'us, Koreans' in opposition to 'them', especially the Japanese colonisers. The term, 'nation', can be translated into *Minjok* in Korean. The first character, *min*, refers to a term for 'people' whereas the second character, *jok* denotes 'clan', 'tribe' or 'family' (Schmid, 2002). Schmid (2002:175) observes that under the control of the Japanese, 'the [*minjok*] presented an alternative locus for national existence and autonomy'. Later, the notion of 'nation' was combined with the 'state' – which refers to 'the political organisation that displays sovereign entities within geographic borders and in relation to other sovereign entities' (Ingram, 1996:331) – creating the political and ideological term 'nation-state'. Since independence from 35 years of Japanese occupation, the political ideology identifying the nation with the state has been a crucial part of the nation-building project in Korea. During the Cold War, referring to Korea as a 'nation-state' allowed government elites to secure the legitimacy of their power, and to promote political stability by building a sense of internal cohesiveness against the Communist enemy, North Korea. Despite political and ideological differences between North and South Korea, the idea of ethnic homogeneity has been heavily politicised in both Korean states in the name of future 'national' reunification.

The notion of a 'nation-state' assumes a complete concurrence 'between the boundaries of the nation and the boundaries of those who live in a specific state' (Yuval-Davis, 1997:11). However, the concept of the 'nation-state' is an intuitive and fictional idea. The nation is 'an imagined political community' (Anderson, 2006) and a mythical unity constituted by 'fictive ethnicity' (Balibar, 1991c). Until very recently, it has commonly been argued by Korean scholars and historians that 'Korea is one of the most homogeneous nations in terms of its history, culture, blood and

language' (M. L. Park, 1996, cited in Ko, 2002:126-127). Nevertheless, the ideology asserting the cultural and ethnic homogeneity of the Korean nation derives from state elites and dominant bourgeoisies, which have restructured the state in the national form and modified heterogeneous forms of class into one singular 'nation'. The idea of cultural homogeneity is based merely on the cultural hegemony of the dominant group in the society, which overlooks the cultural diversity between different classes or regions in the Korean territory. The 'pure blood' ideology is an imaginary narrative as there has been a long history of contact with the Chinese, Manchurian and Japanese (Ko, 2002). As Balibar (1991c:96) argues:

[n]o nation possesses an ethnic base naturally, but as social formations are nationalised, the populations included within them, divided up among them or dominated by them are ethnicised – that is, represented in the past or in the future *as if* they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture and interests which transcends individuals and social conditions.

This imaginary concept of the 'nation-state' forms the basis for nationalism (Yuval-Davis, 1997). The 'nation-state' is characterised and fortified by a national identity that homogenises a stratified national population and naturalises the hegemony of one collectivity. Balibar depicts (1991c:96) 'fictive ethnicity' as the collectivity instituted by the nation-state as follows:

By constituting the people as a fictively ethnic unity against the background of a universalistic representation which attributes to each individual one – and only one – ethnic identity and which thus divides up the whole of humanity between different ethnic groups

corresponding potentially to so many nations, national ideology does much more than justify the strategies employed by the state to control populations. It inscribes their demands in advance in a sense of belonging in the double sense of the term – both what it is that makes one belong to oneself and also what makes one belong to other fellow human beings. ... The naturalisation of belonging and the sublimation of the ideal nation are two aspects of the same process.

In this regard, ethnic homogeneity (*volknation*) and cultural homogeneity (*kulturnation*) become important dimensions of nationalist projects. Yuval-Davis (1997:21) argues that *volknation* – which on the genealogical dimension is constructed around the specific origin of the people – tends to construct ‘the most exclusionary and homogeneous visions’ of ‘the nation’. On the other hand, *kulturnation* is based on ‘the cultural dimension in which the symbolic heritage provided by language and religion and other customs and traditions is constructed as the ‘essence’ of ‘the nation’’, and tends to have little tolerance of ‘non-organic’ diversity (ibid.). Importantly, women play crucial roles in the construction and reproduction of these nationalist projects, not only as biological reproducers of the members of the collectivity but also as carriers of the cultural artefacts and symbolic figures of the nation (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992).

### *The Politicisation of Ethnicity Constructing the ‘Other’*

Balibar (1991b:37) argues that racism develops ‘within the field of nationalism’ and ‘nationalism would be, if not the sole cause of racism, then at least the determining condition of its production’. Balibar’s view on the relationship between nationalism

and racism becomes convincing when the concept of ethnicity, which is commonly grounded in ideas about culture, is critically interpreted in the political context. Fenton (1999:90) states that 'part of the rhetoric of public political ethnicity, as of nationalism, is the language of family and kindred'. 'Ethnonationalism' is deeply embedded in the words 'blood, family, brothers, sisters, mothers, forefathers, home', which are commonly used in the political rhetoric of ethnicity (Connor, 1993, cited in Fenton, 1999:90). The fictive and ideological sense in which Korean ethnicity is regarded as one big family – carrying the same 'pure blood' of shared ancestry – has been an inherent characteristic of Korean nationalism. Ethnonationalism develops alongside ethnocentrism, naturalising and normalising the culture of a dominant ethnic group, which is considered to be the 'national culture'. Constructing commonalities, ethnocentrism transcends differences in gender, class and region. At the same time, differences in physical and cultural codes, such as language, accent, food and dress, become boundary signifiers differentiating 'us' from 'them' and constructing 'otherness'. Racism occurs 'when the construction of 'otherness' is used in order to exclude and/or exploit the immutable 'other'' (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1997:49).

The term, ethnicity, has two aspects to its meaning. On the one hand, ethnicity is defined by a group itself based on the group's self-identity constructed by shared language, history, religion, and traditions. On the other hand, ethnicity is constructed outside the group as a result of the dominant group's use of its power to impose social definition on subordinate minority groups (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Castles, and Davison, 2000). As Castles and Davison (2000:62-63) remark, the other-definition of a minority ethnic group by the dominant group 'leads to the racialisation and ethnicisation of social relations' through the 'ideological process of

stereotyping as well as discriminatory structures and practices in the legal, economic, social and political arenas'. Castles and Davison specify three markers constructed by dominant groups to differentiate minorities: phenotypical characteristics; culture; and national origin. The racialisation and ethnicisation of migrant workers is one of clearest examples of stigmatised 'otherness' in Korea. In particular, the racialisation of Korean-Chinese migrants illustrates the ambiguities and contradictions in the political rhetoric of ethnic homogeneity. While in the nationalist discourse the Korean-Chinese are considered to be part of the Korean ethnic community – sharing 'blood' and 'ancestry' – as migrant labourers they are located in a disadvantaged social, economic and political position and constructed as 'the other' by native Koreans.

The ethnicity of the Korean-Chinese is deeply politicised in three dimensions. First, under the Immigration Control Act, the Korean-Chinese are officially Chinese citizens. As mentioned above, the national origin of a migrant worker is taken as a predictor of social characteristics (Castles and Davison, 2000) and origin in China – a 'poorer country' – is constructed as a significant marker for marginalising the Korean-Chinese group from the dominant group in Korea. In the following interview, this Korean-Chinese migrant raged at her Korean relatives who treated her disrespectfully when she visited them.

I once visited my distant relatives who are living in the South. But, I don't want to see them ever again. They despised me completely because I was from a poor country. For one of episodes, I was wearing a silver ring given by my grandmother when I got married. They made fun of me, saying 'are people still giving a silver ring as a wedding present in China?' I was so humiliated and angry with

them who were degrading my precious thing. (*Soon-Sun, waitress, 5 years and 8 months in Korea*)

When we are working in the restaurant, we can overhear conversations between customers. Sometimes, what they are saying gets on our nerves. For example, some middle-aged men are talking like ‘I went to a business trip to China, and the country was really dirty’, ‘In Yanbian [*the Korean Autonomous Prefecture in China*], if you pay just \$10, you can easily sleep with a Yanbian girl’ and so on. It is really unpleasant and offensive to hear these conversations. (*Dani & Myung-Hwa, waitresses, 2 years in Korea*)

Second, Korean-Chinese migrant workers, who are mostly employed in manual, unskilled occupations in the Korean labour market, are located in a disadvantaged position within the wider working class. As discussed above, just like migrant workers from Southeast Asia, Korean-Chinese workers are also racialised in the labour market. Under the current legal system, they are not allowed to engage in any jobs other than designated manual and unskilled ones. The racialisation of migrant workers and their resultant disadvantaged class position makes the nationalist rhetoric recognising the Korean-Chinese as part of the Korean ethnic community an empty concept. Moon (2000:159) points out that:

[t]he government and media [depict] Korean Chinese as illegal migrant workers and criminals. With regard to Korean Chinese women who had married South Korean farmers when the Seoul government initiated its policy, ... the Korean public portrayed them as “women obsessed with material wealth who are willing to transgress all moral principles and threaten the very basis of

Korean identity”<sup>55</sup>. It appears that when Korean Chinese no longer resigned themselves to what Ernest Renan called the “spiritual family” of the past and ventured into the everyday economic and social life of South Korea, they became unwanted strangers.

Third, the ethnic connection with the Korean-Chinese – conceived in terms of blood ties – makes native Koreans reluctant to accept cultural differences between them and the Korean-Chinese. When cultural differences between two groups are perceived, both groups often explain it in terms of ideological differences, specifically between capitalism and socialism. As mentioned in Chapter 6, Korean employers commonly hold Korean-Chinese domestic workers in contempt, seeing them as culturally and socially backward and uncivilised, based on their prejudice against the country from which these workers have migrated – that is ‘socialist’ China. Native Koreans’ negative attitudes towards Korean-Chinese migrants are largely influenced by anti-communist/socialist sentiment, which is still pervasive in Korean society. Korean-Chinese migrants also expressed their experiences of unequal treatment compared to native Koreans in terms of narratives of ideological difference between ‘capitalist’ Korea and ‘socialist’ China.

While I am working in Korea, the hardest thing is to cope with stress and strain. Because we are from a socialist country, we think that all people are equal. Koreans despise Korean-Chinese people. The people in a capitalist country are heartless and cold-blooded. But, I have to put up with all these humiliations without turning upon them because I have to stay in Korea to return to China with money. That’s why I am feeling stressed. (*Seok-Bok, live-in domestic worker, 7 years in Korea*)

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<sup>55</sup> Moon cites this observation made by Park (1996).

At first, it was hard for me to deal with Koreans who look down on us because we are from China. But now I just pay no attention to discrimination against us. Now, I understand a little why Koreans are treating us differently. China and Korea are two very different countries. While China is a country where you share rice in one pot with others, Korea is a country where you have to work and compete with others to get the rice. (*Young-Sil, domestic worker, 6 years in Korea*)

Castles and Davison (2000:63) argue that both the social position and the consciousness of a minority ethnic group are always the result of complex interactions between self- and other-definition.

If a group is marginalized by strongly negative other-definitions (that is, racist structures and practices), it may emphasize its cultural identity as a source of resistance. This can in turn reinforce the dominant group's fear of separatism, leading to even stronger discrimination (Castles and Davison, 2000:63).

The marginalisation of the Korean-Chinese from the dominant group have led the Korean-Chinese to construct some degree of collective consciousness based on their own belief in shared experiences, culture and history. Ironically, the racialisation of Korean-Chinese migrants has provoked strong ties among the group and formed the basis of a political struggle for the recognition of their Korean ethnicity.

Korea's mythical national identity is now in a tangle. The country has reached a crucial juncture at which it is expected to recognise and realise the existence of diverse 'others'. The boundaries of the national imagined community



and the narratives of cultural homogeneity are constantly challenged by the process of international migration. The gendered and racialised process of international migration has challenged and reconfigured boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

Bhabha (1990:4) observes that:

[t]he 'locality' of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, nor must it be seen simply as 'other' in relation to what is outside or beyond it. The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity, incorporating new 'people' in relation to the body politics, generating other sites of meaning and, inevitably, in the political process, producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation.

However, it is important to note that the process of 'incorporating new people' is not always progressive. One of the dilemmas that the Korean state is now facing is whether to include 'foreigners' who are married to its own citizens. By looking at the issue of the citizenship of marriage immigrants, the next section will examine in what ways the process of inclusion implies another form of exclusion and racialisation based on gender and class.

#### **IV. Gender and Citizenship: a Case Study of Cross-border Marriage Immigrants**

##### *Overview of Cross-border Marriage Migration in Asia*

Marriage is in general understood as an interpersonal and private domestic relation

between a man and a wife. The unequal and patriarchal nature of marital relations is however not only limited to personal relations at home, but is also related to social, economic and political structures. Furthermore, in the context of cross-border marriage, patriarchal gender relations transcend state boundaries and are constructed simultaneously with hierarchies of class and race.

Gendered patterns of marriage migration are prevalent throughout Asia. The Philippines is a popular country of origin of marriage immigrants as well as of labour migrants. Of the 175,000 Filipinos engaged or married to foreigners between 1989 and 1999, over 91 % were women (Constable, 2005). Following China's open-door policy, the number of Chinese cross-border marriages has increased dramatically since the mid-1980s, with 30,000 Chinese marrying abroad each year in the early 1990s and almost 80,000 in 2001 (Chinese Statistical Yearbook 2002, cited in Constable, 2005). The majority of cross-border marriages between the Chinese and foreigners involve Mainland Chinese women and overseas Chinese men in Hong Kong, Taiwan and elsewhere. In Taiwan, which is one of the main destinations of Chinese marriage immigrants, the total number of marriage immigrants in early 2004 reached over 300,000 and 93 % of the marriages were between Taiwanese men and foreign women, mainly from China and Southeast Asia (Tsay, 2004).

Korea is no exception to the visible inflows of marriage immigrants. While Korea now increasingly acknowledges the presence of recent cross-border marriage immigrants, existing conceptual boundaries of the 'Korean-ness' locate these marriage immigrants at the margins of society. In a country like Korea, which defines itself as a non-immigrant (*sojourn*) country and in which the principle of the law of blood (*jus sanguinis*) defines membership of the nation, the preservation of mythic ethnic and cultural homogeneity – often conflated with issues of public order and

national security – is a key factor determining the country's policies towards the settlement and citizenship of marriage immigrants.

Although there have been gradual increases in the number of women migrant workers in Korea, male migrant workers still outnumber their female counterparts overall. On the other hand, women constitute the overwhelming majority of the population of cross-border marriage immigrants. Since the early 1990s, the number of cases of cross-border marriage migration has been constantly increasing in Korea. Cross-border marriage has increased from 4,710 cases in 1990 to 35,447 in 2004, which means 11.4 % of total marriages for that year against 1.2 % in 1990 (National Statistical Office, 2006b). Of the 147,646 estimated population of total migrant women in Korea, marriage immigrants account for 17.3 % (25,594) in 2005. Until 1995, cross-border marriage was mainly between a Korean woman and a foreign man. For example, in 1990, the number of cases of cross-border marriage between a foreign woman and a Korean man was only 619 cases, comprising 13.1 % of total cross-border marriages. Nevertheless, the situation reversed remarkably after 1995 and the common pattern of cross-border marriage is now between a foreign wife and a Korean husband. In 2005, 72.3 % of total cross-border marriages (31,180 out of 43,121 cases) were between Korean men and foreign women (National Statistical Office, 2006b) and these foreign wives are mainly from China, Japan, the Philippines and Vietnam. This reversed situation coincided with the significant inflow of the industrial trainees and migrant workers from developing countries in Asia since 1994. In particular, since 1993 along with the large influx of Chinese industrial trainees, the number of Chinese women (mostly the Korean-Chinese) married to Korean men have constituted over 50 % of the total population of marriage immigrants (National Statistical Office 2006b). The main factor of this change was the prominent change

of international relations after the establishment of diplomatic relations between Korea and China in 1992.

### *Living as a 'Foreign Bride' in Korea*

According to Constable (2005), cross-border marriage migration is often considered as 'global hypergamy', a term building on the conventional anthropological definition referring to women marrying up into higher socio-economic groups. However, she correctly points out that hypergamy raises the question of how, for whom and in what sense such marriages represent upward mobility. As already discussed in Chapter 4, contrary to popular assumptions, marriage immigrants are not necessarily poor, nor do they marry men who are on the higher end of the socio-economic ladder. Moreover, apart from economic reasons, many marriage immigrants in this study stated that their major motivation for migration was based on social pressures relating to marriage in their home countries. While these marriage immigrants appear to be moving up – in a geographical sense – from a less developed country to a more developed one, this does not mean that they have moved upward on the socio-economic chain. In fact, many of women in this study have moved into an 'unexpectedly' low standard of living and end up in poverty.

Truong (1983:538 cited in Piper 1997:328) argues that the men who marry foreign women are those 'who feel they are losing out in the power struggle between sexes and who need to restore their feelings of masculinity, but cannot find partners suitable to this end among peer groups.' While this may require further systematic study on those men's reasons of cross-border marriage, as mentioned by Piper (1997), Truong's analysis partly explains a trend among certain Korean men who cannot find

Korean wives due to demographic and socio-economic changes. On the one hand, there are rapidly increasing numbers of independent working women, who are reluctant to get married or delay marriage due to the responsibility for social reproduction which are imposed on married women. On the other hand, men who suffer economic hardship, disability, or less desirable jobs – such as rural farmers or urban manual workers – often have difficulties finding Korean partners. As in many Asian countries, marital decisions and choice of marriage partners in Korea are often affected by the family's socio-economic status. Korean men who are located in lower social and economic positions often face difficulties finding local women who are willing to marry them. Furthermore, in Korea as in many Asian societies, being married and having a family at a certain age – early 30s – is considered to be a family obligation and a norm of social standing. Under these circumstances, many Korean men look for their marriage partners abroad.

Cross-border marriage has become an increasingly institutionalised and organised business. The state, local governments and marriage intermediaries, including private agencies, are all involved in marriage between women and men from different regions of the world. For the Korean government, cross-border marriage has become one of the most significant measures to tackle the country's low birth rate and aging population. In particular, local governments in agricultural districts in the southern provinces of Korea are one of the central actors in cross-border marriage migration. Increasing numbers of farmers are facing difficulties finding spouses in the rural areas and this tendency is related to concerns over the declining rural population and its adverse impact on the rural economy in general<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> Freeman (2005:80) notes that in Korea 'the bride shortage in the countryside has reached the level of national crisis, brought to the attention of the public by the media and by the protest suicides of unmarried farmers'.

Accordingly, local governments in the rural area organise overseas ‘marriage tours’ and arrange matchmaking services for farmers to meet prospective brides in countries such as China, Vietnam and the Philippines. In her study of Korean-Chinese [*Choseonjok*] marriage immigrants in Korea, Freeman (2005) argues that the Korean government has attempted to resuscitate the rural economy and repopulate the countryside by using the productive and reproductive labour of brides from China. She states that ‘when the government first initiated its programme of importing brides, the media portrayed *Choseonjok* women as saviours of the Korean countryside, “returning the sound of crying babies” to farming families and restoring “ethnic homogeneity” to a divided people’ (Freeman, 2005:84).

On the other hand, as discussed in Chapter 4, the majority of marriage immigrants in this study got married through arrangements made by the Unification Church. The Unification Church – which provides all necessary arrangements for the couple, from a matchmaking service and a marriage ceremony to paperwork for entry visas for foreign brides – has become a less expensive alternative to private marriage agencies. When couples get married through cross-border marriage agencies or religious groups, the husbands pay for marriage expenses, such as air travel and paperwork for visa clearance.

On the surface, this would seem to be an ideal situation for the bride. However, later this may take a psychological toll on the wife. Because of the costs incurred, Korean husbands tend to treat their foreign wives as purchased possessions rather than as equal partners. According to counselling data provided by the Women Migrants Human Rights Centre (2004), in many counselling sessions migrant women make complaints about their husbands’ attitudes towards them, saying, “because I have paid for you, you have to obey me.” Two of the Filipina wives in this study

seriously suffered such contempt from their husbands and mother-in-law, and this caused discordant marital and family relations and left these women with emotional scars of indignity.

I have a lot of pains and difficulties in my life because of my husband's family. My mother-in-law says that she bought me to be her son's wife. She says that she paid the Church to buy me. I know that many Korean husbands say this to their foreign wives. She said to me that she paid the Church 30,000,000 won (US\$30,000) to bring me into Korea. But, that is not true. My husband showed me the receipts and she actually paid around 7,000,000 (US\$7,000) for my flight ticket and the costs of our wedding. (*Jogie, 27, Filipina*)

I don't go to the Sunday service in the Unification Church. I hate the Church! My husband always says to me that he paid 5,000,000 won (US\$5,000) to the Church to bring me from the Philippines. He says he bought me by paying the Church. So he tells me to pay him back when I earn enough money. I don't know whether it's his joke or he is serious. I don't want to go to the Unification Church because of what my husband is saying to me. The Church also lied to me about my husband before we got married. The reverend said that he had his own dry cleaner's, a house, a car and even a lot of money. But, nothing was true. They are so liars! I feel betrayed by the Church and my husband. (*Lisa, 36, Filipina*)

While those women migrated to Korea because they wanted to settle down to a married life, settling down in a foreign country with a foreign husband was not simple for them. In his study of cross-border marriage immigrants in a Japanese rural village, Burgess (2004) points out that, as cross-border marriage immigrants encounter the limited range and status of their roles in married life, they often find

that the social resources they possessed in their country of origin have been lost in the move to Japan. Accordingly, 'their lack of competence and knowledge about the new culture exacerbate this perceived loss of identity' (Burgess 2004:234). With the shift from a working, independent and single life to a domestic and married life, these women have to adopt the different roles and the lifestyle associated with marriage migration. Moreover, when there is domestic discord, their weak language skills and knowledge about Korean culture tend to aggravate the problem even further.

There were three common problems in the cross-border marital relations that were found in this study. First, marriage immigrants experienced difficulties in communicating with their husbands. Their husbands communicated with them mainly in Korean. While husbands insisted that marriage with a Korean man entailed learning the Korean language, for these women, learning a new language in a short period of time was one of the hardest challenges in their new life. They were too busy with full-time work and childcare to spare time for language lessons. Furthermore, there was lack of assistance from the government or the local community in the form of a Korean language programme for marriage immigrants.

We communicate each other only in Korean. My husband cannot speak English - He only finished middle school. That's why we are fighting. It's been only four years since I came to Korea. My Korean is too short - I'm speaking Korean still like a baby. A language is a big problem in our relationship. (*Carol, 40, Filipina*)

We communicate each other in body languages, Korean and English. I'm learning Korean by myself. I can speak a little bit Korean, just simple sentences and words. We often have a quarrel



because one misunderstands what the other person is saying. In the last year, I studied Korean on every Sunday, but since my factory work has got busy I cannot go to the class any more. (*Marilou, 30, Filipina*)

Second, marriage with a Korean man often involves a patrilocal residence, in terms of which a bride is expected to move in with her husband's family. Under these circumstances, marriage immigrants found it hard to understand and cope with the gender role of wife or daughter-in-law in the patriarchal structure of the Korean family.

My husband often complains about the dinner I cook. I just prepare basic dishes such as rice and soup for his dinner. I'm too exhausted to cook when I come home after work. He moans about food and compares me with other Korean wives. He is normally nice to me, but sometimes he is so mean. His words hurt me. He says words that I don't like to hear and I don't think he appreciates me. He is not accepting me as his respectable wife. He is not accepting me as the way I am. It takes time for me to learn the Korean way of life. He wants me to be a very typical Korean wife. But, how can I be? (*Carol, 40, Filipina*)

My in-laws live close by. They live in the next door. Whenever I have argument with my husband, my mother-in-law interferes and talks to me "why are you fighting with your husband?" Then, I answer, "I am not a bad person. If I am a bad person, I would not have married with your son and have left him a long time ago." I am not a bad person. Despite all the problems, I am still living with him! I don't have a friend near by. I am very lonely. There is no friend to share my feelings and problems. My mother-in-law doesn't like that I meet and talk to other Filipinas because she

thinks that they cause problems. She is afraid that I might talk about her family to my friend. (*Zenaida, 28, Filipina*)

Third, most of the interviewees were struggling with financial difficulties owing to their husbands' unstable jobs and irregular incomes, and some of them, especially those living in a city, were in fact living on the poverty line. According to the survey data provided by the Ministry of Health and Welfare (2005), 52.9 % of marriage immigrants are living with household incomes less than the official minimum cost of living in Korea. Nevertheless, only 13.7% of these households are on social security benefits (Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs, 2007). Financial problems and poverty aggravate the pressures on women who have to manage households on a tight budget.

We have financial difficulties – my husband has no money. Money is the biggest problem in our life at the time. We are in debt and only paying the interests to the bank. It is really hard. My husband's salary is only \$1,200 and we have to pay the rent \$450 monthly. (*Geraldine, 37, Filipina*)

At the moment, we are having a hard time because we don't have money even for my daughter's milk. We are living in a temporary accommodation illegally built on the public land. It is hard to live in this house. It is very hot in summer and cold in winter. We cannot get hot water in winter so I have to boil water in a kettle to take a shower. My husband and his family don't have any property. I was so shocked when I first arrived at here after the wedding. They have been living here for fifteen years and my mother-in-law says that they will live here until the government forces us to leave. (*Zenaida, 28, Filipina*)

Despite problematic situations, the marriage immigrants in this study did not completely reject the strict gender roles and expectations in the family relation. Rather, they seemed to put up with the problems and even accept them as cultural differences associated with the new way of life in Korea. For example, even though Carol responded to her husband's criticism of her cooking by saying "If you want something else, then you cook!", she made an effort to learn Korean recipes for her husband. Lim (2005) argues that, for Korean husbands, 'the cultural difference' becomes a code for the control measures imposed on their wives in the household. Foreign wives are expected to accept and adapt themselves to Korean culture and customs, which mean – in this context – the patriarchal conjugal relation. The subordinate relationship between a wife and a husband become justified under the name of 'culture'.

### *The Limits of the Citizenship of Marriage Immigrants*

Yuval-Davis (1991; 1999) argues that citizenship should not only be understood in terms of the narrow formalistic meaning of having the right to carry a specific passport, but also as a more total relationship between an individual and the state, inflected by identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions, institutional practices and a sense of belonging. The popular notion of citizenship is based on the work of Marshall (1950), which views citizenship as full membership in a community based on civil, political and social rights and responsibilities. Nevertheless, Yuval-Davis (1991) questions the very concept of 'the community' on which the notion of citizenship is based. As she rightly points out, in the vague notion of the community there is an assumption of 'an organic wholeness', which sees the community as a

'natural social unit' (Yuval-Davis, 1991:59). Therefore, the community is 'out there' and 'any notion of internal difference within the community is subsumed to this organic construction' (ibid.). Yuval-Davis also adds that since the notion of the community assumes a 'given collectivity', it does not see that boundaries, structures and norms are constantly changing as a result of processes of struggle and negotiation, which construct and reconstruct the collectivity.

The notion of citizenship is ambiguous to the extent that it implies not only inclusion, but also exclusion. Lister (2003:44) argues that it is crucial in a theory of citizenship to pay attention to 'the symbiotic processes of inclusion and exclusion, which form the kernel of citizenship as a concept and a practice'.

Whether the focus is the nation-state or the community, or particular groups within these localities, boundaries and allocative processes serve to include and exclude simultaneously. These boundaries operate both as visible physical borders and as less tangible structural and symbolic barriers (Lister, 2003:44).

Lister observes that the patterns of inclusion and exclusion are gendered and racialised, and these in turn generate different opportunities for and constraints on the exercise of agency.

For those who are not born into 'the organic community', exclusion is generated through the differential granting of rights by the state (Morris, 2002). Migrants are granted stratified rights in terms of immigration status, class, ethnicity, gender, and nationality. Morris (2002) explains that 'civic stratification' becomes a device for governing immigrants, which forms the basis for differentiation as much as a foundation for inclusion. Civic stratification also codifies the racialisation of

migrant groups. As Morris (2002:140) points out, 'immigration statuses in practice represent a system of social structural division in terms of rights, raising the question of how this structure is 'embodied' in terms of race and/or ethnic divisions'. The embodiment of rights is particularly perceptible in countries like Germany, Sweden and Korea, in which the right to citizenship is based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*. In these countries, immigrants can be granted formal citizenship only through naturalisation. The exclusive nature of Korea's citizenship rules – which rely on 'blood' based criteria – extensively limits the formal rights of immigrants and, even if these immigrants are granted formal rights, there are significant barriers to claiming substantive rights.

The immigration rules and citizenship rights significantly determine the lives and choices of marriage immigrants. Unlike temporary labour migrants, marriage immigrants are likely to be permanent settlers and access to formal citizenship is a central issue for them and their children. Yuval-Davis (1991) argues that the state is not a neutral universalistic institution. She defines the state 'in terms of a body of institutions which are centrally organised around the intentionality of control with a given apparatus of enforcement as its command and basis' (Yuval-Davis, 1991:63).

Immigration policy and practices restrict personal autonomy and increase dependency of a migrant woman on her husband. In Korea, a foreign wife has to be married to her Korean husband for at least two years in order to gain formal citizenship. When a migrant woman extends the duration of her residence visa or applies for formal citizenship, she is required to present a personal reference from her husband (or husband's family) and documents proving her or her husband's economic capacity for living. The husband's economic capacity for earning a living and support of a family is one of the key determinants of the naturalisation of a

foreign wife. It is specified that when a foreign wife submits the application she must be accompanied by her husband or her father-in-law. These regulations and practices implicitly prevent a foreign wife from acting as an autonomous legal agent. In this regard, conjugal and family relations in the private domain determine women's status as citizens within the public domain (Pateman, 1988; Walby, 1990). Immigration policies are gender-biased since they do not acknowledge the independent legal status of migrant women but presuppose them to be dependents of their husbands. Furthermore, immigration regulations are not only gendered, but are also based on certain notions of the family within the institutional setting of marriage (Piper and Roces, 2003). Immigration laws and citizenship are based on the normative values of marriage because marriage is regarded as an institution that reflects the collective values of society and, moreover, national identity.

Under those circumstances, migrant women become vulnerable to economic and sexual exploitation and potential deportation (Anderson, 2000; Lister, 2003). According to counselling data provided by the Women Migrants Human Rights Centre (2004), most of human rights violations in the household of cross-border marriage take place prior to the naturalisation of a foreign wife. In many cases, migrant women are trapped in violent marriages, as their right to stay in a country depends entirely on maintaining marital relations with their husbands. When problems like domestic violence occur before the naturalisation, migrant women are compelled to tolerate the situation for fear of becoming undocumented and being deported. Some of the respondents in this study experienced domestic violence, but they put up with it. They did not only tolerate violence and verbal abuse of husbands and in-laws for the sake of their children or for religious reasons (e.g. being Catholic for Filipina migrants), but also for fear of jeopardising their legal status and the

consequent risks of with being deported and returning to their countries as a divorcee.

Just one year after we got married, he started to beat me. He sometimes beat me until I got blood on my face. He was normally drunk when he was violent against me. For first three years since we got married, he never stopped drinking. I really wanted to leave my husband and go back to the Philippines with my son. If I had had enough money at that time, I might have left him. (*Lisa, 36, Filipina*)

I lost my baby when I was three month pregnant because of my mother-in-law – she made me work in her farm for all day when I was pregnant. One day, we argued because she tried to confiscate my passport and an alien registration card. She worried if I would run away. When I refused to give them to her, she hit me and I pushed her back. I was sorry, but I had to defend myself. When my husband saw this incident, his mother shouted him to hit me for her. [Interviewer: Have you ever thought about going back to the Philippines?]

No. For me, when a woman is married to a man, it should last forever. I want to settle in Korea. This is my life. (*Jogie, 27, Filipina*)

In some cases, a foreign wife's legal right to obtain citizenship is improperly obstructed by the husband or husband's family, out of fear that formal citizenship might give a woman freedom to leave. Lack of legal status and autonomy tends to put the foreign wife in a subordinated position in the marital relation.

My husband and mother-in-law first wanted me to get Korean citizenship. But, once my sister-in-law said that if I get citizenship,

I would run away, my mother-in-law changed her mind about it. So, now she says that I have to wait for getting citizenship until I have a baby. (*Jogie, 27, Filipina*)

Some of my friends don't have Korean citizenship yet, even though they've live here for a long time and have children, because their husbands don't want them to have it. Many Korean husbands think that if their Filipina wives have Korean citizenship, they would run away. (*Lisa, 36, Filipina*)

Piper and Roces (2003) indicate that, notwithstanding arguments about the declining importance of national citizenship in the era of globalisation, national citizenship should not be underestimated in women's migratory experience (cf. Soysal, 1994; Sassen, 1996; 1998). Piper and Roces (2003) argue that Soysal's theory of postnational citizenship is derived from the European context and based on the overemphasised importance of international pressures in securing rights for immigrants. In practice, an international regime of rights for immigrants is 'weak and nonexistent outside of Europe (where migrants' rights are also limited)' (Piper and Roces, 2003:17). Given migrant women's vulnerable positions due to lack of legal status, formal citizenship is crucial for these women. In particular, social welfare and medical benefits strictly exclude marriage immigrants who are not yet naturalised because they are regarded as 'foreigners'. Formal citizenship confers rights to benefits that are essential for those women living in difficult circumstances.

Although they were married for more than two years, the majority of marriage immigrants in this study still lived with residence visas and longed to gain Korean citizenship. Many respondents complained about inconsistent administrative services associated with handling the application for formal citizenship. Formal



citizenship is an ascription of belonging (Christiansen and Hedetoft, 2004). The acquisition of a resident identity card and a Korean passport, which are symbols of citizenship, gives a migrant woman a sense of initial belonging and security. In this respect, it is interesting to observe the following case of Lisa, who was one of very few respondents granted formal citizenship.

I've got Korean citizenship in May 2004. I was really happy when I got my resident card. *[Proudly showing her resident ID card]* Sometime, I wanted to leave my husband and go back to the Philippines with my son. But, since I've got Korean citizenship, I don't think that any more. I wanted to live and settle down here in Korea. I can visit my country whenever I can. I think that having a Korean passport gives you many benefits. I am really pleased to have it.

Access to formal citizenship is, however, only a first step on the way to full membership of the host society (Castles and Davidson, 2000; Piper and Roces, 2003). Even with formal citizenship granting political and labour rights, the language barriers and cultural differences remain as obstacles to exercise these in practice. In her interview Lisa also stated that:

although I am now legally a Korean citizen, I am not yet Korean because I cannot speak fluent Korean. If I speak Korean well, then I would think that I'm Korean.

Furthermore, there is still the question of the substantive citizenship of immigrants. As Lister (2003) points out, substantive citizenship – which refers to the possession of full and equal rights and opportunities – does not automatically follow from

formal citizenship. Racial discrimination, harassment and the stigmatisation of immigrant women are processes of social exclusion that seriously undermine substantive citizenship. The marriage immigrants in this study showed particular concern for their children, who were the second generation of a cross-border marriage. They worried that their children might be bullied by their peers because of their inter-ethnic backgrounds. In particular, they were explicitly concerned about the skin colour of their children. One respondent even said, "I am so pleased because my children do not take after my dark skin." One Korean-Chinese respondent, who was married with an eleven year-old daughter, mentioned that she had never visited her daughter's school, as she was worried that her daughter might be bullied by her friends because her mother was Korean-Chinese.

According to the survey data provided by the Ministry of Health and Welfare (2005), 17.6 % of marriage immigrants (166 out of 945 foreign wives living in Korea) claimed that their children were bullied in school and 34 % of these were bullied because of their mothers' ethnicities. The children of migrant women in rural areas were found to be more likely to have such experiences than those in the cities. The same survey data also shows that 18.6 % of migrant women in rural areas had abortions due to serious concerns about raising their children in small rural communities. These examples illustrate that, even when marriage immigrants become legal citizens, this does not protect them from discriminatory discourses and practices that are deeply rooted in Korean society.

The notion of exclusive national belonging based on ethnic and cultural homogeneity inheres in the system of laws and regulations in Korea. One distinctive example is that, until 2005, the state prevented male children born of inter-ethnic unions from enlisting for military service. The main reason for the restriction was

based on the idea that 'the people with inter-ethnic background would not successfully adapt themselves to live in the barracks due to their physical differences'. In accordance with the 2005 amendment, children born of inter-ethnic unions after 1987 are now allowed to enter the military for the first time, but only on a voluntary basis. It is however too early to conclude that this initial change has practically dissolved prejudices and institutional discrimination against people who – because of phenotypic or cultural differences – are not considered to be 'Korean citizens'.

### *Economic Citizenship and the Paid Employment of Marriage Immigrants*

Walby (1994) argues that women's economic participation should be also included in the definition of social citizenship. Most of the participants in this study had full-time jobs in order to subsidise their household incomes, but their caring work in the family and the male-dominated household were major barriers to these economic activities. For example, despite financial difficulties, many husbands initially did not want their wives to engage in paid employment. The unsupportive attitudes of husbands towards the paid employment of their wives reflect stereotyped notions of gender roles, where it is naturally expected of a husband to be the breadwinner. Patriarchal discourses privilege male income and construct women's labour as appropriate to caring responsibilities in the household (Brah, 1996). Husbands often control financial affairs and the household budget, and do not want their wives to work or be involved in social activities outside the home. Some of the respondents eventually began to work, after much negotiation and persuasion.

My husband never gives me money. He never shows me the money. He puts all his salary in the bank. He's saying that he is saving his money for our son's future education. Well...I understand. He is old - 49 years old and wants to save money for the future. But, he and his family also think that, if he gives me enough money, I would run away. This was also the reason why he didn't want me to work. (*Lisa*)

My husband didn't like me working at first because he worried that other people might talk about him making his wife work. But I insisted and persuaded him. (*Marilou*)

As the majority of marriage immigrants in this study had financial difficulties, they wanted to work to bring additional incomes to the family, and their earnings were an essential contribution to the income of their households. In Carol's case, her earnings were the main source of household income, as she earned far more money than her husband. For these women, who had been economically independent for most of their adult lives (for some, even since they were teenagers), it was difficult to accept being dependent on their husbands. The following interview with Zenaida shows how she feels about being out of work due to childcare.

In the Philippines, because I worked and earned money I was independent. I could buy food and something I need. But, here in Korea, since I cannot work because of my daughter, I have to depend on my husband. I am reluctant to spend money given by my husband. My mother-in-law always checks where I spend the money. I want to work and earn my own money. I cannot stand to be dependent on my husband. I had always been financially independent. I finished high school and college by myself with my own earnings. (*Zenaida*)

Moreover, most of the respondents wanted to continue helping their families in the Philippines, as they had done before marriage.

My husband salary is not enough for living. He is a daily labourer. So his income varies depending on the day. On good days he earns between 150,000 won (\$150) and 250,000 won (\$250). But, if there is no work, he could earn only 50,000 won (\$50). Incomes from two people are better than it from one person. Since I got a job, I have sent \$200 to my family in the Philippines in every month. I do it not because they need my money, but because I want to. I send them money for their comforts, such as medicine for my father. *(Marilou)*

I started to work because I really needed money. Living in Korea is different from living in the Philippines. It is expensive. I needed money for myself and my family back home. I had always supported my family in the Philippines because I am the eldest daughter and had a responsibility to support them. Currently, I am only one in my family who is working in overseas. My parents don't have much money. My brothers are still in college. *(Jogie)*

Lister (2003:138) argues that paid work outside the home signifies 'an important locus of social participation' and 'a source of self-esteem', which is important for the fulfilment of women's potential as citizens. Paid work brings (partial or full) economic independence, which results in a sense of confidence and satisfaction.

I think that the life here is better than it in the Philippine. I work

and earn money so that I can help myself and my family. I can buy something I need without asking my husband. Two years ago before I worked, the life was so miserable and I cried many times. Now, I feel that I'm free and independent. I'm happy now because I work. (*Lisa*)

Paid work outside the home also creates an extensive social network beyond family and kinship. It is 'an antidote to the boredom and isolation of staying at home' (Brah, 1996:140). Brah argues that '[w]omen talked about the joy of sharing a joke, teasing, engaging in casual banter, sharing out items of lunch brought from home, gossiping, offering sympathetic ear to workmates experiencing domestic or other problems, sharing "a moan" against employers, and so on' (1996:140).

I started to work after I got married because I was so bored. There was nothing to do in the house when my husband left for work. Only thing I was doing was watching T.V. and waiting my husband who returned home often late from work. So I became hysteric. Now, I'm happy that I'm working. I'm so happy that I can buy things and do whatever I want to do. I have also met several Filipina friends at the factory where I work. (*Marilou*)

As a whole, leaving the domestic roles of wife, mother, and daughter-in-law and entering paid work in the public sphere is a focal point for immigrant women in reconstructing their identities outside the home (cf. Burgess, 2004). Lister (2003) rightly argues that paid work can be an important route to both social and active political citizenship. Women's paid work in the public sphere can 'encourage politicisation and open up political processes' (Lister, 2003:138).

*Is Korea becoming a multicultural society?*

'Korea moving toward a multicultural society' was the headline of the special article by Professor M-C Kim, a Korean sociologist, which appeared in one of the English newspapers, *The Korea Herald*, in November 2007. In the introduction of his article, Kim states that:

the idea of "multicultural Korea" seems to be more credible as we witness the growing number of restaurants selling international food. This multicultural thesis looks rather convincing if we consider the increasing number of interracial [sic] marriages.

Recently, 'multiculturalism' has become a buzz word in the media and policy documents in Korea. The government and NGOs have even launched a campaign for the adoption of the term 'multicultural family' to denote cross-border marriage couples and their children. It is evident that the Korean government is aware of the increasing number of people with diverse ethnic backgrounds, and is trying to establish policies for the effective 'integration' of these people into Korean society. Kim's observation nevertheless raises a serious question: does the mere visible presence of 'new culture' and 'new people' in the country suggest the transformation of the society towards a 'multicultural' one? The excessive and ambiguous usage of the term 'multiculturalism' leads us to examine the underlying implications of the 'multicultural' and the 'integration' policies in Korea.

According to Castles (1994:15), in a multicultural society 'citizens simultaneously have equal rights as individuals and different needs and wants as members of groups with specific characteristics and social situations' (cited in Lister,

2003:51). Lister (2003:51) argues that key fundamentals are linguistic and cultural rights or 'rights of recognition', 'which denote equality of respect, [and] which in turn [enhance] human dignity and agency'. Importantly, in a multicultural society the majority population has a consciousness of difference and accepts cultural heterogeneity in the society. Accordingly, multiculturalism becomes a significant antidote to the assimilationist tendencies of the nation-state (Yuval-Davis and Werbner, 1999). It is a fundamental error to argue that a visible increase in the numbers of different cultures or different ethnic groups within a society, or the promotion of basic welfare policies providing material supports for immigrants, form the basis of a society multicultural.

In 2006 the Korean government introduced 'the policy measures for the social integration of the mixed-blooded [*sic!*] and marriage immigrants' (Han and Seol, 2007). The policy measures consist of seven key tasks: preventing illegal cross-border marriages and protecting the victims; strengthening the supportive system for the settlement of victims of domestic violence; supporting immigrants' early acclimatisation and settlement in Korean society; supporting children of immigrants acclimatisation in schools; fostering a stable living environment for the immigrant's family; promoting a positive social perception of marriage immigrants and the education of government officials and social workers working closely with immigrants and their families; and establishing a system for implementing these tasks. Han and Seol (2007) argue that these policy measures constitute a significant part on the current discourse of a 'multicultural society' within government, the media and NGOs in Korea. They suggest that this can be seen as a turning point for progressive policy towards migrants in general.

However, the principal aim of these policy measures is to provide very basic



social security for marriage immigrants and their children, while the promotion of the fundamental rights of recognition, equality and diversity for the groups is missing in the main tasks. The main policy toward marriage immigrants of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) also focuses on supporting those women's reproductive roles. Regarding its support programmes for marriage immigrants, the MOGEF states that:

the programme was drafted to provide social support for difficulties these migrant women might face, such as family conflicts, language problems and fear experienced during pregnancy and childbirth in a foreign place. ... Maternity protection guides ... incorporate Korean family, customs and culture in the content and they will be utilised in family and childbirth guidance counselling (MOGEF, 2007).

Material and educational support for immigrants are certainly essential for their settlement. However, in these policies marriage immigrants – who are mostly women – are merely embodied as reproducers in the private household.

In fact, in its emphasis on 'social integration' and the 'acclimatisation' of immigrants into Korean society, the government policies toward marriage immigrants are more inclined to promote the assimilation of migrants, rather than multiculturalism. The Korean Arts and Culture Education Service (KACES) is a government-funded institute promoting 'culture and art education programmes' for marriage immigrants. The following description of the programmes by KACES is posted in its English website:

a system designed to help immigrants adjust to Korean society

needs to be established in order to help them understand Korean culture and the Korean way of life. Culture and arts education programmes at the national support level are also required to help female immigrants by marriage develop their potential ability as a member of society ... (KACES, 2007).

The culture and arts education programmes entail assimilation projects that encourage marriage immigrants to learn 'Korean culture and the Korean way of life' in order to successfully adjust to the country. As a consequence, this helps them 'develop their potential ability as a member of society'. The central idea of the programmes is that cultural assimilation is a key condition for these migrants to become a 'member' of Korean society. Certainly, cultural assimilation is one of the implicit criteria for the membership of Korean society, and this limits the full citizenship rights of migrants.

Under the rhetoric of promoting Korea as a 'multicultural society', the media and the local government eulogize marriage immigrants who successfully acculturate themselves to the Korean way of life and thus turn into 'exemplary Korean wives or daughters-in-law'. The following article is posted on the official homepage of the Korean government, which is managed by the Korean Overseas Information Service (KOIS):

On Monday (Oct. 2), around 100 foreign wives attended a *Chuseok* [Korean Thanksgiving holiday] class at the Korea National Folk Museum. The wives, who were from China, [the] Philippines, Vietnam and Uzbekistan, enthusiastically joined the class to learn about Korean customs and how to make traditional pottery and *songpyeon*, the rice cake eaten during *Chuseok*. The class, which was conducted in Korean, is part of efforts to make foreign wives

become more integrated in Korean society (KOIS, 2006).

'Koreanising' marriage migrant women is closely related to the patriarchal and nationalistic ideology that pervades in Korea society. As marriage immigrants are represented as 'mothers and wives of Korean citizens', they become 'central in ethnic and national reproduction and transformation, not only as biological reproducers of the member of the group or central in the transmission of its cultural artefacts, but also as markers of the boundaries of collectivities' (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992:10). In Korea assimilation is a central national strategy to maintain cultural homogeneity by rendering the 'others' invisible and incorporating migrant women and their children into the dominant cultural group. Without cultural recognition and respect for their individual liberal rights, these migrants are fundamentally excluded and marginalised in Korean society.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, gender, race and class are socially constructed and embedded in the institutional structure, which results in different experiences for different groups of migrant women. The experience of racism is heterogeneous and varies among different class, gender and ethnic groups. It has been argued that the gender aspect should not be considered 'an additional base of division' but rather a simultaneous base along with racialisation. Migrant women are racialised and sexualised in the labour market. Gendered and racialised practices generate a gender- and racially stratified workforce in Korea.

It has been emphasised that, for an adequate analysis of racism, institutional

racism also needs to be considered. The practices of the nation-state naturalise the hegemony of one collectivity to the exclusion of the 'other'. It was also argued that the Korean nation-state is 'an imagined political community' (Anderson, 2006) and a mythical unity constituted by the myth of 'common origin' and imagined 'pure blood'. As found in the case of Korean-Chinese migrants, there are ambiguities and contradictions in the political rhetoric of ethnic homogeneity in Korea. While in the nationalist discourse the Korean-Chinese are considered to be part of the Korean ethnic community sharing 'blood' and 'ancestry', as migrant workers, they are located in a disadvantaged social, economic and political position and constructed as 'the other' in Korean society.

This chapter has also noted that the social structural division in terms of citizenship rights is 'embodied' in terms of gender, race and/or ethnic divisions. The differential granting of rights by the state – i.e. 'civic stratification' (Morris, 2002) – signifies the interconnections of racialisation, nationalism, class and gender. The boundaries of the national imagined community and the narratives of cultural homogeneity have been challenged by the process of international migration. The discussion of the citizenship of marriage immigrants has noted how gendered and racialised transnational movements have challenged and reconfigured boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in Korean society.

The ostensible process of inclusion through the granting citizenship to immigrant women implies another form of exclusion and racialisation based on gender and class. The empirical data in this chapter have illustrated that the exclusive nature of Korea's citizenship rules – relying on 'blood' based criteria – extensively limits the formal rights of immigrant women and, even when these immigrants are granted formal rights, there are racialised and gendered barriers to claiming

substantive rights. In the context of cross-border marriage, patriarchal gender relations exist across state boundaries and are constructed in terms of hierarchies of class and race. Women marriage immigrants are expected to accept and integrate themselves into the Korean culture and customs. In the patriarchal conjugal relation, the subordinate relationship of a wife to a husband becomes justified by cultural differences. These conjugal and family relations in the private sphere also determine women's status as citizens within the public sphere. Immigration laws and citizenship, which are based on normative notions of marriage, implicitly deny the status of an immigrant woman as an autonomous legal agency and thereby increase the vulnerability and dependency of the woman on her husband.

Furthermore, it has been shown that racist discourses and practices, which are deeply rooted in Korean society, seriously undermine the substantive citizenship of immigrant women and their children. Under the rhetoric of promoting Korea as a 'multicultural society', women marriage immigrants are 'Koreanised' and implicitly forced to integrate into Korean society. It was argued that the assimilation project, which is disguised as 'the policy towards a multicultural society', is closely related to a patriarchal and nationalistic ideology. Policies on women marriage immigrants focus merely on their reproductive roles as mothers and wives of Korean citizens. As these women become central to ethnic and national reproduction and markers of the boundaries of collectivities, the Korean state veils the cultural identity of those immigrants and incorporates them and their children into the dominant cultural group. Without cultural recognition and respect of their individual liberal rights, these immigrants are fundamentally excluded and marginalised. It is therefore misleading to claim that Korean society is 'multicultural'.

## Conclusion

*Maybe I'm a machine  
Absorbed in soldering subassemblies  
Swarming down the conveyor,  
Like a robot repeating,  
The same motions forever,  
Maybe I've become a machine.  
Maybe we're chickens in a coop.  
Neatly lined up on our roosts,  
Hand speed synchronised in dim light,  
The faster the music,  
The more eggs we lay,  
Maybe we've become chickens in a coop.*

...

*They who extract and devour  
Our pith and our marrow,  
Maybe they are barefaced robbers,  
Turning humans into machines,  
Into consumables,  
Into things buyable and sellable.  
Maybe they are dignified  
And law-abiding barefaced robbers.*

*Those gentle smiles,  
That refined beauty and culture,  
That rich and dazzling opulence,  
Maybe all of that is ours.*

(*'Maybe'* by No-Hae Park, 1984:89-91, cited in Koo, 2001:147-148)

This poem was written by the well-known Korean worker-poet, Park No-Hae in 1984 when the Korean labour movement was growing stronger under the authoritarian regime. The poem expresses Korean factory workers' feeling of alienation, grievances, resentment and anger under the intolerable conditions of physical labour. The 40 years of Korea's rapid industrialisation was not possible without these millions of urban factory workers, most of whom were recruited directly from the

rural areas and had no prior experience of wage employment. Koo (2001:3) describes these workers as 'the first generation of the Korean working class'. Today, this poem applies to half a million of the new generation of workers who have left their home countries and come to Korea to fill the jobs rejected by the workers who once sang this poem on the shop floor.

Focusing on the empirical research of migrant women in Korea, this study has attempted to unpack the process of international migration in historical, social and political contexts and to explore each process with a better integration of theoretical analyses, through a critical gendered lens. It examined the case of Korea, which since the early 1990s has become one of the major labour receiving countries in Asia, but which has received less attention in the English literature on migration studies. Focusing on the migration of women, it has also challenged the absence of the gender perspective in the study of migrant workers in Korea. By integrating an analysis of empirical data into critical theoretical analyses, it has shown how gender and race/ethnicity are significantly implicated in the structure of international migration and state institutions, and how the ostensibly gender-neutral process of migration is therefore gender specific, resulting in different migration experiences on the part of women and men. The theoretical framework of this study is based on the observation that theorising the multifaceted process of international migration – which takes place with various interrelated variables – requires multidisciplinary and multidimensional approaches. The migratory process does not end when people decide to move and successfully arrive at the country of destination, but continues with the employment of migrants in the labour market, their settlement, and consequential societal transformations in the host society. Therefore, this study is intended to provide a more nuanced understanding of the process of international

migration by exploring the three different migratory stages: migration decision and entry to the destination; modes of employment; and residence/settlement in Korean society.

The 'migration transition' of Korea has been influenced by economic, political and cultural/social changes that interlock with changes at the local and global levels. As noted in Chapter 2, Korea has passed through the migration transition as a result of industrial, demographic and international political transitions, and as a result of increasing cultural/social linkages between Korea and other Asian countries. The restructuring of the Korean economy has brought changes in the industrial structure and employment patterns in the labour market, all of which have subsequently relocated the country within the international division of labour and generated demands for migrant workers in certain sectors of the economy. Owing to the vigorous globalisation drive pursued by the state, Korea has been transformed from a labour-intensive to a capital- and technological-intensive industrial economy based on the service and high-tech industries and overseas foreign investment. We have seen that there is a close relation between the globalisation of production of Korean firms and the influx of Asian migrants, as many workers came from countries that were sites for the Overseas Foreign Direct Investment (OFDI) of Korean firms. At the same time, as industrialisation and the vigorous labour movement have proceeded in Korea, domestic wage levels have risen and the manufacturing industry has experienced serious labour shortages due to the demographic transition – a low fertility rate and an ageing population – and job and skill mismatches in the labour market. The migration transition of Korea has also been affected by the changes in Korea's international relations in the post-Cold War era. The terminal stage of the Cold War during the period between 1989 and 1991 altered geopolitical relations in



East Asia and changed Korea's foreign policy, which resulted in the normalisation of diplomatic relations with China and Vietnam. This enhanced economic and cultural relationship between Korea and these countries has led to the increasing movement of people. The intensified movement of capital and goods has at the same time created significant cultural and social linkages, which connect Korea with other Asian countries and further stimulate flows of migrant workers into Korea.

It is undeniable that Korea is now increasingly dependant on migrant labour from the poorer countries in Asia. Given the country's brief history as a labour receiving country, the influx of migrant workers presents various new challenges for the Korean state. As Westwood and Phizacklea (2000:15) rightly observe, 'crossing borders has profound effects upon individuals but also upon the ways in which national affiliations and the nation-state are understood'. Throughout this study, it was shown that political considerations and the strategic intervention of the state have prominently influenced the current state of international migration in Asia. More importantly, the empirical analysis of migrant women in this study has illustrated that, under these structural determinations, migrants also manoeuvre strategically to further her interests throughout the migratory process, from the decision of migration to the choice of occupations in the labour market and to settlement in Korea. Analysing the process of migration from a gendered perspective has enabled us to move between different levels of analysis and provide a more interactive account of structure and agency, of the private and the public, and of the local and the global in the international migration system. The following section will summarise the key findings of this study.

## I. Key Findings

### *Migrant Women as 'Outsiders-Within' the International Migration System*

This study is based on the observation that gender is one of principal analytical factors for theoretical conceptualisation in the study of international migration. As argued in Chapter 1, for the gender-sensitive study of international migration the question should be not 'why women are excluded', but 'in what way gender relations are constructed and exercised in different areas in society such as the family, the labour market and the state'. It is therefore necessary to expand earlier approaches to the migration of women that merely 'add women' to existing theories of international migration. In this regard, while we must avoid a universalising view of patriarchy, Eisenstein's concept of 'the capitalist patriarchal state' and Walby's argument on 'private to public patriarchy' are useful for an understanding of the gender relations in the migration process, particularly in the Asian context. Nevertheless, as argued in Chapter 1, it is crucial to take a dynamic view of patriarchy, which goes beyond the public and private dichotomy. As the empirical research in this study shows, the system of patriarchy has been extended to the global level through gendered labour migration and increasing cross-border marriages in the Asian region. More importantly, through the process of international migration, public and private spheres operate across state boundaries. This fact undermines the conventionally constructed dichotomy of public and private space, which institutionalises social practices. It is also important to consider that patriarchal gender relations are constructed simultaneously with hierarchies of class and racialised social relations. Above all, the gendered process of international migration demonstrates that

patriarchy is 'a fluid and shifting set of social relations' and women bargain with the patriarchal gender relations in diverse ways by adopting different strategies and coping mechanisms in different historical, social and cultural contexts. This concept of 'patriarchal bargaining' has been supported by the empirical analysis of women's decisions on migration, which can be understood as coping strategies for overcoming economic, social, or cultural problems at home.

Gender-sensitive research on the process and structures of migration also goes further than simply explaining the implication of 'gender' in terms of causes, types and figures of international migration. In order to expand existing approaches to the migration of women, which merely 'add women, mix and stir' within existing theoretical frameworks of international migration, it is important to consider the process of knowledge production by looking at epistemological and methodological issues relating to the subject of the inquiry. Adopting a feminist standpoint of the outsider-within enabled us to move the lives of migrant women from the margin to centre of the analysis. The empirical study has shown that migrant women are 'outsiders' who exist 'within' the very core of the international migration system, in which they are nevertheless marginalised and silenced. A standpoint of the outsider-within locates the lives of these migrant women in valuable positions for understanding social relations that are not visible within the dominant androcentric accounts. As discussed in Chapter 3, the experiences of women are socially located in 'a gender/class/race matrix'. The 'matrix of domination' (Collins, 2000) organises oppression, which cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, but which takes particular forms at the intersection of gender, race and class. As further discussed in Chapter 7, acknowledging the heterogeneous nature of women's experiences is a significant aspect of this study, which deals with diverse groups of women – who

may share their positions in a host society as migrant workers, but whose experiences differ from each other in terms of race, ethnicity, or nationality.

### *Migrant Women as 'Knowledgeable Agents'*

The importance of the link between structure and agency was highlighted in the analysis of the decision to migrate and the subsequent admission to the country of destination. As an explanatory framework for this migratory stage, the concept of the migrant institution was examined in Chapter 4. Paying attention to the 'institutionalisation of migration' through personal and intermediary networks, Goss and Lindquist's concept of 'the migrant institution' helps us to articulate between structure and agency in the process of international migration, particularly in Asia where the system of migration is highly institutionalised.

Throughout the study, we have seen the crucial role played by the state in the process of international migration. As discussed in Chapter 4, the measures intended to control migrant labour have continuously changed in accordance with the interests of the state, the state apparatuses and businesses. Regardless of the demand for migrant labour in labour-scare industries, the Korean state has strictly prohibited unskilled migrant workers from entering Korea for the purpose of employment. In the form of the Industrial and Technical Training Programmes (ITTP), for 14 years the Korean state has utilised the migrant workforce to fulfil the serious labour shortage in the manufacturing and service sectors. While migrant trainees have constituted an indispensable workforce for essential industries in Korea, they have not been recognised as 'workers' – owing to their legal status as 'trainees' – and been denied all rights as workers. The unrealistic state policy on migrant workers has

failed to control the continuous flow of migrant workers and resulted in a great number of undocumented workers. After a series of attempts at policy reform, in 2004 the government introduced the Employment Permit System (EPS), which allows employers in labour-scarce sectors to hire unskilled migrant workers. However, under the EPS, workers are granted permission to work only in the designated companies with no right to choose or change workplace once they enter Korea. Alongside the EPS, the ITTP remains as one of main policy measures governing the migrant workforce. At the same time, the Korean state has imposed stricter rules and regulations, in an effort to control the entry of migrant workers in terms of a selective list of labour sending countries and an annual quota of migrant workers in each industrial sector. These measures further increase structural constraints. Nevertheless, as seen in the empirical study in Chapter 4, increasingly selective and restrictive measures to control immigration in Korea have not successfully controlled irregular migrants, but rather increased the likelihood of migrants seeking alternative migration routes. These alternative routes involve a higher risk of exploitation and place additional pressures on migrants to become undocumented.

On the other hand, this study argues that despite those stringent structural restrictions, potential migrants undertake strategic action within the migration system. While the individual decision to migrate is partially driven by economic motives, migrant women in this study make strategic decisions by choosing Korea as the country of their destination. The strategic action of migrants is manifested in their calculation of the cost and accessibility to the country, the exploitation of social and family networks in Korea and the choice of occupations available in Korea. Apart from the economic reason, these women also decided on migration either to escape from social pressure or to overcome problems such as forced or broken marriages at

home. One distinctive motive that explains why ethnic Koreans in China tend to choose Korea as a destination was found in cultural and historical linkages to their 'homeland' Korea. Their psychological links to 'homeland' Korea have materialised since the development of diplomatic relations between Korea and China in 1992. They have been able to physically return to the homeland for which they have longed. At the same time, their successful 'homeland' provides them with employment opportunities. For both reasons, Korea becomes one of the most attractive migrant destinations for the Korean diasporic group in China.

As strict border control has made it more difficult to enter Korea through legal channels, in order to facilitate their decision on move migrants need to acquire knowledge of rules and access to resources, and this takes place through assistance from intermediaries who interpret the rules and who distribute the resources within the migrant institution. Both the potential migrants and recruitment agencies (or private brokers) draw selectively on institutional rules and resources and exploit them in pursuit of their own interests. Within the increasingly institutionalised migration system in Asia, international migration becomes a highly lucrative 'business', and recruitment agencies and brokers are essential actors in the migration system. From the empirical analysis of migrants' use of available resources within migrant institutions, we can see that even though social knowledge and power are unequally distributed and may put individuals in a 'weak' social position, individuals tend to maintain some sense of autonomy and capacity for strategic action. As a whole, the practices of migrants, intermediary agencies and the state become further institutionalised and inevitably reproduce the system of migration.

While in the process of migration migrants act as 'knowledgeable agents' who draw selectively on institutional rules and resources in pursuit of overseas

migration, it is important to avoid a holistic approach to the concept of 'knowledgeable agents'. It is important to consider that allocative and authoritative resources available to individuals are differently distributed and structurally circumscribed. Even if the most marginalised interpret their situation and can mobilise available rules and resources, the modalities of the strategic use of rules and resources by agents could vary between individuals depending on their position within social institutions. Especially, when we consider differing knowledge of the rules and access to resources between women and men in their pre-migration stages, potential migrant becomes dependent on structurally conditioning factors which differentially distribute the capacity to facilitate outcomes. Therefore, unequal distributions of social knowledge and power as well as rules and resources between women and men make women opt for the different strategic use of resources. The particular examples of this examined in this study are young women's use of social/family networks as a 'security blanket' and cross-border marriage as an alternative channel for the entry to Korea. Differently 'sedimented' practices of women and men – who strategically draw on institutional rules and resources to facilitate migration – become institutionalised in a gendered way. This, in turn, influences the gendered process of international migration that is reproduced and transformed over time.

*The Transnational Sexual Division of Labour: Migrant Women's 'Visible Bodies' and 'Invisible Work'*

As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, the analysis of modes of the employment of migrant workers in Korea illustrates the systematic link between international

migration and changing divisions of labour. A critical examination of the theory of the New International Division of Labour has led us to conceptualise a notion of the *transnational* division of labour (Cohen, 2006) that embraces changing aspects of divisions of labour in the developed as well as the developing countries and, more importantly, patterns of the movement of people. The notion of the transnational division of labour provides a valuable tool for an understanding of the changed position of the Korean economy in the global market and its relevance to the country's reliance on the supply of migrant workers from developing countries. While Cohen (2006) does not take a gendered perspective in his account, his concept of the transnational division of labour could be applied to the 'feminisation' of the labour force at local and global levels and can be extended to include the notion of the transnational sexual division of labour, which has been intensified by the international migration of women workers.

Furthermore, the process of international migration has not only reconfigured the international division of labour, but also deepened gender and racialised divisions of labour within the Korean labour market. The transnationalisation of capital and changes in production increasingly demand unskilled migrant labour in order to sustain the country's position in the global economy. Generating 'the migrant labour market', migrant workers become 'flexible labour' occupying the secondary labour market. Migrant workers are not widely dispersed across the occupations, but they are rather concentrated in certain occupations and niche industries at low wages, in precarious jobs – which local workers are reluctant to take on – and without proper labour protection. As the state regulation of the migrant labour force in Korea explicitly illustrates, the demand for migrant workers continues until the cyclical and seasonal jobs in the secondary



labour market are filled, but the demand declines in periods of economic slowdown. Just as the state controls the inflow of migrants, the labour market for unskilled migrant workers is strictly regulated by the state. Given limited labour protection and the flexibilisation of the migrant workforce in the labour market, Korea has been able to reduce possible economic and social costs and, at the same time, enjoy the benefits of the significant economic contribution of migrant workers.

As we have seen in the empirical study, the migrant labour market is segmented by gender, class, race and age. Migrant women are mainly concentrated in archetypical 'female' occupations, such as assembly work in the manufacturing sector and service work – which have traditionally been reserved for local women. The empirical study of gender relations and racial discrimination in the workplace, and conflicting state policies, draw attention to the unlawful treatment of women migrant workers owing to their 'multiple vulnerability' as women, migrants and undocumented workers.

In order to provide a complete picture of the dynamic and constantly evolving process of international migration, Chapter 6 examined paid reproductive work. The commodification of reproductive work has blurred the boundaries of work in the public and private spheres. As paid reproductive work involves the most feminised migrant workforce in many developed countries, the transnationalisation of care and service work have opened up debates around public and private work, drawing attention to the 'global reshaping' of reproductive work. As seen in the empirical study of young Filipina migrant care workers, the tendency towards the commercialisation of care work – which is increasingly carried out by women migrant workers – has resulted in 'global care chains', which have further intensified the inequality of social reproduction between rich and poor countries as well as the

transnational sexual division of labour. While the notion that private work is the unpaid service of a woman in the household is elided by paid domestic work, the conventional assumption that domestic work is a woman's responsibility remains. While the state encourages middle-class Korean women to pursue their careers in the productive economy to sustain the country's economic growth, the issue of who should be responsible for housework, and child and elderly care is resolved by tacitly attributing these duties to women. By maintaining the patriarchal idea that care and domestic work are women's personal responsibilities, the Korean state responds to the function of social reproduction by importing migrant women, rather than by providing appropriate state welfare provisions. In this regard, the 'patriarchal capital state' manipulates both local and migrant women to fulfil its own need for sustaining economic and social development.

The patriarchal nature of the state is also reflected in gendered and racialised state policies toward women migrant workers. While migrant women are 'visible bodies' controlled by the state with regard to entry and the allocation of jobs in the labour market, they perform 'invisible work' in the labour market. As discussed in Chapter 5, undocumented women migrant workers in Korea are essentially in a blind corner with respect to state policies. We have seen that the maternity protection for undocumented women workers is of no concerns to the Korean government. Moreover, the government refuses to consider migrant domestic workers as 'workers' and to legalise paid domestic work, because the work is performed in the private domain.

On the whole, the analysis of the changing divisions of labour in Korea gives a comprehensive account of how social, political, cultural and institutional processes are intertwined in the context of production and social reproduction. The

feminisation of labour migration has significant implications for the sexual division of labour in the private and public spheres. Given the occupational segregation by gender in the labour market, migration may simply transfer women from one form of patriarchy to another, leaving gender relations within the labour market of both the labour sending and receiving countries essentially unaltered.

### *Gender, Racialisation and the Embodiment of Rights*

The final chapter of this study examined the migratory stage of residence and the settlement of migrants in the host society, which has been completely omitted in the dominant theories of migration. In this study, the social and political relations between migrants and the host society are considered as one of the significant parts of the migratory process. The analysis of the experiences of the residence and settlement of migrant women in Korean society involves not only examining the gendered structure of society, but also considering social and political relations in terms of race, ethnicity and class in the specific context of Korea. In this regard, a feminist integrative framework has been a useful tool for exploring how gender, race and class are socially constructed factors in the interlocking system of multiple discriminations experienced by migrant women. This integrated framework for the discussion of gender, race and class has been applied to the empirical analysis of the racialisation of migrant workers and the social structural division of citizenship rights in the specific context of Korea.

Gender, race and class are socially constructed and embedded in the institutional structure, which results in different experiences for different groups of migrant women. Immigration status signifies the social structural division in terms of

citizenship rights, which are 'embodied' in terms of race and/or ethnic divisions. In order to gain a proper understanding of the unequal and discriminatory treatment experienced by migrant women in Korea – which are generated through the differential granting of rights by the state – the interconnections between racialisation, nationalism, class and gender were considered. Unequal wages and unfair treatment between native and migrant workers within the same economic sector indicate the racially fractionalised nature of the working class in Korea. Furthermore, this study has shown that the gender is not an 'additional base' of structural division, but a concurrent base along with racialisation. Migrant women are racialised and sexualised in the labour market. As seen in Chapter 5, a clear example of gendered and racialised practices in Korea is the case in which phenotypical difference and gender are decisive factors in the employability of migrant workers in the service sector.

It is also important to consider institutional racism. The case study of Korea demonstrates that the practices of the nation-state naturalise the hegemony of one collectivity to the exclusion of the 'other'. The Korean nation-state is 'an imagined political community', which is based on a mythical unity constituted by the myth of 'common origin' and shared 'pure blood'. Ambiguities and contradictions in the political rhetoric of ethnic homogeneity in Korea are clearly reflected in the politicisation of ethnic Korean migrants from China. While in the nationalist discourse the Korean-Chinese are considered as part of the Korean ethnic community sharing 'blood' and 'ancestry', as migrant workers they are located in a disadvantaged social, economic and political position and constructed as 'the other' in Korean society.

The boundaries of the national imagined community and the narratives of

cultural homogeneity in Korea are nevertheless challenged by the process of international migration. The country has reached a crucial juncture at which it is required to recognise the existence of diverse 'others'. The discussion of the citizenship of marriage immigrants has highlighted the extent to which the gendered and racialised process of international migration has challenged and reconfigured boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in Korean society. However, the limited citizenship rights of marriage immigrants indicate that the process of 'incorporating new people' into Korea is not progressive. The ostensible process of inclusion, through the granting citizenship to immigrant women, implies another form of exclusion and racialisation based on gender and class. The empirical data in Chapter 7 showed that the exclusive nature of Korea's citizenship rules – relying on 'blood' based criteria – limits the formal rights of immigrant women. Even when those immigrants are granted formal rights, there remain racialised and gendered limits to claim for substantive – i.e. social, economic and cultural – rights. In the context of cross-border marriage, patriarchal gender relations are deterritorialised and constructed with hierarchies of class and race. Women marriage immigrants are expected to accept and integrate themselves into the Korean culture and customs. In the patriarchal relation within the family, the hierarchical relationship between a wife and a husband becomes justified by cultural differences and is engendered by the race and class of the immigrant wife. These conjugal and family relations in the private sphere also determine women's status as citizens within the public sphere. Legal and political regulations on citizenship, which are based on normative and cultural notions of marriage, deny the immigrant woman autonomous legal agency and thereby increase the vulnerability and dependency of the woman with respect to her husband.

Furthermore, this study suggests that racist discourses and practices, which are deeply rooted in Korean society, seriously undermine the substantive citizenship of immigrant women and their children. Under Korea's rhetorical promotion of a 'multicultural society', women marriage immigrants are forced to integrate into Korean society by being 'Koreanised'. The policy towards 'a multicultural society' in Korea should therefore be regarded as an 'assimilation' project, which is closely related to a patriarchal and nationalistic ideology. The government policy measures focus only on the reproductive roles of marriage immigrants. Treated as mothers and wives of Korean citizens, these women become central to ethnic and national reproduction, as well as markers of the boundaries of collectivities. In this way, the Korean state veils the cultural identity of these immigrants and incorporates them and their children into the dominant cultural group. Without cultural recognition and respect of their substantial citizenship rights, those immigrants are deeply excluded and marginalised in Korean society.

## **II. Implications of the Study for Further Research**

Clearly, spatial dichotomies are being reconfigured in the current process of international labour migration. The *transnational* division of labour has transcended state boundaries, thereby blurring the dichotomy between 'global economy' and 'local agency'. As a result of the transnational movement of people, the core and periphery of the world system have come to co-exist within a single country and even a single metropolitan area. It is however too hasty to posit the 'deterritorialisation' of nation-states in an increasingly globalised world. This study has demonstrated that international migration has not weakened, but rather

engendered the governance of the national territories of states. Although migrants transcend spatial boundaries by crossing geographical borders, they are bound by a series of state-based legal and political controls. The strict regulatory systems associated with a border control and the domestic labour market are designed to prevent the permanent settlement of migrant workers and their families, and cultural diversity created by new ethnic groups. However, trends towards long-term residence and the permanent settlement of migrants are beginning to emerge, as seen in the Korean case. It is questionable whether many Asian countries, like Korea, can avoid repeating the precedent of the unsuccessful attempts of Western European countries to reduce migrant populations in the 1970s.

Even though many societies are now experiencing foreign cultures and a burgeoning number of migrants crossing borders for business, labour and marriage, this does not necessarily lead to a 'multicultural' society or the elimination of racialised prejudice and social bias toward migrants. The tendency towards 're-territorialisation' has become apparent in the host society. The imagination of cultural homogeneity and the naturalisation of the cultural hegemony of the dominant ethnic group have resulted in the political and social exclusion of migrants. Progressive changes will not be made, unless we confront the unjust social relations that marginalise women migrant workers who perform 'invisible work' that sustains the host country's economy and society. By untangling the multifaceted process of international migration through a gendered lens, this study may provide a starting point for change.

The migratory experiences of migrant women discussed in this study direct our attention to women's agency and empowerment, which require further research. This can begin by looking at the ways in which migrant women are constructing their

identities and resisting unequal power relations, through the negotiation of their roles and positions in the private and public spheres. As migrant women make strategic choices when making a decision to migrate, there is a great possibility that these seemingly powerless women could carve out 'spaces of control' to organise collective power to redress exploitation and inequality. The considerable number of NGOs – mostly led by religious groups – working for migrant rights in Korea indicates growing concerns in civil society with social justice for migrants. However, the empowerment of migrant women cannot be achieved without allowing these women to speak for themselves. Alliances and solidarity among NGOs, individuals and migrant women are vital for moving towards effective political action.

In addition, international migration is a gendered process shaped in multiple ways by dynamic gender relations. In order to expand our understanding of international migration with a 'gendered' lens it is important to consider how gender relations in a migration process are reconstructed and transformed in different ways by looking at both women and men. Migrant men should also be examined as gendered individuals. Gender relations shape migratory patterns and experiences of men, which are different from those of women. It is also important to explore dynamic gender relations among different migrant groups in each stage of the migratory process. Further research is therefore required to explore ways in which international migration produces new challenges and opportunities for change in both women's and men's behaviours, and changes gender relations in both countries of origin and destination.



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# Appendix

## List of Interview Participants

### 1. Profiles of Migrant Workers

| Name     | Nationality                           | Age | Period of Residence  | Current job      | Current Legal Status   | Type of Initial Entry Visa                           | Marriage Status                                 |
|----------|---------------------------------------|-----|----------------------|------------------|--|--|---|
| Bong-Sun | Korean (former nationality – Chinese) | 52  | 13 years             | Restaurant staff | Naturalised (through a marriage with a Korean citizen)                       | A family visit (F-1)                                 | Married   |
| Brenda   | Filipina                              | 37  | 11 years             | Domestic worker  | Employment permit for a domestic worker hired by foreign professionals (F-1) | Tourist (C-2)  | Married   |
| Choon-Ja | Chinese                               | 66  | 6 years              | Domestic worker  | Undocumented   | A family Visit (F-1)                                 | Married   |
| Dani     | Chinese                               | 25  | 2 years              | Waitress         | A family visit (F-1)   | Trainee (D-3) and re-entry with a family visit (F-1) | Single  |
| Hae-Hwa  | Korean (former nationality – Chinese) | 27  | 3 years              | Waitress         | Naturalised (through a marriage with a Korean citizen)                       | Residence (F-2)                                      | Married   |
| Hee-Ok   | Chinese                               | 56  | 10 years             | Domestic worker  | Undocumented   | A family visit (F-1)                                 | Married   |
| Hong Sam | Vietnamese                            | 26  | 5 years and 6 months | Factory worker   | Undocumented   | Trainee (D-3)  | Married   |
| Jenny    | Filipina                              | 34  | 14 years             | Factory worker   | Undocumented   | Business (C-2)                                       | Unmarried (cohabiting with a long-term partner) |
| Jo       | Filipina                              | 45  | 4 years and 6 months | Factory worker   | Undocumented   | Tourist (C-1)  | Married   |
| Jung-Hee | Chinese                               | 57  | 4 years              | Cleaner          | Undocumented   | A family visit (F-1)                                 | Married   |
| Lakshika | Sri Lankan                            | 27  | 3 years              | Factory worker   | Trainee (D-3)  | Trainee (D-3)  | Married   |
| Le       | Vietnamese                            | 31  | 5 years              | Factory worker   | Undocumented   | Trainee (D-3)  | Married   |
| Marcy    | Filipina                              | 31  | 6 years              | Factory worker   | Undocumented   | Trainee (D-3)  | Single  |

| Name       | Nationality | Age (years) | Period of Residence (years) | Current job                                    | Current Legal Status                          | Type of Initial Entry Visa  | Marriage Status                                 |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Myung-Hwa  | Chinese     | 22          | 2 years                     | Waitress                                       | Non-professional employment work permit (E-9) | Trainee (D-3) and re-entry with a non-professional employment work permit (E-9) | Single  |
| Nina       | Indonesian  | 41          | 2 years and 4 months        | Factory worker                                 | Non-professional employment work permit (E-9) | Tourist (C-1)   | Married   |
| Sandra     | Indonesian  | 37          | 3 years                     | Factory worker                                 | Non-professional employment work permit (E-9) | Tourist (C-2)   | Married   |
| Seok-Bok   | Chinese     | 61          | 7 years                     | Domestic worker                                | Undocumented                                  | A family visit (F-1)  | Widow   |
| Shilani    | Sri Lankan  | 30          | 7 years                     | Factory worker                                 | Undocumented                                  | Trainee (D-3)   | Unmarried (cohabiting with a long term partner) |
| Shin-Keum  | Chinese     | 55          | 4 years                     | Part-time domestic worker and restaurant staff | Undocumented                                  | A family visit (F-1)  | Married   |
| Soon-Hee   | Chinese     | 70          | 11 years                    | Domestic worker                                | Undocumented                                  | A family visit (F-1)  | Married   |
| Soon-Kuem  | Chinese     | 48          | 8 years                     | Private care worker for the elderly            | Undocumented                                  | Business (C-2)  | Married   |
| Soon-Sun   | Chinese     | 43          | 5 years and 8 months        | Part-time domestic workers and cleaner         | Undocumented                                  | Business (C-2)  | Married   |
| Thuy Duong | Vietnamese  | 29          | 8 years                     | Factory worker                                 | Undocumented                                  | Trainee (D-3)   | Married   |
| Young-Sil  | Chinese     | 55          | 6 years                     | Domestic worker                                | Undocumented                                  | Business (C-2)  | Married   |

## 2. Profiles of Marriage Immigrants

| Name      | Nationality                            | Age (years) | Years of marriage                               | Current Legal status | Number of Children         | Current job                             | Husband's job and age (years)                    |
|-----------|--|-------------|---|----------------------|----------------------------|---|--|
| Carol     | Filipina                               | 40          | 4 years   | Residence (F-2)      | Two                        | Domestic worker                         | Engineer (50)                                    |
| Geraldine | Filipina                               | 37          | 3 years   | Residence (F-2)      | Two                        | English teacher in a nursery            | Delivery man (45)                                |
| Hyang-Lim | Chinese                                | 39          | 1 year and 7 months (under divorce proceedings) | Residence (F-2)      | One (in previous marriage) | Kitchen staff in a restaurant           | Manual worker in the construction industry (50s) |
| Jogie     | Filipina                               | 27          | 2 years and 4 months                            | Residence (F-2)      | None (one miscarriage)     | Factory worker                          | Farmer (31)                                      |
| Lisa      | Korean (former nationality – Filipina) | 36          | 5 years   | Naturalised          | One                        | Factory worker                          | Dry cleaner (49)                                 |
| Marilou   | Filipina                               | 30          | 3 years   | Residence (F-2)      | None                       | Factory worker                          | Engineer (36)                                    |
| Zenaida   | Filipina                               | 28          | 2 years and 6 months                            | Residence (F-2)      | One (one miscarriage)      | Unemployed (previously domestic worker) | Parking lot assistant (40)                       |

### 3. List of Government Officials and NGO Workers

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| H-J. Jeong    | Deputy Director,<br>Family Policy Division,<br>Ministry of Gender Equality & Family |
| J. W. Hong    | Deputy Director,<br>Foreign Work-Force Policy Division,<br>Ministry of Labour       |
| T. H. Choi    | Deputy Director,<br>Human Resource Development,<br>Office of the Prime Minister     |
| Rev. G-B. Lim | Director,<br>Welfare Mission Centre for Korean-Chinese.                             |
| Rev. K-Y. Han | Director,<br>Women Migrants Human Rights Centre<br>(WMHRC)                          |
| S-H. Kang     | Deputy Director,<br>Women Migrants Human Rights Centre<br>(WMHRC)                   |