REFEREED PAPER

On 'Being Australian': Korean Migrants in 'Post-Multicultural' Australia

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Abstract

This paper reports on the findings of research into what Korean Australians thought about the process of 'becoming and being Australian', drawing on measures of social cohesion and 'Australianness'. The aim of the research was to find out what Korean Australian migrants valued or were uncomfortable with in relation to multiculturalism and processes of 'being Australian', or conformation with 'Australianness'. Based on in-depth interviews with ten and a survey of 153 members of the Korean migrant community in Sydney, data indicated that social activities and self-perception of identity effectively continue to reflect past Australian policy settings that recognised the importance of multiculturalism as both a community-based policy framework as well as a national social policy. The study found participants highly valued Korean identity, language and community and that bonds to the Korean community, limited English language competency and experiences of racism reinforced the importance of settling into a society that valued multiculturalism.

Keywords

Post-Multiculturalism; Korean Migrants; 'Being Australian'; Social Cohesion

Introduction

The political histories of multiculturalism policy in Australia and South Korea are significantly different. In South Korea, under the two divergent presidencies of Roh Moo-Hyun (2003-2008), a progressive leader, and Lee Myun-bak (2008-2013) a more right-wing leader, the Korean government was actively developing multiculturalism policies related to the education curriculum and community-based investments in multicultural family support centres (Chung 2018). During this same period, Australia was moving away from its commitment to building a national policy framework of multiculturalism. As Chung (2018) observed, in South Korea political support for multiculturalism was bolstered by right-wing forces seeking to counter left-wing notions of nationhood as akin to the 'Korean people', by creating a 'Korean nationality' for marriage migrants and their children, not just migrant workers (Chung 2018, p. 137). Further, as noted by Ahn (2013, p. 32), 'multiculturalism as a governmental policy has a strong inclination toward assimilation and social integration in South Korea', illuminating 'a different path than Western multiculturalism' which, as in the early Australian context (1970s to the early 1980s), sought to create a multiracial environment that worked against racism and toward inclusivity, in the context of a country long recognised as a nation built by migrant workers. In other words, Korean multiculturalism policy was an assimilationist approach of bringing 'racial others in the process of a nation-building project' (Ahn 2013, p. 32).

The divergent histories of multiculturalism in Australia and South Korea show how the relationship between multiculturalism policy and national identity can be strongly informed by the relationship between what drives particular governmental policies at specific points in time. It also relates to a sense of how one becomes part of a popularised national identity or adopts the nation's design for identity generated as a formal citizenship identity. It is this interrelationship between multiculturism policy and national identity that was behind research exploring views on becoming – or not becoming – the identity that fits with new societal membership or citizenship as a migrant. The primary focus of this paper is to illuminate how the Korean Australian community viewed such a transition, drawing on a study conducted in Australia's largest Korean community, in Sydney, New South Wales.

The most recent available data on Korean migrants living in Australia is from the last (2016) Australian Census. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported there were 98,775 people in Australia with Korea as country of birth, representing 0.42% of the Australian population of 23,401,892 (ABS 2016). In 2016, 38.7% of Korea-born Australians had Australian citizenship, while 60.3% did not (ABS 2016). Of 98,775 Korea-born Australians, 50.1% (49,508) lived in the Greater Sydney Greater Capital City Statistical Area (ABS 2016). The Australian Census (2016) showed an increase of 23% for Korea-born Australians living in Greater Sydney in the five years since the 2011 Australian Census (ABS 2011; 2016).

The survey reported in this paper used a modified version of the Scanlon Social Cohesion instrument (2016). Given this study's reliance on the Scanlon survey, it is important to note that the Scanlon Foundation presents a comprehensive discussion of the meaning of social cohesion, utilising a range of perspectives and sources (Scanlon Foundation Research Institute 2020). This paper recognises social cohesion as existing in a society that actively seeks to ensure well-being of all its members, where exclusion is minimised and a sense of belonging, trust and collective responsibility exists across public, economic and socio-cultural aspects of life (Scanlon Foundation Research Institute 2020). The Foundation points out that social cohesion is not synonymous with multiculturalism, rather multiculturalism is one project in a socially cohesive society. A version of the Scanlon study has been repeated 15 times across Australia annually from 2007 to 2019 (Markus 2019) and found that despite strong views of multiculturalism as 'good for Australia', over the last six years 67% of participants in the survey believed that people migrating to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like Australians and a majority did 'not support government funding of cultural maintenance' (Markus 2019, p. 70). These specific findings point to a key objective in this paper, which is to explore the idea of what it is to 'be' Australian within a migrant community. The second objective

is to analyse the data from both the survey results and the one-to-one interviews to promote understanding of the Korean community's sense of 'being Australian' and their links to multiculturalism in Australian society.

Being Australian

Popular views of 'being Australian' and prevailing attitudes to immigration have fluctuated and changed over time but have consistently had a profound impact on political credibility and social policy responses. This study set out to answer research questions about challenges for migrants to adopt a sense of nation via an Australian identity. Brahm Levey (2019a, p. 98) explained Australian multiculturalism as 'an expression of a broader liberal nationalist approach to national identity, citizenship and cultural diversity that emerged after decades of ethnic nationalist (racial exclusion) and then cultural nationalist (assimilationist) politics'. In such an approach Anglo-Australian institutions and culture firmly represent the basis of Australian society, but this privilege is curtailed somewhat as equal citizenship rights and opportunities are extended to cultural minorities (Brahm Levey 2019a, p. 98), particularly to migrants rather than Australia's Indigenous peoples. More recent Australian studies (Elias 2020; Markus 2016, 2019; Mansouri et al. 2017) found high levels of support for multiculturalism and diversity, despite the contradiction between acceptance of diversity and support for harsh policies towards certain minority groups (Gaita 2011; Markus 2016). In a national online survey (1004 participants) exploring the relationship between multiculturalism and interculturalism, Mansouri and Modood (2020, p. 11) found a sustained relevance and positive role for multiculturalism 'for all society, as perceived not only by migrants and their descendants but also by the Anglo-Celtic majority of Australians'. However, they also found that white Australians saw a need to revise and update multiculturalism to overcome perceived persisting challenges around social integration, racism and discrimination (Mansouri and Modood 2020).

Historically, wide political support for multiculturalism in Australia was characterised by multicultural policies of the 1970s and early 1980s. This was undermined by the Liberal/National Party (LNP) Coalition when Prime Minister Howard's 'government lent multiculturalism nominal support until 2007' and Prime Minister Gillard's minority Labor government 'reinvigorated multiculturalism policy and programs between 2011 and 2013' (Brahm Levey 2019a, p. 99). With the re-election of an LNP Coalition government in 2013, it was shelved again under a conservative Prime Minister. Subsequently, largely due to surges of asylum seekers coming to Australian shores and the wider phenomenon of terrorism, there was an escalation of debates about racism, multiculturalism and freedom of speech that became omnipresent in public and political discourses and social policy outcomes. This led to migrant communities being targeted with imperatives to 'be Australian'. This was explicit in its requirements that all migrants to Australia should abandon other political loyalties and become part of 'Team Australia' (Rajkhowa 2015). In 2014 this was exemplified by the then Prime Minister Tony Abbott in an overt construction of 'Australianness' through a notion of 'Team Australia' when he claimed that 'everyone has got to put this country, its interests, its values and its people first, and you don't migrate to this country unless you want to join our team' (Rajkhowa 2015). Following a party leadership change, the Turnbull LNP Coalition government went further and announced a '"post-multiculturalism" multicultural policy' in 2017, predicated on the assumption that Australian multiculturalism 'had done its assigned job and is no longer needed' (Brahm Levey 2019a, p. 99).

Although diversity of culture in Australia is a fixed aspect of its social landscape, particularly in large urban centres, it has undergone a political marginalisation under the current trend of more nationalistic governments. The idea of 'Team Australia' is emblematic of negative attitudes towards multiculturalism and places conformity above diversity. In 2017, the then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull also clamped down on access to working visas and reoriented access to citizenship towards a 'nation first' stance, including requiring fluency in English language (Kwok and Khoo 2017). By using the concept of the

'Australian family' Turnbull invoked a presumptive, dominant idea of the Australian family or what Kwok and Khoo describe as 'middle Australia', which they observe, 'is the preoccupation of public opinion' (2017, p. 280).

Scholars have made clear links between racism specifically targeting 'Asian Australians' and notions of what it is to be part of dominant Australian identity (Kwok and Khoo 2017). This is clearly linked to the meaning of multiculturalism in Australia as Kwok and Khoo observed:

> **In a previous era, critiques of multiculturalism were framed by their ambivalence to cultural difference. Currently we are looking not just at an intensification of ambivalence but the legitimisation of political discourses that are explicitly hostile to difference itself** (2017, p. 279).

Further, research by Kamp et al. on attitudes to cultural diversity and multiculturalism showed strong support for cultural diversity but revealed a prevailing contradictory assimilationist attitude supporting that 'people from racial, ethnic, cultural and religious minority groups should be behave more like "mainstream Australians"' (2017, p. 69).

Tranter and Donoghue (2007), in reviewing the scholarship on Australian identity, found consistent reoccurring values of Australian 'nation'. These included Australia's British heritage of white settlement, pioneers, bushrangers, ANZAC servicemen, post-World War Two immigration (of Europeans) and contemporary sporting heroes (Tranter and Donoghue 2007). The existence and culture of Australia's First Peoples was not present in the list, although it could be argued that in the 15 years since that research was done there has been some evolution of the idea that Indigenous culture is present in Australian identity. In a survey on national identity, Tranter and Donoghue (2007) used historical figures and myths surrounding them as a way of exploring Australianness, relying on an historically grounded idea of being Australian. They argue that history constitutes national memory and other research has confirmed that people, places, values and events defined as 'Australian' were aligned to historical experiences and understandings of the Australian nation (Tranter and Donoghue 2007).

Drawing on a national survey conducted twice in two years, Jones (2000) examined notions of national identity in the context of a multicultural society in Australia and found there were two dominant dimensions of Australian identity: 'Australian nativism' and 'affective civic culture' (Jones 2000, p. 178). The key distinctions between the two dimensions were that nativists were born in Australia or had lived there for a long time and were generally Christian, while the civic culture dimension 'required a commitment to Australian laws and institutions and a subjective feeling of being Australian' (Jones 2000, p. 178). It should be noted that Jones' research was conducted during the conservative Howard government years (1996 to 2007) when there was a visible anti-multiculturalism re-emerging. Prime Minister Howard rejected the term multiculturalism and dismantled the functions of the former Office of Multicultural Affairs – which had already moved under Prime Minister Keating from a division of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs – immediately after being elected (Jupp 2005).

Multiculturalism and the Korean Australian context

There has been very limited research conducted on the Korean diaspora in Australia, as with other distinct, recent waves of migrants to Australia (Noble 2017). More recent studies have examined work and employment experiences, gender specific experiences of Korean migrants (Lee 2013; Choi et al. 2015; Dalton and Jung 2019) and the psychological impact of acculturation on Korean Australian families (Kim et al. 2020). What appears to be a consistent finding of research on Koreans in Australia, is their highly valued 'Koreanness' and the importance of a Korean community. The most relevant study to the research reported here was David Hundt's (2019) exploration of some similar issues to those in focus in

this study. Hundt focused on political and social experiences of Australian citizenship for Koreans, one of Australia's fastest growing immigrant communities. In analysing census data from 2016, he determined that Koreans have lengthy residencies without taking up citizenship and linked it to relative newness having mostly arrived within the 21st Century, late compared to other Asian migrant waves in the 1970s (Hundt 2019). This and other aspects of his analysis of the census data, such as relatively low-income range and professional employment, are consistent with the cohort of participants in the study reported here.

There are no prior Australian studies that explicitly explore a personal connection to national identity and its links to multiculturalism. Noble (2017) noted that there has been some research about the Korean Australian community focusing on language learning and Korean Australian enterprise and that Korean Australians appear to typify a 'model minority', a term often used to frame discussions of East Asian migration (Noble 2017, p. 2). The term 'model minority' is borrowed from United States public discourses recognising East Asian migrants' notable social and economic success (Noble 2017, p. 2). The reported study supports Korean Australians as a 'model minority', but their success appears contingent on capacity to be connected to other Koreans for employment and social ties. This is similar to the findings of a study conducted in New Zealand where it was found that Koreans had not felt 'at home' and the majority had turned to other Korean migrants for economic and social support (Morris et al. 2007). This was attributed to high levels of harassment, anti-Asian racism and an absence of inclusive, multicultural policies (Morris et al. 2007).

Research Methodology

The aim of the study was to find out what Korean Australian migrants living in Sydney, in Australia for twelve months or longer, thought about the extent to which they had adopted an identity of 'being Australian' in a post-multicultural policy context. The study, 'Being Australian? A Study of Korean Australians' Social, Economic and Political Participation in Australian Society' was funded by a grant from The Academy of Korean Studies. Conducted with approval from the University of Sydney Human Ethics Committee (Protocol Number 2014/995), the research employed a mixed methods research design. This included using a modified version of the Scanlon Foundation 'Mapping Social Cohesion' Survey Instrument (Markus, 2016), that measured levels of social inclusion, covering its comprehensive dimensions of: economic security; social cohesion; access to social services; political participation, and; overall satisfaction with life. The survey included 75 questions in six sections. The largest number of questions (17) were in the "Cultural Life and Identity" section. As the survey design was a wide-ranging social exploration, via the social cohesion survey instrument, the focus of the data presented in this paper is limited to the questions relevant to identity and ideas related to 'being Australian'.

Criteria for developing the modified survey questions were derived from the literature and historical understanding of Australian identity (Jones 2000; Tranter and Donoghue 2007). For example:

- To what extent do you celebrate Australia Day, such as by attending public events on the day?
- To what extent do you follow Australian entertainment or drama on television?
- To what extent do you follow Australian sports?

They also draw on research that supports the public idea of 'being Australian', found in the Scanlon surveys over 15 years and other similar research (Gaita 2011; Markus 2016; Markus 2019; Mansouri and Modood 2020) as well as ideas promoted by political leaders (Kamp et al. 2017; Kwok and Khoo 2017). Each dimension comprised relevant quantifiable items, allowing for relative comparison between dimensions.

Survey participants were invited to participate via members of previous studies conducted by the Sydney-based Hoju Research Centre. As the study relied on a purposive sampling process (non-random), participants were familiar with the broad objectives of doing research having participated in prior studies.

The research manager/assistant was a Korean Australian migrant from the Hoju Research Centre. Survey participants provided informed consent regarding the collection and stated research purposes of the data.

The qualitative component of the research comprised ten face-to-face interviews, with 8 open-ended questions seeking views on social integration and identity. Recruitment of interview participants was via a question in the survey asking about interest in participating in a follow-up interview after completing the survey. Ten participants from diverse demographic backgrounds were then selected for the qualitative cohort. The semi-structured interviews were conducted under the protocols of ethics approval by the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee, complying with principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality. Each participant was provided with an information sheet about the study and a consent form that they were requested to sign, which indicated they could withdraw from the interview at any point and committed to ensuring their participation would be kept anonymous through the use of pseudonyms. Both the survey instrument and the interview questions were translated into Korean by a certified translator and completed in Korean by the participants. The interview responses were translated into English prior to analysis.

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Complying with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition, Korean 'migrant' refers to those who were born in Korea and have been (or are expected to be) residing in Australia for a period of 12 months or more (92% of the participants were citizens or permanent residents). The table below outlines the gender, age, period of residency and age at immigration of the research survey participants. All survey participants are first generation migrants, and this was indicated as a requirement for participation during the sampling process.

Table 1.   Characteristics of survey participants (%)

The Korean-Australian community in this study (*n* = 153)	
Gender	
Male	38.6
Female	61.4
Age	
29 and under	8.5
From 30 to 39	36.6
From 40 to 49	41.8
50 and over	12.4
No response	0.7
Residence in Australia	
5 years and under	12.4
6 to 10 years	38.6
11 to 15 years	19.6
20 years and over	28.8
No response	0.7

Table 1.   continued

The Korean-Australian community in this study (*n* = 153)	
Age at immigration	
Younger than 20	16.3
From 20 to 29	35.9
From 30 to 35	29.4
36 and over	17.6
No response	0.7

In the 2011 ABS Census for Greater Sydney, 46.1% of the Korean migrant population were male and 53.9% were female; for the 2016 Census 46.5% male and 53.5% female (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020). There was a limitation introduced by the purposive sampling process, as the sample displays a different gender ratio compared to the population.

The interview participants' characteristics were generally aligned with the survey sample. The interviews included approximately the same ratio of men and women as the survey, with ages between 23 and 45 years and a mean age of 36 years. Age at immigration was collected in the survey using a multiple-choice option between four ranges. The range of tenure of Australian residency was 20 years and the mean residency period was 12.3 years. The earliest year of arrival to Australia was 1988 and most recent was 2008. All interview participants are first generation migrants. The survey data is de-identified, responses were not recorded as linked observations per subject and are stored in summary frequency tables. The interview participants were given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

Table 2.   Characteristics of interview participants (*n* = 10)

	Gender	Age	Residence in Australia (years)	Age at immigration
Ms. Choo	Female	38	7	31
Mrs. Ha	Female	45	12	33
Mrs. Yoo	Female	38	15	23
Mr. Choi	Male	37	7	30
Mr. Seo	Male	28	18	10
Mrs. Park	Female	36	7	29
Miss. Jun	Female	23	16	7
Mrs. Lee	Female	38	26	12
Mr. Oh	Male	39	6	33
Mr. Kim	Male	41	9	32

MARGIN OF ERROR

The margin of error for inferential observations regarding the Korean migrant population in the Greater Sydney Greater Capital City Statistical Area (GCCSA) has been calculated at 7.91% for the survey data at a 95% CI. The same margin of error result is produced after rounding when using both the 2011 and 2016 area populations recorded in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census. The survey was conducted in 2014, therefore the same margin of error can be assumed.

The margin of error approaches 8%. It should be noted, however, that for most survey question results, the difference in frequencies for the majority result against other results is more substantial than the variation to results that could be introduced by the margin of error. A warning is given for the results where the margin of error ranges would affect inference of the majority-recorded characteristic.

Research Findings

SURVEY

The survey questionnaire used six thematic sections derived from the 'Mapping Social Cohesion' Survey Instrument (Markus 2016), including: Economic Life; Social Life; Political Life; Cultural Life and Identity; Life Satisfaction and Demographic Information. As the focus of reporting data from the study in this paper is on 'Australianness', only relevant aspects of the data are discussed here. Other survey questions examined in this analysis relate to experiences of racism or discrimination, which are considered relevant environmental factors in the contemporary Australian context of post-multicultural policy.

Economic and Social Well-being

Based on the economic and social life sections of the survey, the respondents were generally fairly well off, had food security and capacity to pay for emergencies or contingencies and strong social networks that could assist financially. However, many respondents struggled to purchase education for their children and only half owned or were buying their own home. Although 81% of participants had been employed or self-employed, many respondents disagreed or were neutral regarding the ease of a finding a job that they wanted (Figure 1).
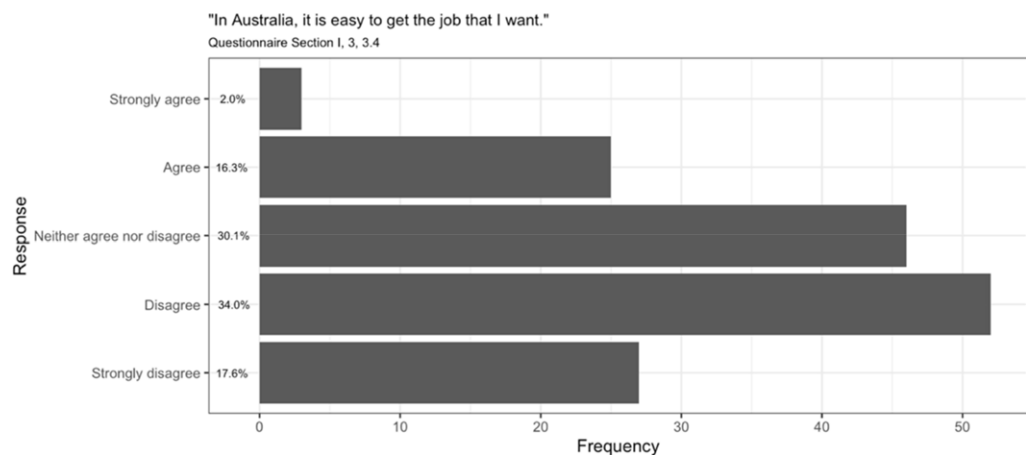

Figure 1.   Survey Responses: Access to employment

In terms of social activities, very few (10%) of the respondents visited people of other cultural identities or had them visit on a somewhat or very often basis ([Figure 2](#)). Whereas around 60% of respondents had attended a community centre or local school event at least once in the past 12 months. Around a third of respondents had volunteered in the past 12 months – mostly in the preparation of food or in school 'tuck shops' (informal, parent-based school food retail).
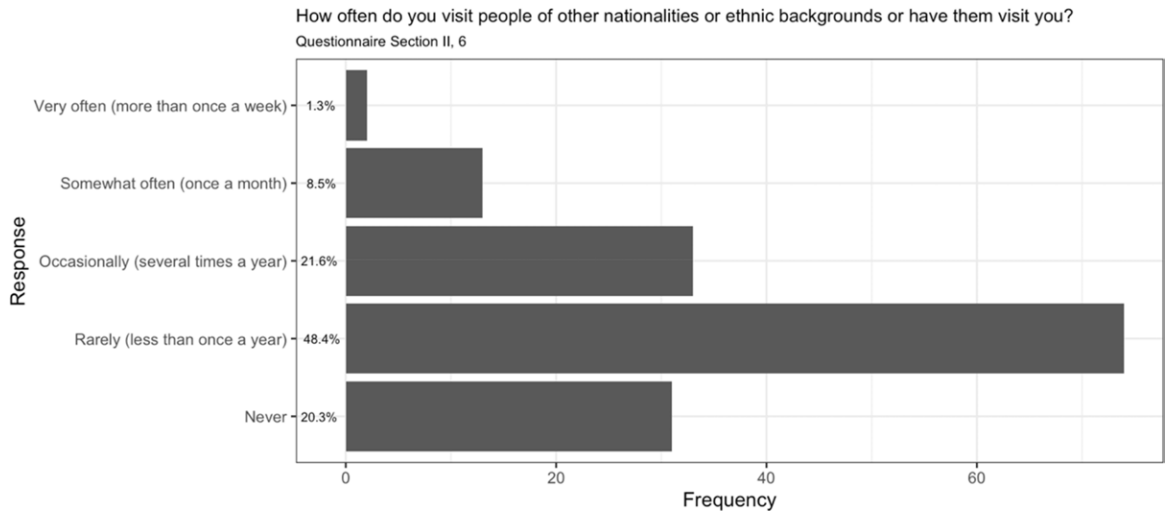

Figure 2.   Survey Responses: Social contact with people of other backgrounds

English Language

A significant finding related to the level of English language competency. Only 30% of respondents indicated that they spoke English well or very well. Whereas 68% indicated that they only spoke a little English or 'neither little nor well'. A small group – 2.6% – spoke no English.
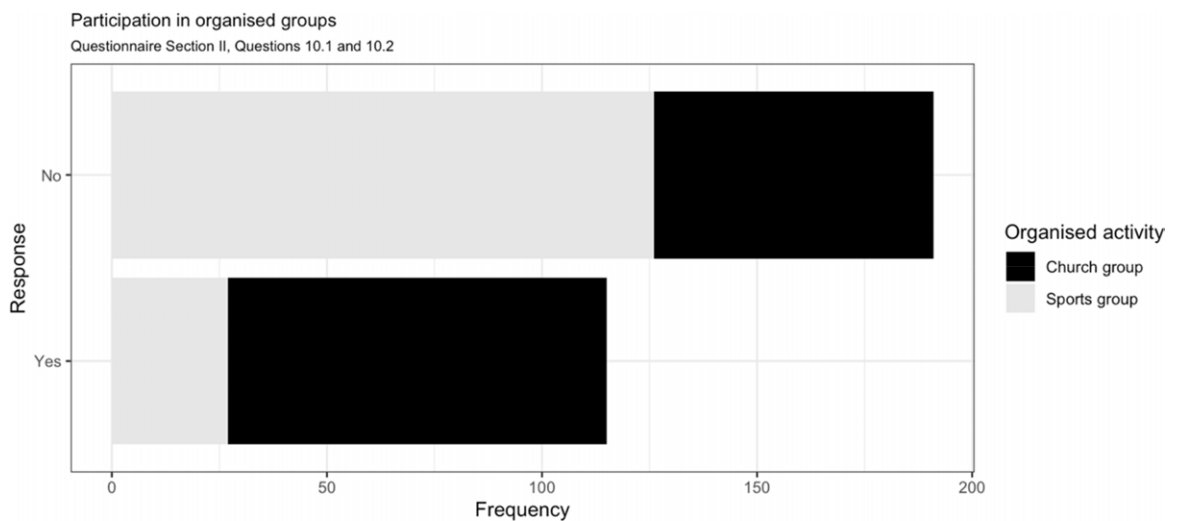

Figure 3.   Survey Responses: Organised community activity participation

Sport, Membership and Services

Less than 20% of respondents were part of a sporting club. This is compared with an average of 40% of the wider adult population between 25 and 54 years old (Australian Government 2017, p. 11). Whereas nearly 60% were a member of a church group. This is compared to only 20% of the wider population being active in their religion (McCrindle 2017, p. 16). In terms of accessing health, childcare and leisure services, respondents were generally willing to go out-of-area and to non-Korean providers. A preference for 'Korean services if possible' was strongest for healthcare (Figure 4).
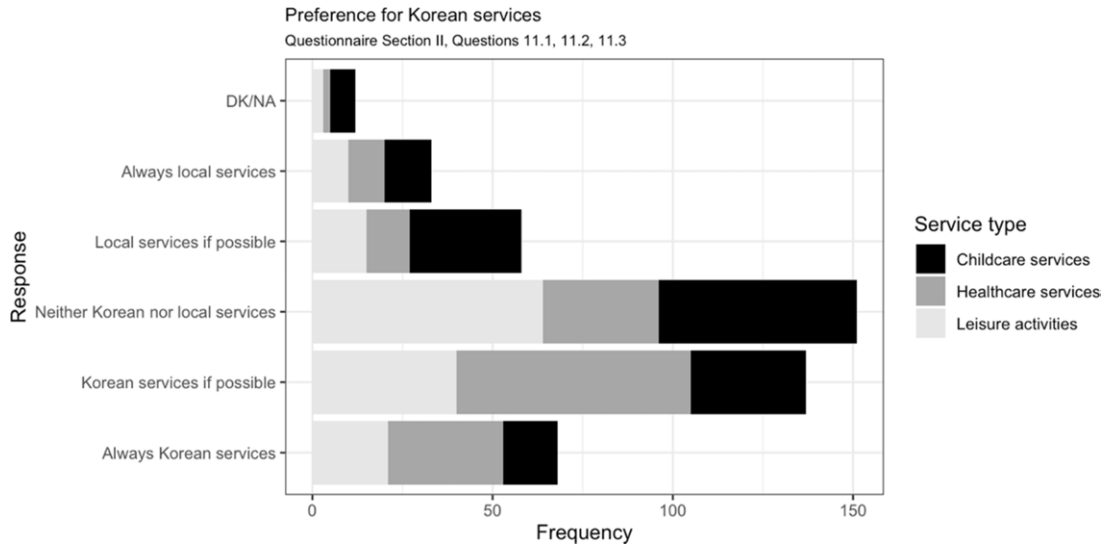

Figure 4.   Survey Responses: Utilisation of childcare, healthcare and leisure services – preference for local or Korean-operated facilities

Discrimination and Racism

When asked about experiencing racist remarks or discrimination over the past 12 months 38% said yes and 61% said no. For the 58 respondents that had reported experiencing racist or discriminatory
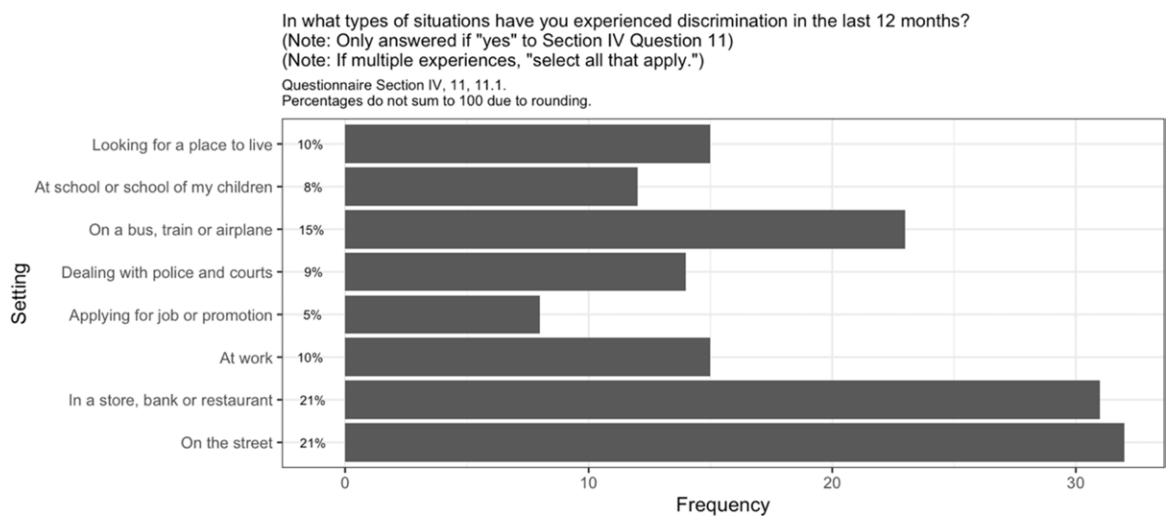

Figure 5.   Survey Responses: Reported settings of discrimination

behaviour over the past 12 months, they tended to have had more than one experience of discrimination in the period. This was demonstrated in the follow-up question for 'yes' respondents which then asked them to identify the situation(s) of discrimination and allowed the selection of multiple options for all settings that were applicable. These 58 respondents collectively experienced at least 150 events involving racism or discrimination. The average 'yes' respondent had experienced at least two instances of racism or discrimination in the preceding 12 months. The setting or situation share as a percentage of total discriminatory events (150 events, experienced by 58 respondents) is presented in Figure 5.

The most common situations in which discrimination occurred were 'on the street' and 'in a store, bank or restaurant' (both 21% with rounding). The least frequent situation reported was when 'applying for a job or promotion,' while 'at work' and 'looking for a place to live' were each less than half the proportional share of the public space and business settings (at 10% each). Meanwhile the second largest share for discriminatory setting was for public transport and air travel (15%).

Identity

Regarding self-identity, a limited number of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I see myself as an Australian' (20.9%), while a majority saw themselves as Korean (89.5% recording 'agree' or 'strongly agree' responses). Out of the survey respondents, 24.2% 'strongly' disagreed with seeing themselves as Australian – a similar share to 'disagree' (28.1%) and 'neither agree nor disagree' (25.5%). For the statement 'I see myself as part of the local community,' the 'agree' response was the largest proportion at 43.1%, followed by 'neither agree nor disagree' (35.9%).
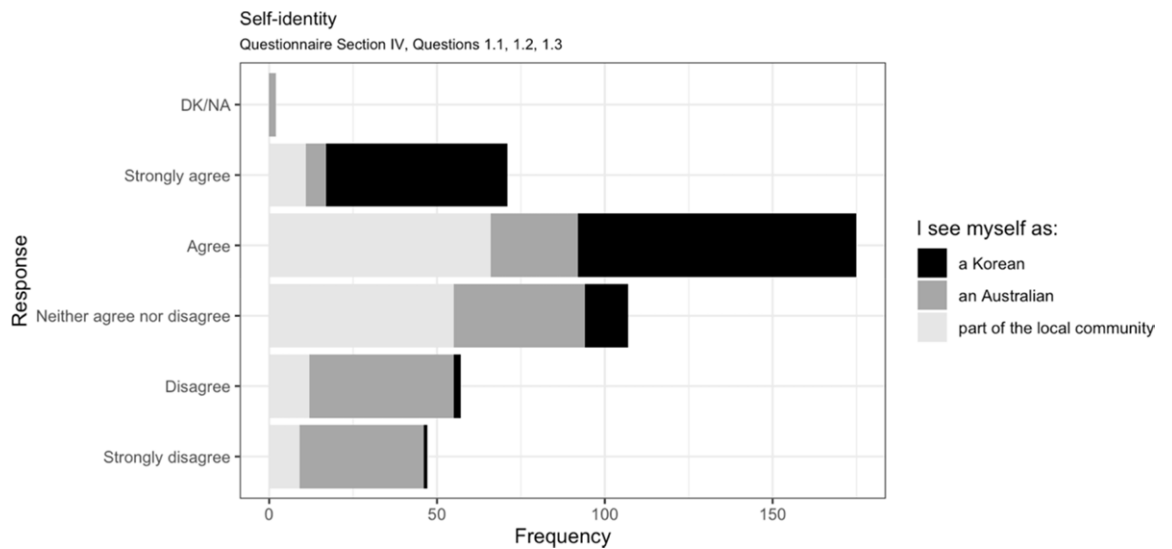

Figure 6.   Survey Responses: Self-identity

Satisfaction with Life in Australia

More than half of the survey respondents were either somewhat or much happier in Australia than they would be in Korea (54%), while a large proportion recorded a 'somewhat' or 'very satisfied' level of overall satisfaction with life in Australia (70%).
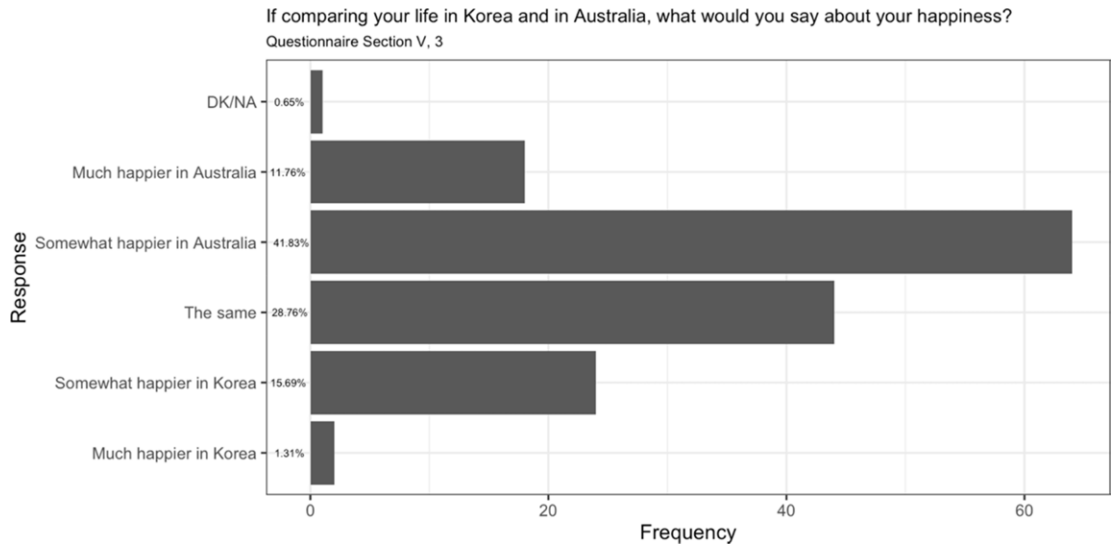
If comparing your life in Korea and in Australia, what would you say about your happiness?
Questionnaire Section V, 3

Figure 7. Survey Responses: Happiness in Australia compared to Korea

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with life in Australia?
Questionnaire Section V, 6
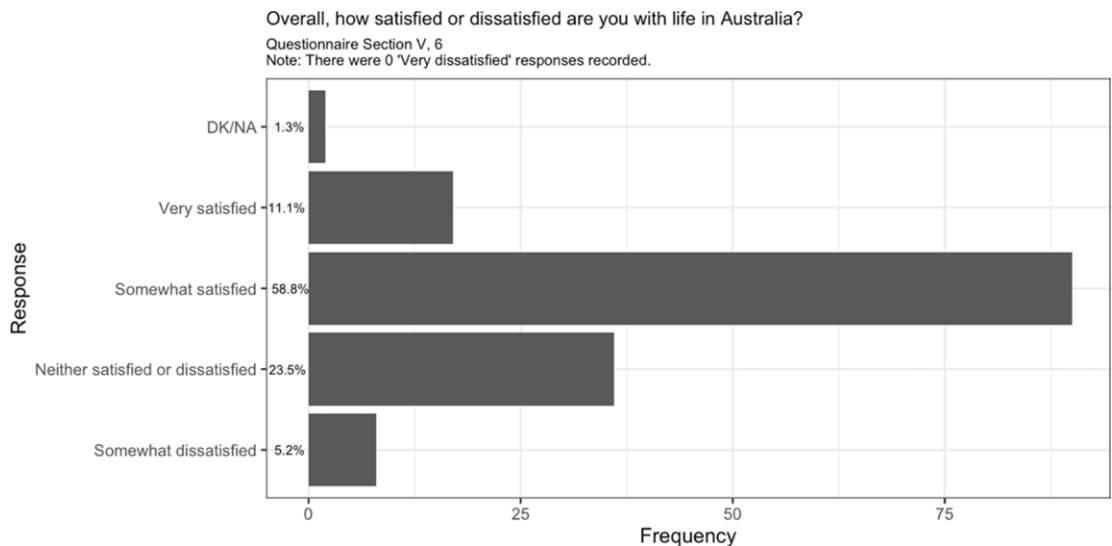Note: There were 0 'Very dissatisfied' responses recorded.

Figure 8. Survey Responses: Satisfaction with life in Australia

INTERVIEWS

The interview data was processed manually, with Korean language responses directly translated into English language. It was determined that data saturation was satisfactorily achieved for the research area by the ten interviews conducted. However, the following limitations regarding the interviews are acknowledged. Though a residency period of less than five years represented 12.4% of survey respondents (see Table 1), none of the interview subjects were in this range for length of residency in Australia – the minimum residency period among interview subjects was six years. Additionally, though participants that were aged 36 or older at the time of immigration represented 17.6% of survey respondents, no interview subject was in this range for age at immigration. The maximum age at immigration among interview subjects was 33.

Despite the acknowledged demographic gaps in comparison to the sample captured in the survey, it was determined that data saturation was reached given that no new themes would emerge from further interviews. The ten interview transcripts demonstrated substantially shared coding and a strong repetition of themes. A spectrum of differing value-assessments was well-covered among the ten subjects on key study themes such as identity and citizenship. An expansion to additional interview subjects was unlikely to have contributed new themes that were relevant to the study's aims. The interview responses demonstrate three key themes: the English language barrier and its implications; maintaining Korean cultural and national identity and, emphasis on personal responsibility regarding integration into Australian 'multicultural' society. While there was the same median and mean age when sub-setting for male and female participants, the female interview participants (n=6) had generally experienced longer tenures as residents of Australia compared to the male participants (n=4).

Reflecting a grassroots sense of multiculturalism, one participant's comments showed a positive attitude in her perception of Australia as a multicultural society:

> So, I understand the struggles that Korean people have when they try to adjust to the Australian lifestyle. But the thing with Australian lifestyle is not all about people with white skin who just sit in cafes and speak English. Australia's a very multicultural country. Embracing the multiculturalism and socialising with people from other backgrounds will really help you just settle into Australia. I think having a very relaxed attitude and open mind is the most important thing. Not being so prejudiced and… Koreans have the tendency to be very quickly judgmental. They carry a lot of prejudice and discrimination. That's just their culture and their natures that can't really help. But in a country like Australia where there is a huge cultural diversity, that sort of attitude is not really healthy (Miss Jun, 23, female, resident of Australia for 16 years).

One participant, noting that mainstream Australian society did not recognise or particularly care about the Korean nation or culture as a distinct entity in Asia, likened the isolation caused by this invisibility to a form of disability, in fact figuratively relating this status to a 'language disability':

> Because of that, Korean people are given less opportunity to get into the mainstream society, economically, politically and socially. In general, Korean people are not really recognized by Australian people, and the life is difficult. They are like people with language disability (Mr Kim, 41, male, resident of Australia for 9 years).

One interviewee did indicate that class rather than language may have been an obstacle to socialisation outside the Korean community, and that this would be the fact for migrants in Korea as well:

> I think social status is also a factor. While people say there is no high and low job, it would be easier (to make friends with local people) if I was in a higher class. It would be difficult for people who work at the bottom. This seems the same whether it may be in Korea or in Australia (Mrs Yoo, 38, female, resident of Australia for 15 years).

Responding to the interviewer's question 'Are you proud of living with a Korean background?' Miss Jun said:

> I am immensely proud of the fact that I have another culture. That has sort of helped me understand other people better. Having another culture means I am more open to other ideas and more exposed to things. I don't think I have ever been disappointed or ashamed of my background or my heritage (Miss Jun, 23, female, resident of Australia for 16 years).

The ambiguity of feeling Australian was exemplified by the response of one participant who had migrated as a twelve-year old child and had married a more recently migrated man but had lived in Australia for 26 years:

> I am half. No, I am one third Australian, and two thirds Korean. Actually, it falls short of the half. I thought myself as an Australian when I came here first and up until I was a university student. I mean I thought I have to be like an Australian. But my mind has changed a lot with marriage. Now I am a two thirds Korean (Mrs Lee, 38, female, resident of Australia for 26 years).

Mrs Lee explained her position by describing how excluded she felt throughout high school, which she felt was discriminatory due to her racial/ethnic difference to the majority of students in her school and later at university.

Discussion

On measures seen to be key to 'Australianness', the survey and interview data revealed indicators suggesting a lack of participation or engagement with wider dominant Australian culture. The findings supported the following themes that emerged from the data: English language as a barrier, strong adherence to Korean identity and high engagement in the Korean community in every-day life. Overall findings suggest that Korean identity is central in the largest Korean migrant community in Australia, that limitations in English language affect social participation and work engagement in dominant Anglo-European Australian society and that there is widespread experience of racism in public places.

Nearly 30% of the survey participants indicated that they only spoke 'a little' English and the largest response to the English language capacity question was 'neither little nor well.' Given that nearly 30% of survey participants had lived in Australia for 20 years, and over 58% had lived in Australia for between 6 and 15 years, this indicated a possible barrier to belonging, due to respondents probably not being able to engage in the many aspects of Australian society where English is not only the dominant language but the required language. Given the emphasis on English language competency in recent migration requirements, this factor formally places many respondents outside the current policy of how to 'be Australian'.

Data on experiences of discrimination suggest that it is in wider public life that Koreans tend to experience racism compared to a work context. Given the number of respondents preferring to use Korean services (63%) and the substantial group who found work through Korean contacts (52%), the settings identified with greater numbers of reported racist and discriminatory incidents may be those in which respondents were less able to choose to interact with Korean service providers and businesses or to participate in contexts where other patrons would be Korean. An exception to this association would be the 'school or school of my children' setting, which recorded a relatively low share as a setting (8%) for social interactions. Korean services would be a rare option for schooling and respondents and their children would typically be enrolled at English language medium of instruction primary and secondary schools and tertiary institutions. An explanation of this would be different behavioural expectations and possible greater scrutiny of discriminatory behaviour in education sector facilities. Though the predominant finding in other studies mentioned above was that most Australians support a multicultural society, the high rate of discrimination experienced in public places suggests a general racism toward Koreans and would significantly add to the challenge of 'being Australian'.

The survey indicated that respondents generally preferred Korean-operated services or leisure activities in the community, or, when not using Korean services, they were usually not inclined to use the services of their local area. The response option 'Neither Korean nor local services' was indicative of use of services that were neither based in the respondent's local area nor Korean. There was a high preference for Korean services in categories such as healthcare and leisure. Of the three categories, healthcare recorded the greatest preference towards Korean services. This may be due to the importance of communication and the ability of a Korean healthcare provider to interact in Korean language. Relatively speaking there was less of a preference towards Korean services when it came to selecting childcare services. When aggregated across the three service categories, the option 'Korean services if possible' was only slightly less than 'Neither

Korean nor local services' (137 versus 150 responses), suggesting that even when Korean services were not necessarily used, the preference possibly remained but was weighed up against other factors affecting respondents (such as a perception of quality).

Direct questions in the survey about national identity showed that 90% of respondents identified as Korean and only 21% saw themselves as Australian, which demonstrates the importance of Korean identity and a lack of integrated belonging. This points to the value of multiculturalism policy that facilitates communities to settle within their origin identity, at least among first generation migrants.

Supporting the broader findings of the survey, the interview participants' views also provide evidence for the case that a key part of their satisfaction with life in Australia lies specifically in their ability to maintain their Korean identity through Korean community, services and cultural presence in Sydney. Even for the participants with the longest Australian residency, including from childhood, there was no sense that they had integrated or assimilated into being Australian only – instead articulating either conflicting or complementary heterogenous national identities.

There were three dominant themes that emerged from the face-to-face interviews: the language barrier and its social and economic implications, maintaining Korean cultural and national identity and, a strong emphasis on personal responsibility regarding integration, or lack thereof, into Australian society, which multiple respondents explicitly described as multicultural.

All of the interviews were conducted in Korean language and lack of confidence with English language skills was a recurring theme amongst interviewees. Almost every participant raised this topic in their interview, framing it as a social and cultural barrier and a significant disadvantage in the job market for both men and women. Despite experience and tertiary qualifications—including domestically-awarded degrees— the lack of confident conversational English was seen as a significant impediment. Information Technology professional Mr Kim (41, male, resident of Australia for 9 years), noted that 'native English speakers seem to be given priority without extensive work experience'. The language barrier was also seen to narrow the possible options for unskilled jobs. Mrs Ha (45, female, resident of Australia for 12 years) noted that outside Korean-operated businesses 'I am not sure if there are jobs for Koreans who can't speak English'. Overall, participants saw English language proficiency as a decisive barrier to participation in a social life outside of Korean communities. Mr. Oh (39, male, resident of Australia for 6 years) remarked: 'In order for Korean people to be better involved in Australian society, they need to be better at English at a personal level. I think language barrier accounts for 90% of not being able to get in'. The social and economic dimensions of this insularity are intertwined.

For almost all interview participants, 'Australianness' was an inaccessible, uncertain or distant quality that did not have personal resonance as an identity. Only the participant who had arrived in Australia at seven years old, Miss Jun (Miss Jun, 23, female, resident of Australia for 16 years), had a personal outlook of participating in both Australian and Korean cultures. Her stated identity comfortably reconciled simultaneous cultural influences, and therefore had some sense of her 'Australianness' sitting alongside her 'Koreanness'. Despite residency periods ranging from six to 26 years and in 38% cases having Australian citizenship, when asked about how Australian they felt, most interviewees indicated they were around 30% to 50% Australian, although, as noted, Miss Jun felt that she was simultaneously '100% Australian and another 100% Korean'.

The interviews allowed for some more detailed insights into Korean Australian political perspectives. While multiple participants maintained a disengagement from political figures and parties – nominally consistent with the survey results – the interview process also allowed for political views to emerge. Where a political party preference was identified, it was always the Labor party and positive comments were made about Australia's welfare state and it was observed that conditions and benefits for migrants would be less favourable under a Liberal/National Party Coalition government.

The interview responses showed evidence of a higher level of political engagement than the survey data indicated around these issues. The attitudes expressed by interviewees was both progressive and pro-welfare but was also self-reliant, rational and pragmatic. All reflections on barriers to participation in Australian life embodied either self-criticism or criticism of the Korean migrant community (including, for example, around not improving their English and reticence to visit Australian acquaintances when invited). The only direct criticism of specific multicultural policy was made by Mrs Park, citing frustration that English language education was only subsidised after obtaining citizenship, not on receipt of permanent residency: 'I haven't been entitled to study either. Now [having obtained citizenship] I am entitled to 510 hours as part of the AMEP (Adult Migrants English Program) …without this benefit, I would still not be studying now', noting that for seven years she had desired to learn English and would have done so had it been affordable for their household. This reiterated the recurrent theme of the importance of spoken English education, a strong aspect of public and political expectations of being Australian.

Throughout the survey data there is a strong suggestion that being free to be Korean, to engage in Korean activities and to identify with Korean culture are significant factors in satisfaction with settlement in Australia, rather than being able to embrace and adopt what is seen as 'Australianness.'

The research was conducted only in the Greater Sydney region (the largest Korean migrant community in Australia) and involved a relatively small sample size of survey participants (153) and ten in-depth interviews. The size of the study is an acknowledged limitation. A national study was originally designed but the grant received enabled a local study only. A further limitation acknowledged is that the chief investigator is not a Korean language speaker and organisation and analysis of data was completed using translations provided by certified translators. Interpretation of some of the nuances of remarks in the interview transcripts may have been limited by this process.

Conclusion

Drawing on the dominant and historically-informed concept of 'Australianness', research reported in this paper provides insights into how some well-settled Korean migrants view being 'Australian'. Based on study data, the Korean community in Sydney is well-established, holds onto a strong Korean identity and holds views of a strong sense of community-based multiculturalism, despite the 'post-multiculturalism' federal policy context. Despite a strong sense of still 'being Korean' rather than 'being Australian', the participants in this study seemingly had made what they self-evaluated to be a good choice to migrate to Australia and were mostly happy that they had done so. However, self-assessed limited English language proficiency appears to be a factor in the lack of engagement in culturally Australian activities. Limited English language proficiency appeared to restrict employment choices for respondents and this could mean low job satisfaction and living on a relatively low income. It appears that Australian identity, as part of what Jones described as 'affective civic culture' (Jones 2000, p. 178), is difficult to obtain, especially when it comes to developing a 'subjective feeling of being Australian' (Jones 2000, p. 178).

The knowledge produced in this study is valuable in relation to the place of multiculturism as a core social and structural organiser for migrant communities. The findings suggest that despite successive federal governments' post-multiculturalism policies, a 'de facto' community-based multiculturalism continues to exist in diverse communities. It also provides insight that may encourage a policy shift back to positioning Australia as a positively multicultural nation, which includes this aspect as part of the construction of Australian national identity. This appears to be a strong case, particularly given the consensus amongst the wider public that it is part of how Australia sees itself, in contrast to racist attitudes that are circulated in recent populist mainstream politics. There is a need for further research on other migrant communities in Australia to explore how consistent the Korean Australian experience is with other communities'

experiences of becoming or being Australian. Evidence from such studies could be brought to bear on redefining 'Australianness' and asserting an intrinsically multicultural identity.

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