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Family strategies in a neoliberal world: Korean immigrants in Winnipeg

Hyejin Yoon

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Abstract South Korean immigration to Canada has increased since the East Asian economic crisis of the late 1990s. Korean immigrants in Winnipeg chose the city for many reasons: the introduction of the Provincial Nominee Program, structural changes in the home country, and individual family strategies to provide better educational opportunities for their children. This article examines how changes in the current wave of globalization, at both global and local scale, have affected the migration of Koreans to Winnipeg, Canada and how individual households chose their immigration destination. This study contributes to understanding of the less popular immigrant destinations of Canada using a multiscalar analysis that includes household level. In addition to economic purposes and children's education, changes of life style can be an important reason for immigrant location choice. Overall, the neoliberal economy in South Korea has pushed many Koreans to move to other countries, and the globalization of the Canadian economy has pulled nomadic middle-class members from other countries.

Keywords Immigration · Globalization · Neoliberalism · Household · South Korea · Winnipeg, Canada

H. Yoon (✉)
Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI 53211, USA
e-mail: yoon3@uwm.edu

Introduction

Immigration has played an important role in the Canadian economy, particularly in development of its labor force (Hiebert 2002). Two demographic problems, slow natural population increase and aging, have led to a lack of sufficient young labor to contribute to the economy. Therefore, the inflow of migrants from other countries has been an important solution to these problems. In recent years, Canada has gained both highly-skilled labor and direct investment through its immigration program.

Not all cities in Canada are attractive to immigrants. Recent immigrants are concentrated in a few major metropolitan areas, namely Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal (Wulff et al. 2008; Pandey and Townsend 2011; Park 2012). Of the newly-arrived immigrants to Canada, 59.7 % chose these three major cities in 2012 (CIC 2013).[1] These gateway cities exhibit diversity and tolerance that attract highly-skilled labor (Florida 2012). Existing networks of different ethnic immigrants in these areas are an additional reason for such spatial concentration (Ley 2006; Xu 2011). Thus, these gateway cities provide more resources and services to newcomers (Baglay 2012). Other less popular provinces, especially along the Atlantic coast and in interior regions, have struggled to keep new immigrants after their arrival.

[1] Toronto (30 %), Montreal (11.4 %) and Vancouver (18.2 %).

Since each province has different economic needs for labor and investment, customized and 'regionalized' immigration programs, like the provincial nominee program (PNP), is likely to boost the provincial economy and create more global connections with the local economy (Carter et al. 2008; Akbari 2011). Through this process, the federal governments can encourage each province to gain a more even distribution of new immigrants (Abu-Laban and Garber 2005).

This paper provides a case study of South Korean immigrants in the Winnipeg metropolitan area, a less popular immigration destination in Canada, and explains the motivations affecting transnational and national migration of Koreans at different regional scales based on political economy. I take a general approach that connects immigrant strategies adopted under globalization and neoliberalism. In so doing, I present the motivations of Korean immigrants using a survey of 91 Koreans immigrants to the city. This research particularly examines how Korean parents employed strategies for their children's education over geographical considerations and how they chose a less popular destination like Winnipeg for their children. Since economic growth in East Asia has increased the transnational mobility of middle-class families, most parents want to send their children to attend universities in North America (Waters 2006). This research focuses on how Korean immigrants see a non-gateway city such as Winnipeg as giving their children the best possible opportunity. This article contributes to understanding of transnational migration by Korean middle-income families under neoliberalism. Moreover, this article explains push and pull factors of transnational migration decision-making at multiscalar levels.

This article first introduces previous studies of Canadian immigration. Then I will present the background of current South Korean migration and address the forces shaping migration at the national scale in Canada and South Korea. In particular, the article examines how neoliberalization of the Korean economy has affected society in general and influenced the migration of South Koreans following the economic crisis in the late 1990s. I then explain the influence of globalization on the immigration policy of Canada and efforts by provincial governments to gain competitive advantage using human capital from other countries. In addition, I present how Korean immigrants negotiate changes in these political, economic, and institutional structures.

Discussions on Canadian immigration

Several studies have examined issues related to recent migration in Canada: the impact of migration in the host-country (Akbari 2011; Reese 2012), the effectiveness of immigration programs in different provinces (Carter et al. 2010), and the importance of ethnic networks in gateway cities (Teixeira 2007; Ley 2006).

These three issues are closely related to each other. First, many studies have raised questions about immigrants' contributions to the national and local economies (Tannock 2011; Hiebert 2006; Picot 2004). As noted earlier, policy makers of Canada believe that newly arrived immigrants can be a good source of labor, tax payments, and domestic consumption. However, actual economic performance of these new immigrants after their landing was disappointing and pulled down the overall Canadian economy in some categories such as household income (Grubel et al. 2009). Apparently, overconcentration of new immigrants in three large metropolitan areas of Canada—Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal—can cause harsh competition among immigrants in these areas and lead to poor economic performance (Akbari 2011).

Secondly, immigrant groups in the Atlantic Provinces showed higher rate of labor market participation, lower unemployment rates, and higher income levels than non-immigrant groups in the 2006 Census. This is different from previous studies on immigrant settlement patterns in Canada that emphasized long and preexisting ethnic networks in Canadian cities (Teixeira 2007; Ley 2003, 2006). This is rather a matter of even spatial distribution of newly arrived immigrants, and allocation of resources. In some Atlantic provinces including New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Halifax, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, and Labrador all of which have lost population since WWII, new immigrants have shown higher levels of income, education, and lower unemployment rate compared to traditionally immigrant-concentrated provinces, such as Ontario (Akbari 2011). Thus, the economic performance of immigrants in these less popular destinations may create a better environment for new immigrants compared to more popular destinations. The positive economic performance of

new immigrants in the Atlantic Provinces is driven mainly by each provincial government's PNP program. Soon after they arrive in Canada, the PNP pulls new immigrants to non-gateway cities, and these new immigrants show better economic performance than immigrants in gateway cities. This is a different way to explain the economic performance of immigrants: new immigrants can use PNP programs for a safer and faster landing process than with the federal program.

Thirdly, immigrants can easily move to other popular cities in a few provinces, because well-established ethnic networks could attract new immigrants. Thus, the overall retention rate in PNP programs varied; it is difficult to increase retention rate without well-established ethnic networks as exist in gateway cities (Baglay 2012). In other words, the PNP program is a way of acquiring permanent residency, but the current PNP program may not be an effective long-term strategy to pull new immigrants to non-gateway cities. In this regard, some issues still remained. How can the federal government and the provinces achieve a more even spatial distribution of immigrant groups to avoid unnecessary competition in a few popular destinations? How and why do new immigrant groups choose less popular destinations instead of the three major metropolitan areas? Accordingly, many Canadian provinces and policy makers have focused on how to bring more new immigrants to the less-popular provinces and how to keep them there. However, none of the previous studies have examined decision-making in immigrant choices.

Moreover, various groups of recent immigrants have different reasons for their immigration, and they should not be lumped into one homogenous group. Moreover, the recent flow of immigrants at the global scale is a result of economic and non-economic processes of globalization (Kwak and Hiebert 2010). Thus, even though the MPNP increased the arrival of new Asian immigrants to Winnipeg, behaviors of each immigrant group can be explained by different factors. For example, reasons for immigration from the global south to the global north are different from immigrant flows within the global north (Hiebert and Ley 2006). Although some investigators have examined pull factors of host countries and immigrants' contribution to the economies of host countries, few studies have paid attention to factors originating in the home countries that led migrants to leave (Tannock 2011). So the household scale also plays a role in the process of migration (Silvey 2004).

Conceptual background: neoliberal restructuring in past and present Korean immigration to Canada

Before the current wave of globalization, regulation of state and national borders allowed for limited migration, but globalization has facilitated the movement of more people, information, capital, and products (Waters 2006; Williams 2007; Kwak 2013). Thus, autonomy of nation-states and the borders between them have become less important than before, and neoliberalism has emerged as one of the important pillars of economic globalization (Brenner et al. 2010; Kwak 2013). This also has accentuated the role of markets and caused a decrease in the role of states in general. However, institutions and regulations at national, regional, and local scales continuously affect migration flows and individual's decision-making (Ley 2003; Tannock 2011; Kwak 2013). Thus, the process of neoliberalism is spatially embodied through the roles of institutions, even though the process of neoliberalism is considered aspatial. Many studies have discovered that different regional, national, and local agents apply neoliberal strategies differently rather than following a simple rule, 'less government and more market' (Kwak 2013). In this regard, understanding of the individual household's strategy is more important than ever (Silvey 2009). This article mainly adopts this approach to explain how individual households make strategies to navigate the changes under neoliberalism. Thus I argue that not only political economy but also institutional structures and household attitudes play important roles in the transnational migration of Korean immigrants in Winnipeg.

South Korean immigration under neoliberalism

The reasons for recent Korean immigration to North America are different than earlier waves of immigration. Economic and political reasons for emigration, such as war and famine, were common in South Korea before the 1970s (DeWind et al. 2012; Yoon 2012). Motivations for migration have become more complicated as Korean society has changed since the 1980s. Although political and economic factors remain

important, socio-cultural reasons, such as educational attainment and creating opportunities for children, increasingly affect migration of Koreans (Finch and Kim 2012).

The reasons for these changes can be understood in the context of globalization and neoliberalism, a strategy and doctrine of many governments since the 1990s. The tenets of neoliberalism hold that less government interruption and regulation can create efficient markets, high competitiveness, and economic growth. Neoliberalism within governance has expanded to various sectors of society; many governments are less likely to spend money on social welfare programs and government services (Popke and Torres 2013). These circumstances have influenced decisions about Korean immigration in two important aspects: the desire to live in a country with a welfare state system and deteriorating public education in South Korea. This trend has become common in many Asian countries after the economic crisis in 1997 (Chang 2012). Prior to 1997, a few large conglomerates, or *Chaebols*, dominated the South Korean economy with governmental support. After 1997, some of these *Chaebols* collapsed and adopted neoliberal restructuring to survive (Kim 2010). For example, companies which once guaranteed lifetime employment began to impose voluntary resignation upon many employees as part of their restructuring. These changes limited new hiring and caused severe competition among Koreans for the leftover jobs. Therefore, the traditional safety net that protected labor under state capitalism weakened under neoliberalism. In addition, inflows of more foreign capital to South Korea under globalization enabled Korean companies to adopt 'flexible employment systems' where workers could be hired and fired according to the needs of the company (Kim 2010). The resulting unstable economy and breakdown of traditional social values have forced many Koreans to explore opportunities in other countries.

In addition to job insecurity, Korean parents found it difficult to provide adequate education to their children in this changing society. As is widely known, children's success is a very important focus of many cultures in Asia. The intense competition under neoliberalism has led to an increased emphasis on 'individual responsibility' instead of accepting welfare from the state (Piller and Cho 2013). Consequently, privatization of public services has affected public education.

In addition, *Segehwa* (globalization), a policy of the South Korean Ministry of Education, which emphasizes fluency in English, has also caused high dependency on private education agents over public education (Finch and Kim 2012; Kwak 2013). Even though test scores of South Korean students usually rank high compared to other countries, this success is a result of increased investment by parents in private education, such as the *Hakwons* or private cram schools (Kwak 2013). Increased distrust in the public education system has pushed many East Asian parents to emigrate to other countries, e.g. Canada and Australia, to obtain better education and increased fluency in English for their children (Ley 2006; Finch and Kim 2012). These Korean parents usually plan to obtain permanent residency for themselves and citizenship for their children after a short period of residence in Canada. Generally, the parents want to return to their home country after their children become college students, thus helping the new immigrants maintain transnational business relationships with people in Korea. To Korean immigrants, obtaining permanent residency for themselves and citizenship for their children is important because it allows them to stay in Canada for their children's education and then leave without any worries about their immigration status. Therefore legal immigration status can give 'flexible mobility' to immigrants and strengthen transnational networks for many wealthy Asian immigrants (Ley 2013).

Canadian neoliberal immigration policy and globalization

Before the 1970s, the immigration policy of Canada was designed to support a Fordist economy based on mass production and consumption. Bringing immigrant labor into manufacturing and transforming them into domestic consumers fueled economic growth in Canada (Walsh 2012). Today, this trend is changing.

First, the global economy has become unstable since the 1980s. The Canadian economy that had once focused on manufacturing and resource-extraction has shifted more toward the knowledge economy and the service-based economy (Jones 2004). Thus, recruiting more suitable immigrants with specialized skills and ties to global capital flows has become crucial to help grow the new economy. Thus Canada has targeted more educated and skilled labor in its recent immigration policy.

Second, it is believed that Asian immigrants can bring not only their experience with surprisingly fast economic growth but also their capital to Canada's new economy. Selling Canada to a 'nomadic global middle class' is projected to bring the 'world's flight capital' to Canada (Ong 1993; Jones 2004; Walsh 2011). Therefore foreign-born migrants have become a good source of both high-skilled labor (especially in information technology) and foreign direct investment to Canada (Mahroum 2001; Jones 2004). Since the 1980s, the Canadian government has tailored its immigration program for skilled workers and business entrepreneurs, i.e. for incoming immigrants who can contribute to the national economy (Froschauer 2001). Thus, in Canada "business immigration reflects and extends the financialization and de-territorialization of capital markets" (Walsh 2011).

A third major reason for the increase of immigrants in the western provinces of Canada is regional economic growth (Elliot 2011). The decrease of manufacturing in Ontario and Quebec combined with a resource-based economic boom in the western provinces has led to an increase in the number of immigrants in the western provinces (Ray et al. 2012). Many Canadian provinces and cities are eager to attract new immigrants groups who are highly educated and can invest capital at the provincial and city level. This would help remake their city's image as 'a cool place to live' through revitalization of the urban area and would attract entrepreneurial foreign immigrants (Brenner and Theodore 2002).

Since 1998 neoliberalism and globalization have transformed the traditional development state into a neoliberal state in Korea and brought destruction of deeply ingrained social expectations. These changes at global and national scales have resulted in increasing numbers of Korean immigrants who became uncomfortable with the changing rules and roles in their homeland. At around the same time, the Canadian government changed its immigration policy to bring more investors and professionals to the country.

Creating an immigrants' destination in the prairie: Winnipeg, Manitoba

Between 2006 and 2010, cities in the western provinces have pulled a growing percentage of international migrations; Winnipeg is one of these western cities. Even though Toronto still receives the largest number of international immigrants each year compared to other Canadian cities, its share actually decreased during the same time period.

How could Winnipeg have attracted these new migrants? While gateway cities are the most popular for new immigrants, the housing market in these cities is not attractive to new arrivals. Since the 1990s, many immigrants from Hong Kong who were worried about China's control over their home city contributed to the increase in housing prices and the resulting housing bubble in gateway cities, especially Vancouver. As a result, home prices in smaller cities are moderate compared to those of gateway cities and housing prices in Winnipeg are relatively affordable for new arrivals (Leo and Brown 2000; Ley 2003).

Immigration programs for building national competitiveness

The number of new immigrants who applied to the MPNP has increased continuously since the Manitoba government signed it into law (Fig. 1). In 2004, 4,048 migrants qualified under the program. By 2006 that number had increased to 6,662 individuals, and it has risen every year since. Approximately 77 % of the province's total new immigrants, amounting to over 12,300 persons in 2011, qualified through the MPNP. The majority of the new immigrants to Manitoba (about 82 % of immigrants) have preferred to concentrate in Winnipeg and the rest have chosen to live in rural communities (Carter et al. 2008; MDLI 2012).

Only eight South Korean immigrants received permanent residency in 1999 before MPNP was initiated, but increasing numbers of Koreans have

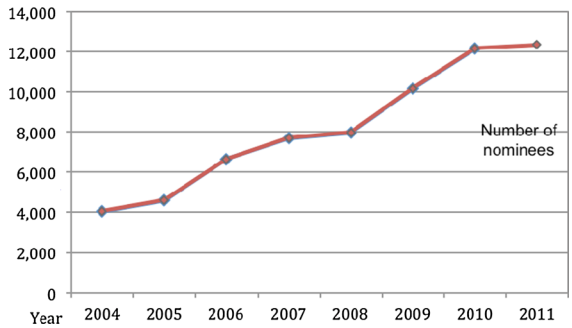

Fig. 1 Manitoba provincial nominee program arrivals (2004–2011). *Source*: MDLI (2012)

qualified through MPNP to live in Canada (Table 1). There have been ups and downs of the numbers of South Korean immigrants newly arrived in Manibota each year, but by 2012 South Korean became the fifth highest sources of new immigrants to Manitoba (CIC 2011). After the introduction of the MPNP, more immigrants settled not only in the Winnipeg area but also in rural areas of Manitoba (Carter et al. 2008; Pandey and Townsend 2011). Still the majority of the new immigrants to Manitoba (about 90 %) have preferred to concentrate in Winnipeg (MDLI 2012; Carter et al. 2008).

However, the experience of living in Winnipeg has not always been very positive for the immigrants; some of the documented inconveniences include deteriorated downtown housing, old infrastructure, and the long, cold winters (Leo and Brown 2000). Some neighborhoods in the downtown area have struggled with high crime rates and large number of old and abandoned houses following the migration of residents to the suburbs. The long winters worsen road conditions, and increased commuting from the suburbs to the inner city area has led to traffic congestion. Some new immigrants in Winnipeg stay in the inner city area because housing prices there are affordable compared to suburban areas, and many immigrant-related services are located in the inner city (Carter et al. 2009). However, South Korean immigrants in the city are not concentrated in any particular neighborhood of the city (Statistics Canada 2011).

Table 1 Number of South Korean immigrants to Manitoba through MPNP and Federal streams

Year	Number of South Koreans
1999	8
2000	89
2001	67
2002	251
2003	312
2004	398
2005	326
2006	422
2007	268
2008	408
2009	400
2010	458
2011	428
2012	324

Source: MDLI (2000–2013)

The city of Winnipeg has made efforts to revitalize its downtown area as a residential area for immigrants and has updated infrastructure to attract immigrants that meet the needs of the city and province (Bookman and Woolford 2013). While the city has increased its number of new immigrants, the diversity of ethnic groups is not as rich in Winnipeg as it is in the gateway cities (Lewis 2010). The current immigration program and MPNP are aiming to bring targeted ethnic groups to the city, particularly the Chinese and South Koreans who are seen as being able to bring international investment with them.

The purpose of the Canadian business immigration program is to attract individuals who have previous experience in running their own businesses (Hiebert 2006; CIC 2013). The business immigration program in Canada includes three categories: investors, entrepreneurs, and self-employed persons. There are different minimum requirements for these categories. However, the first two categories require a minimum investment of capital to qualify, thus favoring immigrants from more-economically developed countries (Lewis 2010).[2] A majority of the applicants to these two categories are from East Asian countries, such as China and South Korea (CIC 2013).

Korean immigrants in Winnipeg

The general characteristics of Korean immigrants in Winnipeg were investigated by the author in a 2013 survey. Of the total 2,170 Koreans in Manitoba, 91 households of Korean immigrants returned the completed questionnaire. Since it is impossible to survey all Korean immigrants in Winnipeg, the author used two Korean protestant churches in Winnipeg to solicit survey respondents because the protestant churches are more dominant among Korean immigrants in North America than Buddhist and Catholic churches. Immigrant churches usually play important roles as both centers of congregation for particular ethnic

[2] Compared to the skilled/professional worker program, both of these business immigration programs require applicants to get 35 points from the six selection factors that are used in evaluation for the skilled-worker program.

groups and service providers to newcomers (Choi 2010; Shin 2011). Thus, a high percentage of Korean immigrants (70–80 %) engage in Korean ethnic churches (Ley 2008). In addition to contacting the church members, the author also used snowball sampling based on the author's personal network to collect additional survey participants.

The sample in this research may not exactly represent all Koreans in Winnipeg, but gives a sense of how people within these ethnic/migrant institutions think about their reasons for migration. The survey gathered socio-demographic information such as age and education level. In addition, the survey focused on their choice of destination and what difficulties they have faced after arriving in Canada. The survey form included both multiple choice questions and open-ended questions to glean reasons for their choices of location and why they decided to emigrate. Thus, survey participants also provided their comments on some questions in written format. The survey form was written in Korean, and the answers used in this article were translated to English by the author.

Characteristics of Korean immigrants in Winnipeg

Most respondents came to Canada during the last 6 years. Of all the respondents to the survey, 86 % arrived in Canada after 2002 when the current point system for immigration was initiated. The trend, however, decreased after 2009 and is again similar to the overall trend of Korean immigration in Canada (Statistics Canada 2011). The results indicate that Korean immigrants chose Winnipeg as a destination over a short period of time.

In 2005 overall Korean immigrants in Canada were comprised of more women than men (50.9 %), and 33 % fell into the working-age group of 25–45 (Lindsay 2001). In this survey, more females (55 respondents, 60.4 %) participated than males (36 respondents, 39.6 %). The average age of participants was 41.8 years ("Appendix"). The largest age-groups of participants were those that were in their 30 s (43.2 %) and 40 s (38.6 %). Most participants were of an economically-active age and had children.

Of the total, 22 % of the survey participants own their own businesses and one-fifth of participants (20 %) were full-time housewives (Table 2). Some Koreans were employed at non-Korean companies (20.9 %) and others at companies owned by Koreans (13.2 %). Still others were professionals (7.7 %), such as doctors and nurses, and 12 Koreans (13.2 %) were found to be unemployed. If one considers the group of housewives, the unemployed, and three students 34 (37 %) of the respondents were not participating in the labor force. The unemployment rate of survey participants is slightly lower than the census result of 2005 (41 %). Immigrants in Canada have a higher unemployment rate than Canadian-born residents (Smith and Ley 2008). The unemployment rate in this survey reaches 13.2 %, not including housewives and the few respondents who are preparing to open new businesses and are thus only temporarily unemployed.

Table 2 Types of jobs held by Korean immigrants

Type	Number of people	%
Self-employed business owners	20	22.0
Full-time housewives	19	20.9
Employees of non-Korean companies	13	14.3
Employees of Korean companies or companies owned by Koreans	12	13.2
None	12	13.2
Other professionals	7	7.7
Students	3	3.3
Federal government workers	3	3.3
Government of Manitoba workers	2	2.2
Total	91	100.0

Source: Questionnaire

More than two-thirds (70.3 %) of respondents were found to have received university education and had undergraduate and postgraduate degrees ("Appendix"). Only 26 people (28.6 %) indicated that they had a high-school diploma. These results are little higher compared to the overall education level of Koreans in Canada.[3]

In general, many respondents immigrated to Canada relatively recently. Many respondents belong to an economically-active group who could contribute to the national and provincial economies. The general profile of the respondents fits with the goals of the current Canadian immigration policy. Moreover, Korean immigrants show a higher rate of self-employment than other minority groups. As mentioned before, the

[3] In general, Korean immigrants in Canada show a higher education level than native-born Canadians (Park 2012).

high percentage of Korean immigrants who used the business immigration programs shows an ethnic bias because the Manitoban government has sought to increase the number of East Asians immigrants to the province.

Korean immigrants in Winnipeg: their reasons for migrating

The survey results found that two factors connect to Korean immigrant choices of destination in a host country. First, transnational selection of education for their children is available to middle-class Koreans by the immigration policy of Canada. Second, middle class immigrants who used a new immigrant policy—business class—migrated to less popular cities, not to gateway cities. These middle-class Korean immigrants revealed that they were seeking less competition from other Korean businesses in less popular places where they could still enjoy an urban atmosphere, like Winnipeg. Before 2000, new immigrants replaced low-skilled labor in manufacturing where high-educated natives had already left (Partridge et al. 2008; Borjas 2005). However, economic restructuring of the Canadian economy from a Fordist production system based on manufacturing to a post-Fordist production system based on the service sector as well as other neoliberal changes. The case of Korean immigrants in Winnipeg can provide a better understanding of the changing economy of Canada and offer the unique perspective of middle-class immigrants.

National scale

Neoliberalization of the South Korean economy increased in the late-1990s, and the Canadian immigration policy was reformed in the mid-1990s based on the needs of the new globalized economy. Table 3 presents the reasons Korean immigrants gave for migration in relation to year of arrival to trace this shift. The results from the survey show that children's education is the most cited reason (44 %) for migration out of South Korea and to Canada. Pursuit of a better quality of life (16.5 %) was also an important motivation among immigrants. The results indicate that many Korean immigrants who are parents are more concerned with their children's careers than their own. Their children's success is very important to them and to the whole family and becomes the family's long-term project (Finch and Kim 2012).

Table 3 Reasons for immigration

Rank	Factor	Number of respondents	%
1	Children's education	40	44.0
2	Better quality of life	15	16.5
3	Family immigration	9	9.9
4	Economic purpose	8	8.8
5	Studying	6	6.6
6	Marriage	5	5.5
7	Social welfare of the host country	4	4.4
7	Living in a different country	4	4.4

Source: Questionnaire

> My family moved here, because the better education system of Canada helps my children's education and their English proficiency (R1)

Educational attainment for the individual has traditionally been seen as the key to success and better status in a meritocratic society, for example by obtaining a degree from a top-tier college in Korea. However, after the recent economic growth of East Asia, foreign universities have come to be preferred over the few good local colleges in East Asia (Waters 2006; Finch and Kim 2012; Waters 2012). Economic growth in East Asia has increased the transnational mobility of middle-class families in the region (Waters 2006).

The second important factor was improvement in the quality of life (16.5 %). In the late 1990s, many South Korean immigrants wanted to escape the economic crisis, worsening public services, especially public education, in South Korea, and lifestyle changes.

> I am disappointed in the current South Korean society. I wanted my children to grow up in another country, like Canada, that provides a better education system. Everyone emphasized working hard and winning competitions. South Korean children never played in the playground because they had to go to the *Hakwon* after school. I didn't want my children to live in this environment (R2)

The respondents also mentioned other factors, e.g. the social welfare system of the host-country and

disappointment with South Korea's current situation. They cited not only their children's education but also their unpredictable careers and job security now that Korean society has changed. This is different from other Asian families who move to other countries in order to give their children the experience of living in other countries (Waters 2006, 2012).

> The intensive work environment [in Korea] made me tired. I thought my future was uncertain (R3).

South Korean immigrants also expected Canada to provide better social welfare benefits compared to their home country. This influenced their decision to migrate to Canada through the new immigration program.

> Canada is a developed country and has a good social welfare system (R4).

Another respondent wrote:

> Besides learning English, I chose immigration to Canada because [I expected] this country is a much safer society (R5).

Based upon the survey results, push and pull factors of migration are closely related to each other. South Korean immigrants did not want to live in South Korea because of the decrease in public services including public education and social welfare. At the same time, Canada had reformed its immigration policy to pull these middle-class Asians who fit into the needs of a knowledge and service-based economy.

Local scale

Why did many Korean immigrants choose Winnipeg instead of the gateway cities that have deeper ethnic networks and urban amenities? Obtaining permanent residency is the most important reason that Koreans gave for choosing Winnipeg (28 %). However, only 26 respondents (29.6 %) actually used the MPNP to immigrate, and more newcomers used the MPNP for their immigration to Canada compared to the immigrants who arrived before 2000.

> I decided to move to Manitoba because it [becoming a permanent resident] is easier and faster than using the federal application program. (R6)

The MPNP was a major factor in their choice of location. Getting permanent residency in Canada is the most important goal of Koreans coming to Winnipeg, and the ease of gaining permanent residency is a major reason that they chose Winnipeg and Manitoba instead of the larger gateway cities in Canada.

Yet another reason is related to family reunification. Respondents explained that other family member(s) were already living in Winnipeg and invited them to move there. Often a single Korean male immigrant will marry a Korean woman from the home country and have his spouse apply for permanent residency through the family support stream of MPNP (Carter et al. 2008).

A third reason for choosing Winnipeg is that the Korean community is relatively small in the city compared to Toronto and Vancouver. This is attractive to Korean immigrants because it creates less business competition among Koreans and offers the possibility of both better business opportunities and improved lifestyles.

> Winnipeg is a small and quiet city and has a relatively small Korean community (R7).
> Living cost is lower than other big cities like Toronto (R8).

Leo and Brown (2000) point out that housing can be an important pull factor for immigrant groups, but some Korean immigrants in Winnipeg are more concerned about avoiding high level of competition among Koreans within a city. The finding in this research that Korean immigrants chose a non-gateway city Winnipeg because of less competition and the relatively small size of the Korean community is different from the usual conception of location by immigrants. For example, the agglomeration economy of gateway cities in North America is usually more attractive to newly-arrived immigrants because of their already established and strong ethnic networks (Teixeira 2007; Ley 2003), but Korean immigrants have different ideas about location choice. Grant and Buckwold (2013) explain that newly immigrant artists in Halifax, a mid-size city in Canada, consider lifestyle more important than the economic advantages of living in gateway cities. Although economic purpose was the most important factor to be considered by many, each group has its own perspective.

A fourth reason, frequently mentioned by respondents, was to attend universities in Manitoba. Initially,

Korean students entered Canada to attend universities in Winnipeg; then they got jobs and eventually became permanent residents after graduation. Other Korean immigrants chose Manitoba and Winnipeg before they applied to universities in Canada. They did their initial research on the MPNP process and later decided to attend the universities in the province.

> When I applied to graduate schools, I did research on the immigration policy of Canada and knew how convenient the MPNP is for applicants like me who want to move to Canada permanently. Thus, I planned to attend the university here to get a job and apply to the MPNP before I came to Canada (R9).

Many survey participants were satisfied with their life in Winnipeg because the MPNP provides a fast and easy process to obtain permanent residency and the government offers adaptation programs for new immigrants. However, many Korean immigrants have experienced problems with Canadian institutions and culture-shock, and they have struggled to find jobs in the limited labor market. Unfamiliarity with institutions and policies hinder Korean immigrants in their adjustment to living in Canada. A limited labor market because of lack of language skills is another barrier for newly-arrived immigrants (Hiebert 2006; Smith and Ley 2008; Kwak and Hiebert 2010). As one respondent described, many Korean immigrants attend colleges or certificate programs from Canadian educational institutions because it is more difficult to get jobs if they do not have work experience in Canada or the necessary language skills (Hiebert 2006; Smith and Ley 2008).

Concerns about children's education opportunity are another reason that respondents consider leaving Winnipeg. People believe that a bigger city could provide better opportunities for their children's education and careers. In this regard, one respondent wrote:

> [I think] big cities provide more jobs to their children compared to Winnipeg. (R10)

In addition, the attractions of Winnipeg turn to push factors to some respondents. For example, some immigrants preferred affordable housing and less competition among Korean immigrants, but these advantages become disadvantages in Winnipeg.

> Winnipeg is so small [compared to cities in S. Korea or Toronto] and boring. I hardly find cultural opportunities or city life here in Winnipeg. There is nothing but playing tennis games in the short summer. (R11)

While Winnipeg has been successful in pulling many South Korean immigrants with affordable housing, low competition among Korean immigrants, and the MPNP for acquiring legal status to reside in Canada, many newly-arrived immigrants found that their professional experiences in their home country were not as valued as they expected. Winnipeg plays a middle stopover to some Korean immigrant parents.

Conclusion

Globalization and neoliberalization have brought about many changes throughout the world. Increased migration of people, knowledge, and technology are clear outcomes of these processes. These outcomes have created a whole different landscape of economy and politics through unlimited competition among countries. It is clear that globalization and neoliberalization have affected not only global, national, and local scale, but also individual's immigration decision. Thus, these changes cannot be understood properly without understanding the push–pull factors between the local and global scales, and strategies of individual households.

This study examines the case of Korean immigration to Winnipeg under neoliberalism in both the Korean and Canadian contexts. Many Korean participants of the survey revealed that changes by the neoliberal regime of South Korea, such as deterioration of public services, especially educational opportunities, quality of life, and the labor market influenced their immigration decisions. As their local society has changed, more Koreans have been forced to find alternate ways to compete in the globalized job market. This increased and unlimited competition has pushed many Koreans to leave for other higher income countries, such as Canada. Therefore, the aims of Korean immigration have changed mainly from economic and political purposes to a blend of economic and socio-cultural purposes. Middle-class Koreans have become transnational nomads who are willing to move for a variety of reasons, particularly

jobs, children's education, and improving their children's future opportunities. Sending children to western countries is not new in many East Asian countries, but the South Korean families in this research have adopted a different strategy—emigration of the entire family to a different country. Many East Asian parents believe that the public education system in their home countries is not as good as that of Western countries and that studying abroad is a better strategy to strengthen their children's competitiveness. They also believe that studying abroad builds the important ability to speak a foreign language, especially English (Piller and Cho 2013). Since South Korean parents are used to spending large amounts of money for their children's education within the private education sector in their country, the expenses of studying abroad require almost the same amount of investment. Therefore, educational hardship, intensified by neoliberal policies, has resulted in transnational mobility of human capital among Koreans through education-related transnational migration (Waters 2012).

When it comes to pull factors of the host-country, structural changes inspired by neoliberalism and globalization have changed the immigration program of Canada that had once focused on manufacturing under a Fordist production system. But since 2002, the Canadian government has introduced a new point system within its immigration program, aiming to bring high-skilled workers and foreign direct investment into the country. However, this new program is only favorable to a limited group of people from particular countries, such as South Korea and China. It certainly has attracted people with particular occupations, for example, engineers and those from certain ethnic-centered networks to Canada. However, this new immigration policy does not coincide with the original values of the Canadian immigration policy: 'multiculturalism, openness and tolerance' (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010). As a result, the current point-based immigration system of Canada is aimed at recruiting high-quality immigrants for the national or provincial economy, but the result is just an alternate way of admitting a limited and particular group of people who are highly-educated (Tannock 2011).

As many survey participants pointed out, concerns about education of their children, quality of life, and the extreme economic instability in Korea since the late 1990s were major factors behind their immigration. Koreans are disappointed with public education and worsening government services in Korea under neoliberalism, and they would like to take advantage of the public education and social welfare systems in Canada. Furthermore, some survey participants revealed that they prefer a less-competitive destination compared to popular gateway cities. Policy makers should pay attention to these different findings from Korean immigrants in Winnipeg. As illustrated earlier, the goal of even spatial distribution of immigrants can be driven in many different ways. In addition to PNP programs for different province, policy makers also have to consider who their PNP applicants might be and what type of labor force they need for the provincial economy. As illustrated earlier, economic reasons are not necessarily the first priority for these middle-class families, so non-gateway cities and less popular provinces can gain relative advantage from understanding the characteristics of potential applicants to the PNP programs. Non-economic factors like lifestyle were important reasons for choosing less popular provinces. This can explain the case of Korean immigrants in Winnipeg too. Therefore, I argue that a different way to understand and investigate immigrants' behaviors is needed for further studies.

However, neoliberal policies in Canada have reduced the social safety net and have distorted the goals of the immigration program in order to bring 'global competitiveness' to Canada (Mitchell 2003). Ironically, these Koreans can enter Canada only because the point system of the new immigration program allows them to take advantage of their education obtained through the neoliberal privatization of public education and training in Korea, which places the burden of education on the individual families rather than on the traditional developmental state. However, the results may not explain the entirety of South Korean immigrants in Winnipeg because of data limitations. The sample size is small and this limits the generality of the findings presented from the study. In addition, this study only focused on one ethnic group in Winnipeg, and the results may not explain migration decision of other ethnic groups. However, characteristics of survey participants represent the overall Korean immigrants in Winnipeg well, and this study adds understanding Korean households' strategies to live under the current globalization regime.

In the case of Korean immigrants in Winnipeg, factors different from political, economic, and institutional structures have affected this migration. Korean immigrants' ideas about family well-being

and the emphasis on children's education are also important factors. Thus, the local and the global scales create different push–pull factors that are tightly connected to each other and interact dynamically. Even though the neoliberal state aims to achieve economic efficiency through less government intervention, the role of the government has strengthened in many ways, for example by changing immigration policy to attract more capital and high-skilled labor from other countries. Therefore, flows of people and immigration are not separated from the interactions between the local and global scale nor from the influences of state institutions. And individual households also play an important part in the process of transnational migration at the global scale.

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Appendix

See Table 4.

Table 4 General characteristics of survey participants

	Number of persons	%
Age		
21–30	6	6.6
31–40	38	41.8
41–50	35	38.5
51–50	8	8.8
Over 61	2	2.2
NA	2	2.2
Sex		
Male	36	39.6
Female	55	60.4
Education level		
High school diploma or lower	26	28.6
College degree or higher degrees	64	70.3
NA	1	1.1
Use of MPNP		
Yes	52	57.1
No	25	27.5
NA	14	15.4

Total number of persons in each category is 91

Source: Questionnaire

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