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The Bibimbap Migration Theory? Challenges of Korea's Multicultural Mix and Social Integration Development

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Abstract Migration was never a brand new phenomenon in South Korea, but its migration pattern has been redirected, migrant size has been amplified, and migrant ethnicity has been diversified in recent years. Korea is undergoing dramatic changes in its demographic composition with an increasing presence of foreigners since the 1990s. Traditionally known for its cultural uniqueness and ethnic homogeneousness, the ongoing inflow of foreigners has presented new challenges, as to who the Koreans are and how the modern Korean society should be defined. Some Koreans even raise concern over migration inflow as a threat to its nationhood purity. This research examines the shifting trend of immigration in Korea with a focus on the new social development of multiculturalism, while assessing the level of social integration and multicultural discourses of the public. In addition to those widely discussed marriage immigrants and foreign labor workers in the existing literature, the recent surge of professional expats, foreign teachers, and international students is becoming evident in Korea's multicultural mix. Moreover, there is still a lack of literature on foreign migrants in Korea, including the US military service personnel, the foreign professional sports players, non-North Korean international refugees, and the latest, permanent residency immigrants through property investment in Korea. Despite the noted increasing inflow of a variety of immigrant residents, who are constantly shaping the new faces of Korea, the acceptance of ethnic diversity and cultural integration has yet to secure its solid place in the Korean society for multiculturalism to be truly embraced and flourished.

Keywords Korea · Migration · Multiculturalism · Social integration · Immigrant policy

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Introduction

In the Republic of Korea (henceforth, Korea), there has been renewed interest in multiculturalism, with increasing popularity of TV talk shows showcasing the daily lives of foreigners residing in Korea. However, in a recent study on world racial tolerance by Swedish economists, Berggren and Nilsson (2013) reveal that more than one in three Koreans objected to a neighbor of a different race, ranking Korea in the second most racially intolerant country category of the world. Despite its high levels of education and economic growth as a global economic powerhouse, the acceptance of multicultural practices and social integration remains problematic in Korea. Why is there such a contradiction, as Korea prides itself on socioeconomic internationalization and openness? Have the increasing inflows of migrants and multicultural families over the past decades not changed the racial views of Koreans? As Korea is finding its way of adapting the transformation of society and experiencing cultural diversity, the multicultural mix presents a challenge in its sociocultural tolerance and a critical barrier to its social integration.

Migration and its effects on Korea's changing demographic composition is a relatively recent phenomenon. Most literature discussing Korea's migration research tends to limit to two perspectives. One emphasizes the early emigration with historical perspectives, looking at out-migration of ethnic Koreans into its neighboring regions of the Korean Peninsula, including Russia, China, Japan, and Central Asia states of the former Soviet Union (Park 1957; Pyong 1992; Kwon 1997; Sparling 2009; KBS 2014), Germany (Schönwälder 2003), and the Americas (Patterson 2000; Park 2006; Chosun Ilbo 2007). Historically, Korea as a migrant-sending state can be explained by its long-term economic hardship and political struggle prior to the 1990s. Years of continued famine and poor crop yields pressured Koreans to seek new farming opportunities in neighboring Russia at the turn of the twentieth century. Following Japan's colonization of Korea in 1910, the Soviet authority ordered forced migration of Koreans to Central Asia in 1937, out of the fear that Koreans might spy for the Japanese (Sparling 2009). By the 1910s, the political economic hardship drove many more Koreans to abandon their native land into China, and many settled down in large numbers in the present Yanbian area (Pyong 1992). Under colonial rule, Japan also organized massive-scale Korean migration to develop newly occupied Manchuria in China as an agriculture base for the Empire of Japan (Kwon 1997). Further into the 1960s–1970s, a group of selected Korean miners and nurses was sent to Germany under the *Gastarbeiter* guest worker program as a way of earning foreign exchange to help alleviate the Korean economy in extreme poverty. Some Koreans found ways to stay in Germany through marriages after the termination of their contracts, and others found ways to undertake onward migration to the USA (Schönwälder 2003). Prior to the 1980s, emigration, rather than immigration, characterizes and dominates much of Korea's migration reality.

The other perspective of Korean migration literature focuses on the contemporary trend of intercultural marriage migrants (Lim 2009; Lee and Jo 2013; Ullah 2014) and labor migration (Park 1994; Kim 2009, 2015; SERI 2011; Kim and Kwon 2012), as these tend to be the majority of migrant inflow into Korea and often raise concerns over its national immigration policy. The literature has been long focused on the intercultural marriages and foreign laborers residing in Korea as the main discourse of migration debate, while non-Korean international refugees, foreign expat, and new investment

immigrants are largely under-researched. Most of the immigration literature tends to downplay the foreign expat community because of its relatively transient nature and smaller size of population. It is likely that Korean immigration policy could be undermined, if the policy is biased toward a certain group of immigrants. Thus, this research attempts to further the understandings of Korea's present immigration environment, while addressing the issues faced by those under-researched immigrant groups in Korea.

Multiculturalism in the Context of Korea

Cultural Assimilation and Multiculturalism

"Melting pot" is a common metaphor used to describe cultural assimilation that migrants with different backgrounds in a heterogeneous society are assimilated into a cultural uniformity, in which people lose their discrete identities as they adopt and accept the new culture toward establishing a homogenous society. The metaphor became popularized in a US play titled "The Melting Pot" by Israel Zabgwill in 1908, particularly depicting the group of European migrants moving into the USA in the early 1900s (Sollers 1986). Since the 1960s, the term "melting pot" increasingly has been replaced by the term "salad bowl," as the newer migrants retain their own culture and lifestyle, while assimilation is no longer deemed necessary. Each ethnic group upholds their own cultural integrity in the society, where different cultures coexist and remain visible. People are no longer merged or melted into the only one group, rather the situation is more like that in a salad dish where all ingredients come together, but can clearly see the differences. The metaphor salad bowl, which represents cultural pluralism or multiculturalism, seems to become more appropriate, as people from diverse backgrounds form a society with cultural diversity based on mutual equality and acceptance. In Canada, for instance, its population is comprised of more than 200 ethnic origins, and one of out five Canadians is a foreign-born individual who arrived as an immigrant (Lafontaine-Émond 2013). In 1971, Canada adopted multicultural policies and officially recognized in *Section 27* of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* that "[t]his Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians." By 1988, the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* is enacted to promote the "recognition and appreciation of the diverse cultures of Canadian society." Multiculturalism, which defines society as a mosaic of communities, is a well-recognized defining aspect of the Canadian identity.

Many migrant-receiving countries of the West have looked at the success of Canada's model of multiculturalism to find a common ground that can be applied to tackle domestic affairs surrounding the growing immigrant population, while fitting their own cultural context for the growth and stability of the migration society. Certainly, Korea is also looking for that common ground by developing an integration model that will serve its best interests. Unfortunately, multiculturalism, as an option for managing cultural diversity, has not been always a proven success in many European migrant-receiving countries. Based on recent European experiences, the multiculturalism model has led to the so-called ghettoization of certain ethnic groups, resulting in the

creation of parallel societies within countries (Lafontaine-Émond 2013). In October 2010, German Chancellor Angela Merkel courted growing anti-immigrant opinion in Germany by claiming the country's attempts to create a multicultural society have *utterly failed* (BBC News 2010). Immigrants are required to do more for their integration responsibility, rather than exploiting the social welfare benefits of the West. Likewise, authorities of the British, French, and Dutch governments have echoed the sentiments of their German counterparts and plan to seek alternatives to multiculturalism for managing immigrants' integration. As evidenced by the enclave crises of ethnic minorities and reoccurrence of anti-immigrant conflicts in Europe, it is argued that multiculturalism policies might have contributed to the erosion of national identities.

Korea's Multiculturalism Policy and Basic Plan for Immigration Policy

With growing numbers of immigrants, Korea has to develop an integration model for managing cultural diversity. It remains debatable whether Korea has adopted a multiculturalism policy. The term "multiculturalism" often causes confusion over its uses and meanings in Korea. Indeed, the word "multicultural" is often used to refer to the "multicultural family," with its legal definition in the Korean Law, specifically referring to those families consisting of a foreign migrant and a person with Korean nationality. In other words, families that are made exclusively of immigrants or foreigners are excluded from the legal term of multicultural family and thus are not protected under the *Support for Multicultural Families Act* (2010). In fact, the provisions concerning foreigners residing in Korea are governed by the *Act on the Treatment of Foreigners in Korea* (2007). With an aim of contributing to the social integration, the *Act* outlines the responsibilities of 17 government agencies involved at different government levels, the establishment and implementation of policy on foreigners, and various supports for social adjustment of foreigners in Korea. *Chapter IV* of the *Act* may be the only section close to the value of multiculturalism, mentioning the "enhancement of understanding about cultural diversity" in *Article 18*. Nevertheless, the particular term multiculturalism or multicultural is nowhere to be found throughout the entire *Act*. Unlike Canada's multiculturalism policy as a fundamental social value of the nation, Korea seems to show a very different mindset on how the concept of multiculturalism is interpreted, with multiculturalism policy targeted at a specific group of married immigrants with Korean spouses. It is critical for the nation's multiculturalism policy to be implemented from an all-inclusive approach, instead of being exclusive to a particular immigrant group.

The *2nd Basic Plan for Immigration Policy 2013–2017* (2012) is known as Korea's immigration policy blueprint, offering directions and intentions on matters encompassing border control, immigration, nationality, and social integration for immigrants. Under the *Act on the Treatment of Foreigners in Korea* (2007), the Korean government is required to establish a master plan over a 5-year cycle, detailing the major policy goals and tasks to be performed. The second section of the *Basic Plan*, titled "Promote social integration that respects shared Korean values," highlights the Korea Immigration and Integration Program (KIIP) as a step-by-step learning process for immigrants to be easily integrated into the Korean society, while receiving benefits when applying for permanent residence or citizenship status. The KIIP consists of 415 h of Korean language studies and a 50-h compulsory course on understanding the Korean society. After completing

the KIIP program, the participating immigrants are believed to grasp not only the Korean language ability but also a well-rounded cultural knowledge about Korea. The program has been seen as a great success for those foreigners willing to further their personal development and integration to the Korean society. The *Basic Plan* also delineates the tasks specifically for the immigrant spouses and children with a foreign background in the second section.

Despite the fact that the general public's confusion over the uses of the term multiculturalism has been noted, there was no further clarification in the *2nd Basic Plan for Immigration Policy 2013–2017* on how the government defines its multicultural approach toward foreigners. Nevertheless, the *Basic Plan* has acknowledged its own limitations that "the authorities have concentrated mainly on projects supporting immigrant spouses and their children; other immigrants have received relatively fewer social benefits… about 95 % of the budget allocated to social integration went to immigrant spouses and their children" (Korea Ministry of Justice 2012, p. 16). This suggests that the attention and practices concerning multiculturalism policy in Korea remain heavily oriented to the marriage immigrant and children with a foreign background. In addition, an obvious issue in Korea's *Basic Plan* that must be reconsidered is that the target has always been the foreigners, while native Koreans are irreverent in the discussion of immigration policy or social integration. This further enhances a misleading belief that multiculturalism policy is for foreigners, not for the Koreans, living in Korea. As the current *2nd Basic Plan for Immigration Policy* runs from 2013 to 2017, many action plans and tasks for immigrants are in the middle of implementation. The full effects and results have yet to be realized and evaluated. The current status of six under-researched immigrant groups will be further analyzed with the *Basic Plan* in the latter discussion.

Overview of Immigrant Statistics in Korea

There are 37 visa categories in Korea classified by the purpose of immigration, ranging from *A1 Diplomat* to *H2 Work and Visit for Overseas Koreans*. Based on the period of sojourn, foreigners' stay in Korea can be categorized in three groups, including short-term stay (limited term for up to 90 days), long-term stay (limited term for over 90 days), and permanent residency (unlimited term of stay). Monthly reports on immigration statistics in Korea have been published by Korea Immigration Service, Ministry of Justice (2015) based on its visa categories. The proportions of these immigrant groups by visa categories are detailed in Tables 1 and 2.

As of November 30, 2015, there are 1,860,081 foreigners in Korea Korea Immigration Service 2015a, b). Those "others" listed in Tables 1 and 2 may include sensitive information, such as *A1 Diplomat*, *A3 International Agreement* (*US Military*), and *Miscellaneous* (*G1*). According to Korea Immigration Service (2015a, b), *F4 Overseas Koreans* (324,882 people), *H2 Work and Visit for Overseas Koreans* (288,800 people), and *E9 Non-professional* (276,607 people) ranked as the top 3 foreigner categories staying in Korea, accounting for 17.5, 15.5, and 14.9 %, respectively. It should be noted that the individual groups presented later in this research may include people with different visa status, which may not be directly related to the immigrant's identity or profession. For example, foreign professional sports players may fall under *E6*

Table 1 Number of short-term stay immigrants in Korea by visa categories (as of November 2015)

Category	A2 Government official	B1 Visa exempted	B2 Tourist/transit	C3 Short-term general	C4 Short-term employee	D2 Student	D4 General trainee	E2 Foreign language instructor
Numbers	1386	89,465	73,458	145,609	735	209	1623	233

Category	B2 Tourist/transit	E6 Artist and athlete	E7 Foreign national of special ability	F4 Overseas Koreans	H2 Work and visit for overseas Koreans	Others
Numbers	73,458	454	543	2998	2797	63,860

Source: Korea Immigration Service, Ministry of Justice (2015)

Table 2 Number of long-term stay and permanent resident immigrants in Korea by visa categories (as of November 2015)

Category	D1 Korean arts and culture	D2 Student	D4 General trainee	D5 Long-term news coverage	D6 Religious worker	D7 Intra-company transferee	D8 Job seeker	D9 International trade	E1 Professor	E2 Foreign language instructor	E3 Researcher
Numbers	85	69,784	29,636	92	1711	1531	5897	7531	2647	16,153	3129

Category	E4 Technical instructor	E5 Professional	E6 Artist and athlete	E7 Foreign national of special ability	E9 Non-professional	E10 Maritime crew	F1 Family visitor	F2 Resident	F3 Dependent family	F5 Permanent resident	F6 Marriage migrant	H2 Work and visit for overseas Koreans	Others
Numbers	188	619	4617	19,635	272,429	14,372	82,816	38,523	22,423	122,126	118,912	286,003	27,761

Source: Korea Immigration Service, Ministry of Justice (2015)

Artists and Athlete visa, but other categories are also possible, including *F2 Resident* visa, *F3 Dependent Family* visa, *F4 Overseas Koreans* visa, *F5 Permanent Resident* visa, *F6 Marriage Migrant* visa, or naturalized Korean citizen.

Korea's Bibimbap Theory of Migration?

Korean population is still the majority, making up more than 97 % of the people in Korea. While Korea is trying to embrace multiculturalism, it has, in fact, moved closer toward cultural assimilation. The importance of melting pot and salad bowl has been widely cited and recognized to explain the complexity of cultural assimilation and multiculturalism in migration literature. Yet, the present Korean society is neither a melting pot nor a salad bowl, but it may be referred to as a *Bibimbap*. The *bibimbap* metaphor emerges in-between the melting pot and salad bowl continuum, as Koreans try to mix the diverse ethnic groups in Korea, though the foreign migrants are not being completely integrated. It is like the *Bibimbap* rice (as the majority of Korean population living in Korea), mixing all ingredients or vegetable toppings (foreign migrants as the minority of population in Korea) with the chili pepper paste and raw egg yolk (government multicultural policies or societal pressure) in a bowl, and yet it remains unblended together, no matter how thoroughly one tries to mix. The irony is evident in Korea that all multicultural support centers are built for the foreigners, rather than the Koreans. In fact, no programs offered at the multicultural support center are geared toward Koreans to understand immigrants' cultures. The dividing line remains clear in Korea that Koreans are Koreans, whereas foreign immigrants are not, or cannot be, Koreans. Multiculturalism aims to strengthen intercultural understanding, yet Korea's multicultural policies seem to work as a one-way process of enforcing Korean cultural assimilation.

A bowl of *Bibimbap* will certainly not be tasty if 97 % of the bowl is simply plain rice. This implies that Korea's present multicultural family policies would not create a cohesive and balanced Korean society, if the focus of social integration is still on the Koreans only, rather than the mixing of Koreans with migrants, regardless of foreigners' temporary or permanent status. The criticism is that the present Korean way of integration produces a society that primary reflects the dominant Korean culture, rather than fusing into a completely new entity balanced with other foreign migrants' cultures. It is also evident that some of the coercive assimilation measures that were taken by the government, including Korean language education requirements, strict immigration policies, stipulations of nationalist criteria for citizenship, or preferential treatment of immigration policies favored wealthy elites or businessmen. It is evident from the *Basic Plan* that the overemphasis on *economic stimulus* has overshadowed the Korean government's immigration policy by attracting foreigners with the means to invest, spend, and increase employment leading a boosted Korean economy (Korea Ministry of Justice 2012).

The research explored six types of contemporary migrant groups in Korea, assessing the level of social integration and multicultural discourses of the public through public media and migrant personal experiences. With local reports and discourses, it hopes to characterize and identify these migrants' lives and struggles related to Korean perceptions and domestic policies. This research addresses the need to understand the multicultural

mix by examining various migrant groups in Korea, including the growing numbers of professional expats, foreign teachers, and international students. In addition, the US military service personnel, the foreign professional sports players, non-North Korean international refugees, and the latest, permanent residency immigrants through property investment in Korea are discussed.

Foreign Professors and Native Language Teachers in Korea

The majority of these foreigners in the field of education fall under Professorship (E-1 Visa) and Foreign Language Instructors (E-2 Visa) status. Under the *Basic Plan*, attracting in-demand human resources with support for foreign professional recruitment, such as online application and issuance of E-visas, has been one of the target policy areas (Korea Ministry of Justice 2012). The transient nature of foreign teachers, job security beyond their own control, and employment discrimination based on color are the main characteristics associated with foreign professors and native language teachers in Korea. The group of English teachers, including teachers in cram schools (*hagwon*), regular schools, and universities, is the largest foreigner group working in the educational settings in Korea. Teaching English abroad has been popular among recent university graduates in their twenties, who seek to experience new lives abroad over short-term, usually ranging a year or two, contract commitments, while making money to pay off their university debt back at home. Since many have not treated this as a lifetime career, and the excitement for teaching English in a foreign land may soon diminish after encountering cultural shock or being homesick, the transient nature for some young graduates is common and understandable. However, some research respondents have argued that their unwillingness to stay longer in Korea has more to do with the working conditions that Korea has failed to create a foreigner-friendly employment environment with job security, especially when English teachers are often treated as "temporary" migrant workers. In addition, foreign professors may also face the challenges of obtaining tenure positions in universities, as more and more Korean universities now prefer to hire part-time instructors on a contract basis to avoid costly expenses.

Lack of Job Security

As the largest government-operated foreign English teacher recruitment organization for public and private schools in Korea, the *English Program in Korea* (EPIK) hires teachers for 15 metropolitan cities and provinces' elementary, middle, and high schools, except Gyeonggi and Jeonnam provinces. EPIK only admits citizens from seven countries, including the USA, the UK, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, and Ireland. Native language teachers are sacrificed for the political fight between the central and municipal governments, as the Korean central government pushed ahead its populist "free" childcare and preschool education programs for children under 5 years old—a key election promise made by the President Park Geun-hye. Without any thorough budget plans to finance the childcare and preschool programs from the central government, local municipal governments are struggling to secure funding by downsizing the native language teachers at public schools. In 2015, for instance, 98, 120, and 195 native language teachers have lost their jobs in Inchon, Daegu, and North

Chungcheong Province, respectively (Korea Times 2014). 81.9 % of the primary, middle, and high schools in Korea had at least one native language teacher in 2012, and the number has dropped down to only 65.1 % in 2014 (Korea Times 2014). Job cuts on native language teachers at public schools are growing concerns, not only for the foreign teachers but also some parents who may not be able to afford the English language cram schools. As most English teaching jobs require the employers' sponsorship to obtain the working visa, working on a contract basis poses a risk for their legal immigration status to remain in the country.

Employment Discrimination

Employment discrimination based on color remains common and blatant in Korea, especially for foreign English teachers seeking jobs at cram schools (*hagwon*). Racial discrimination is hard to avoid in Korea's job-seeking process, especially when the country follows a popular recruitment practice to request applicants' face photos as well as height, weight, and family relationship details on the resumes. The appearance certainly weighs more than the teaching ability in a Korean business culture that overemphasizes superficial beauty. White Caucasians are normally considered more employable than Asians, including overseas Korean *Gyopos* (people of Korean descent with foreign nationalities), or black native English speakers at language schools. This discrimination has been said as a circular problem in Korea, entailing that the root cause of problem comes from some Korean parents with strong racial preferences to pressure cram schools' discriminatory selections (Jung 2014). Racial preferences may not always be an intentional act, but the deep-rooted Korean mentality may seem hard to change that all white Caucasians are deemed to be native English speakers. Furthermore, there is also hiring discrimination based on the accent, with the North American English accent being most familiar among Koreans, followed by some other less popular accents of South African, New Zealand, and Australian English. At times, employment discrimination based on gender also takes place, as female teachers are preferred over male, particularly when the school environment is primarily for minors or young children. Furthermore, employment discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation also exists. For example, an English language teacher employment post at Korea Nazarene University in Chungcheongnam-do declares that "drinking, smoking and homosexuality are not allowed," and applicants are required to reveal their HIV status or if they have had a sex-reassignment surgery (Lee 2014, p. 1). Unfortunately, employment discrimination for foreign English teachers is hard to avoid in Korea, when the selection and hiring decisions are solely made by the private employers.

International Students in Korea

International students, who have perhaps become one of the most visible foreigner groups in Korea, also draw immigration policy attention in terms of employment and residency status. As a way of drawing foreign students to secure Korea's future growth engine, a variety of measures outlined in the *Basic Plan* (2012) has taken place to attract foreign students, including the implementation of Global Korea Scholarship and

improvement on foreign students' quality of life and living environment (Korea Ministry of Justice 2012). The number of international students in Korea has fluctuated from 40,858 in 2008, to the peak of 63,653 in 2011, and down to 53,636 in 2014 (Korea Ministry of Education 2015). This drop since 2011 was affected by the Korean government's International Education Quality Assurance System, in which universities with poor ratings of international student management were banned from admitting foreign students. The number of international students in Korea, however, should be larger, when taking into consideration the primary and secondary schools, as well as Korean language training schools. With 531 higher education institutions (universities, colleges, and graduate schools) in a country facing a declining fertility rate, attracting international students has become a vital government strategy to not only globalize its education but also boost the student populations. In an aggressive attempt to transform Korea into Asia's "Educational Hub," the ministry has set a target of 200,000 international students in the country by 2020 (Korea Ministry of Education 2015). Along with this, a number of universities in Korea also began their so-called internationalization or Americanized-style education transformation since the late 2000s by creating special global campuses, an international curriculum, and delivering English lectures.

Chinese International Students

Geographical proximity may have played a major role in attracting Chinese international students to Korea. As of April 2014, around 53,000 Chinese international students were living in Korea, and they are the largest group in Korea, accounting for 59 % of all foreign students in the country (Chosun Ilbo 2014). In Cheongju University, for example, more than 90 % of the foreign students are Chinese, and Chungcheongbuk-do government has identified *Chinese students* as their regional special characteristics to host the annual Chinese Student Festival with various Korean wave (K-pop) and job matching events. Around all major Korean universities, Chinese international students have also transformed the residential landscapes such that restaurants and supermarkets selling Chinese food and groceries have opened nearby with their menus and signs in Chinese. For instance, at Keimyung University in Daegu, where 73 % of the 1100 foreign students are Chinese, the university has opened a Chinese-only dormitory and Chinese student's lounge, offering Chinese reading materials and free calling services to China. Outside the campus, due to the sharp increase in Chinese student numbers, the housing rents in the Keimyung University neighborhood have soared up to KRW100,000 over the last 3 years alone (Chosun Ilbo 2014). Since 2011, there has been a new trend for more universities in Korea, especially in the capital region of Seoul, offering lectures in Chinese exclusively to Chinese international students, including Kyung Hee University, Konkuk University, and Hanyang University.

International Students' Extension of Stay After Graduation

International students are often tempted to extend their stay in Korea after graduation. The Korean government also hopes to utilize these educated foreign talents for its own economic development. As encouraged by the *Basic Plan* (2012), job fairs are hosted to provide foreign students with access to employment opportunities in Korea after

graduation (Korea Ministry of Justice 2012). Korean conglomerates, or *Chaebols* in Korean, have also set up recruitment programs specifically targeted at international students, as part of their global market expansion strategies. As of February 2015, the Korean government has relaxed visa rules for foreign graduates to remain in Korea (Jung 2015). Job seeking (D-10) visa, for example, has been extended from 1 year of stay to 2 years, and the previously attached conditions (grade point average above 3.0, national certificates, and professor recommendations) are abolished altogether. Employment Visa (E-7), which used to grant to foreign graduates only working in a university major subject-related area of employment, now has been opened to other employments unrelated to the major. Those who earned their master's degree or higher from Korea or a bachelor in the advanced area of high technology and engineering are eligible to apply for Korean permanent residency (Korea Ministry of Justice 2015). To retain foreign graduates in the country by easing permanent residency and employment visa rules, the Korean government hopes their stay will help tackle the nation's demographic problems of a declining labor force.

Non-North Korean International Refugees

One would hardly think that Korea has evolved itself from a refugee-sending country to a recipient country. Korea officially ratified the *1951 Refugee Convention* in 1992. However, it was not until 2001 that the Korean government first granted refugee status to asylum seekers, and in 2011 introduced its first legislation of *Refugee Act* as the basis for domestic law, enabling government policies and programs related to the international refugees and asylum seekers to be legally implemented in Korea. It is worth noting that North Koreans are excluded from the so-called refugees category in Korea, and unlike other refugees or migrants, they are managed under the Korean Ministry of Unification, rather than the Korea Immigration Office. The Korean government still regards North Koreans as Koreans, despite the international political reality of two independent countries. North Korean defectors, who come to South Korea, are granted Korean citizenship upon arrival with training and resettlement assistance, including education support and social welfare programs.

International Refugees in Korea

The majority of refugees came from Asian countries, namely Pakistan, Nepal, China, Burma, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, while there are also sizeable numbers of African origin, including Uganda, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, and Ethiopia (Korea Immigration Service 2015a, b). For instance, Jumma indigenous people, who came from Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill bordering Myanmar, account for the second largest group of recognized refugees in Korea with the majority residing in Gimpo, Gyeonggi-do. In March 2010, for the first time, the Korean government granted Korean citizenship to a recognized Ethiopian refugee who fled persecution from his homeland and arrived in 2001 (UNHCR 2010). The move to grant citizenship to refugees is considered to be a significant development in Asia, where very few countries have ratified and implemented the *Refugee Convention*, let alone extending citizenship status to refugees. The citizenship status, which provides refugee migrants the equal entitlement of rights

and benefits as the local Koreans, is the ultimate layer of requirements in local integration. The measure is generally welcomed by the international community and civil society groups.

Dilemma with International Refugee's Applications

However, the provision of refugee protection in Korea is not without challenges and problems. One controversial area lies in the Korean government's insistence that an asylum seeker should file an application for his or her asylum status immediately after arrival without using the forged documentation. Entering the country on a false passport is considered a crime, and it can lead to deportation from Korea. It is debatable if asylum seekers, who have waited longer without applying, may abuse the application process purposely for their illegal extension of stay in Korea, while it is also doubtful if all asylum seekers, who fled from their homeland under emergency situations, may always avail themselves to obtain genuine travel documentation with real identity. Korea conducts refugee status determination review for each applicant and the assessment takes a span of 3 years. While waiting for the results, applicants' entitlement to employment and social welfare depends solely on the discretionary power of the Minister of Justice.

Since Korea started to accept asylum claims from 1994, 472 people out of 10,089 asylum applicants have been granted refugee status (Korea Immigration Service 2015a, b). In addition, 747 applicants who are found not to be legal refugees through the assessment, but still in need of international protection on humanitarian grounds, have been granted a residence permit in Korea. As of February 2015, among 2176 pending applicants, political reason accounts for the largest group (2861 cases), followed by religion (2282 cases), civil war (932 cases), ethnicity (632 cases), and family unification factors (460 cases) (Korea Immigration Service 2015a, b).

US Military Personnel in Korea

Prior to the 1990s, incoming migration to Korea was negligible and largely unnoticed in the Korean society. It is particularly true for non-Asian migrants, except the American service personnel around the US military bases. Given the temporary nature of US military deployment, migration literature tends to ignore the presence of this particular group of foreign migrants in Korea. Although the US military service personnel, known as the United States Forces Korea (USFK), are only on a limited term of stay in Korea, their interactions with Koreans outside their bases are inevitable. US military service personnel are indeed no different from those temporary labor migrants with a fixed-term job to help defend and protect South Korea's national security. Some have even brought their families to stay together in Korea or even marry local Koreans to form multicultural families.

USFK History and Development in Korea

As part of the Korean War legacy, USFK began its operation in Korea since 1957 with its headquarters based in Yongsan, a prime district of Seoul, and more than 70 air force,

navy, and army camp bases throughout South Korea. In the event of an armed conflict in the region, the US leader has power to command the South Korean military during the wartime. The number of US soldiers stationed in Korea has dropped significantly since the peak of 326,823 people in the 1950s to the low of 28,500 in the 2010s (Kim and Gil 2013). As estimated by USFK in 2011, the total US Department of Defense population in South Korea will increase from 54,010 in 2011 to 84,000 people in 2020, when including all military families, dependants, civilian employees, and retirees in South Korea (US Government Accountability Office 2011). US military presence in Korea remains a contentious topic in the Korean society. Opposition to the ongoing US military operation in Korea and Koreans' anti-American sentiment are evident and easily aggravated, especially when the focus was on the USFK members' criminal acts or incidents, such as murder, robbery, rape cases, and the most well-known Yangju Highway Incident in 2002, killing two schoolgirls.

Korean Women Married with US Military Servicemen

In the 1960s and 1970s, a prostitute business culture was popular under the table and common around the US military bases in Korea. Korean prostitutes servicing American military personnel were often nicknamed "Western Princess" or *Yanggongju* in Korean, a derogatory term with negative connotation of a vulgar and shameful social object (Kim 1998). Many former prostitutes pointed out that the Korean government actively facilitated the prostitute business, offering "western etiquette" courses for the prostitutes. For Korea, the government-institutionalized brothels not only contributed to earning the dollars to support its economy but also eased a hidden concern that Washington might pull its troops out of the country (Evans 2014). During the 1950s–1960s, an increasing phenomenon of the Korean intercultural marriages often involved Korean women married to American soldiers. This has started the very early chapter of intercultural marriages in Korean history with the significant ethnic expansion of Korean-American communities across the USA. However, the prostitute culture at that time has resulted in a negative stigma for Korean women who had relationships with US military personnel. Furthermore, the children born of Korean women and US servicemen also suffered social prejudice and discrimination in the Korean society. Since the Korean War, more than 100,000 Korean women, who married American soldiers, moved to the USA, while some Korean women and their children were left behind, as the US servicemen ended their term in Korea (Cho 2008).

Foreign Professional Sports Players in Korea

There is not much literature addressing foreign migrants as professional sports players in Korea. Yet, for the past two decades, thousands of foreign players have set foot in various professional sports leagues in Korea, and the number of in-takes has been accelerating for teams to look for imported talents. Foreign athletes playing in Korean leagues make valuable contributions, especially their influences on the performance of Korean athletes to further develop sports skills. For the majority of foreign players, it may be regarded as either a temporary midway stopover in their professional sports careers or a final shot at performance before their retirement from sports.

Foreign Professional Athletes as Sports Migrant Laborer

The Korea Baseball Organization (KBO) began its introduction of foreign players in 1998, with an initial annual salary cap at US$120,000. As the league grows to ten professional teams, KBO teams now are allowed to carry up to three foreigners on their active rosters, and the previous US$300,000 limits of the salary cap were abolished in 2015. Two imported players will be allowed to play in a game at any one time (International Baseball Federation 2015). Although the rules regarding the foreign players vary from different sports leagues, it has become very common to see foreign sports players in K League (Korea Professional Football League), Korean Basketball League, Women's Korean Basketball League, Korean Volleyball League, and Korea Baseball Organization. Foreign professional sports players have increasingly gained popularity among Korean sports fans.

Foreign Professional Athletes with Korean Citizenship

While it may be seen as a temporary career change for the athletes, there are also those who successfully embraced the transition of playing sports and make their permanent home in Korea. With the Korean Olympic Committee (KOC)'s recommendations for special naturalizations, a number of foreign-born athletes have been granted naturalized Korean citizenship to represent Korea at sporting events worldwide. As of 2014, there are 46 foreign-born athletes who obtained Korean citizenship through the special naturalization scheme from the Ministry of Justice (Inchon Asian Games Organizing Committee 2014). Thanks to the revised Korea nationality law in 2011, the special naturalization policy grants Korean citizenships to individuals with outstanding talents in sports. Nonetheless, the question remains with public acceptance of how well the Korean public has embraced visible minorities to represent the nation.

> The public might be more welcoming toward athletes of Korean ancestry seen as 'returning home' and 'representing the homeland,'… The Korean public may show a sense of disapproval, reluctance or even bewilderment if those foreign athletes are included in a 'national team'… Although Koreans' exposure to and understanding of multiculturalism have increased over the years, Koreans' notions of 'us' and the nation are still, by and large, grounded on their shared blood (Professor Park Jung-sun, Asian Pacific Studies, California State University, quoted in an interview with John Power for The Korean Herald, June 4, 2012.) (Power 2012).

In the field of basketball, there are a number of naturalized Korean players who were born to an American father and a Korean mother. While some Korean-American athletes have returned to re-take up their roots in Korea, others may not necessarily have any previous heritage connections with Korea. For example, volleyball player, Who In-Jung is the first ever naturalized Chinese-born Korean athlete and a well-respected veteran in Korean Volleyball League. Brock Radunske, a Canadian-born naturalized Korean who became a Korean citizen in March 2013, is the first foreign-born ice hockey player for the Korean national ice hockey team. Kong Sang Jeong, a naturalized Korean and a gold medalist in the 2014 Winter

Olympics Games in short track speed skating, was born with Taiwanese nationality.

Permanent Residency Through Real Estate Investment in Korea

Investment migration, also known as economic citizenship, often refers to those who gain the right of permanent residency or citizenship through making an investment in the required amount of foreign capital, length of term, and field of economic activity stipulated by the government regulations. Traditionally, the investment migration is commonly practiced in the island states of the Caribbean region as a measure to attract foreign investment for domestic economic growth, and the approach has been increasingly adopted by all major immigrant receiving countries of the West, including some EU countries, such as Portugal's Golden Visa scheme, and Malta's and Cyprus' citizenship-by-investment program. However, the investment migration is not one without controversy, as countries offer citizenship or passports for purchase.

Korea's Economic Citizenship Migration Scheme

Korea has followed suit to offer its own investment migration scheme since 2009, and the *Basic Plan* (2012) has further expanded the areas subject to investment immigration and diversified the types of investment (Korea Ministry of Justice 2012). There are various types of avenues that foreigners can invest their funds into, and any high net worth individual, who is capable of investing a sum of 50 million (KRW) into the Korean local economy, is eligible to apply for permanent residency in Korea. However, the one that receives most attention is permanent residency through real estate acquisition launched in Jeju Island in February 2010, particularly the Chinese investors. As reported by the Chosun Ilbo (2015), there have been 1007 people who obtained F-2 Residency visa through the real estate immigration policy, since the policy was first introduced in 2010. Among those, 99 % of them (992 people) are Chinese nationals. During the same period, foreigners have bought 1522 recreational condos, reaching the investment scale of about 1 trillion Korean won. Korea's *Permanent Residence Policy for Investors in Real Estate* is one of Korea's policies of attracting foreign investors. Foreigners, who invest over USD$50,000 in recreational facilities in the Jeju Island region, will be granted a residence visa (F-2) for 3 years. The accompanying family members, including spouses and minor children, also receive the residential visa status. After maintaining the residence visa for 5 years, the permanent residency visa will be granted, and these residents are subsequently eligible to apply for Korean citizenship. Recently, the Jeju government intends to raise the threshold of investment requirement that foreigners need to buy about $500,000 in local government bonds.

The investment migration policy has received criticism. The residency requirement is waived such that the investors are not required to remain in Korea during the investment period, as long as their visa was renewed before expiry. Moreover, once the investors have received their permanent residency (F5) status, the investors are free to trade their property of investment, and they are free to relocate out of Jeju Island to anywhere in Korea. In addition to Jeju Island, there are three similar permanent residency programs through real estate acquisition. Korea's attempt to resolve local

government budget shortages by attracting massive foreign investment is focused on the leisure and tourism sectors. Currently, the investment program ranging from US$500,000 to US$1.5 million has been extended to the Unbuk Leisure Complex, a free economic zone in Incheon, the Kyeong-Do Oceanic Tourism Complex in Yeosu, South Jeolla-Do, as well as Alpensia Tourism Complex in Pyeong Chang, Kangwon-Do, in support of the recreational facility development for 2018 Pyeong Chang Winter Olympic Games in Korea. It is clear in the *Basic Plan* (2012) that preferential treatment of immigration policies is expanding to favor wealthy elites or businessmen as part of the Korean government's *economic stimulus* measure.

Conclusion

The research explored six types of under-researched migrant groups in Korea, characterizing and showcasing the diversity of migrant populations in Korea. One goal in this research is the hope to inspire a new direction of migration research onto the diversified and newly developed migrant groups of Korea. The Bibimbap illustration seeks to help understand the complexity of Korea's multicultural reality and assess the experiences of migrants in Korea. Korea is not a multicultural country, at least at its current stage. It is obvious that having only 3 % of the population from abroad does not make a country *multicultural*. In contrast to the melting pot and salad bowl, the Bibimbap model characterizes the present struggles of Korean migration reality that while the country claims to pursue multiculturalism, cultural assimilation seems to dominate the overall integration process. The integration efforts from the government and community groups with support centers for multicultural families are worth appreciating, yet it seems that more needs to be done for social integration from a different perspective. The government has admitted in its *Basic Plan for Immigration Policy* (2012) that there is a growing concern over the crisis of national identity, as "most Koreans still do not recognize or embrace cultural diversity" (Korea Ministry of Justice 2012, p. 20). In particular, there has been an imbalanced emphasis on cultural understanding for foreign migrants to understand Korean culture, rather than Koreans to understand foreign cultures. Korean language ability and Korean cultural knowledge are used as an assessment indicator for immigration criteria, making it difficult for foreigners to seek permanent settlement.

Furthermore, Korea has yet to pass a comprehensive anti-discrimination law. The UN Special Rapporteur on racism, Mutuma Ruteere, points out that racism incidents and xenophobia problems in Korea are serious enough to be brought to light (UN News Center 2014). In Korea, the word multicultural is used to refer to the multicultural family and has its legal definition in the Korean Law, specifically referring to those families consisting of a foreign migrant and a person with Korean nationality. Families that are made exclusively of immigrants are excluded from the legal term of multicultural family and are not protected under the *Support for Multicultural Families Act* in Korea. Some Koreans claim that multicultural policy enacted by the government actually discriminates against Koreans, as they are not entitled to the same social benefits and programs. This suggests that the Korean government has failed to make multicultural policies for all members of the society, so that the misconception leads some Koreans to believe that multiculturalism is a preferential policy only for the foreign migrants.

Combating racism and preventing xenophobia from proliferating in Korea through implementing education and awareness campaigns may be an important first step to bring about total social integration in Korea.

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