

The Pennsylvania State University

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**LEARNING THROUGH WORK: HOW NORTH KOREAN MIGRANTS LEARN TO  
INTERACT, MANAGE EMOTIONS, AND DEVELOP COPING STRATEGIES AT  
SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IN SOUTH KOREA**

A Dissertation in

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by

Jinhee Choi

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The dissertation of Jinhee Choi was reviewed and approved by the following:

Esther S. Prins  
Professor of Lifelong Learning and Adult Education  
Dissertation Advisor  
Chair of Committee

Craig A. Campbell  
Assistant Teaching Professor of Lifelong Learning and Adult Education

Allison Henward  
Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction

David M. Post  
Professor of Educational Theory and Policy

Hyung Joon Yoon  
Assistant Professor of Workforce Education

Susan Land  
Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Learning and Performance Systems

## ABSTRACT

Renowned as a theater of the Cold War, the Korean peninsula has been divided between North Korea and South Korea over the past 70 years, with each country developing its distinctive political, economic, and cultural systems. Over the past 30 years, approximately, 33,000 North Koreans have entered South Korea, where they experience part-time and precarious employment, as well as unemployment. Through collaboration with corporations and non-governmental organizations, the South Korea government seeks to support North Korean migrants' employment by providing training programs and job opportunities, particularly through social enterprises.

These work sites are intended to be a primary avenue for North Koreans' sociocultural and economic integration into South Korean society, yet there is no empirical literature on how North Korean migrants learn in their everyday workplaces. In particular, policy makers, scholars, and practitioners have neglected to examine how North Korean migrants' unique sociocultural backgrounds and characteristics create opportunities and challenges in their workplace interactions. Few studies have demonstrated what fosters or hinders the learning of North Korean migrants in customer service jobs in general, and at social enterprise settings in particular, places where employees' ethnic identities are on display.

This dissertation seeks to interpret and understand (a) how North Korean migrants learn to interact with co-workers, customers, and supervisors at social enterprises in South Korea, (b) how they develop ways to manage their feelings to fulfill the emotional requirements of the service jobs, and (c) how social enterprise organizational settings shape their coping strategies. I used ethnographic methods (participant-observation, informal and semi-structured interviews, and field notes) to conduct research with 25 participants over nine months at social enterprise restaurants and cafés in a major South Korean city. The study's theoretical framework integrates a social constructivist approach to learning (Illeris, 2004) and emotional labor (Hochschild, 1979,

2012) to explore what and how participants learn in their workplace environment. The narrative and discourse analyses of the multiple sources revealed several key findings. First, the participants' experiences of strong tensions in communication and interpersonal relationships were rooted in linguistic and cultural gaps between North and South Korea. To integrate themselves into demanding business environments, participants drew on the cultural practices (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Swidler, 2001) of memorization and *nunchi* (an ability to read implicit social cues and understand intentions) to avoid anxiety, confusion, and humiliation. Second, some South Korean customers labeled and treated participants as their enemies and as uneducated, sexual objects from a lower social class. These perceptions evoked ambivalent responses toward North Korean migrants: hostility and contempt, but also sympathy for their plight. Third, at the group level participants developed interactive coping strategies, appraising (accessing and evaluating external challenges), storytelling, and collective criticism, to access information, release intense feelings, and correct each other's attitudes, respectively. At the individual level, participants managed the emotional requirements of the workplace by embracing, avoiding, and/or resisting social bias toward North Koreans. Finally, social enterprises' organizational identities, artifacts, and environments induced participants' sense of exclusion and otherness, which served to undermine the championed social mission of integration. This study contests the deficit discourse on North Korean migrants as incompetent workers and social burdens. It underscores how the contradictions and complications encountered by these migrants catalyzed their self-directed learning and efforts to fit in. This research calls for careful integration of adjustment supports and training programs for social enterprises that hire the socially marginalized populations within sociocultural and historical contexts. The findings can be used to foster dialogue among inter-sector stakeholders regarding the complexities of social enterprises and to improve opportunities, adult education, and professional development to support North Koreans' workforce integration.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

FN: fieldnotes (e.g., “FN 6/05/17” indicates citation of fieldnotes written on 6/05/17)

NA: Narrative Analysis

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Every morning beginning at 8:00 A.M., chatty South Korean customers come to a café in metropolitan city to share a cup of coffee. The customers make a combined loud, cheerful noise with a sense of liveliness and excitement. The barista's rhythmic use of a manual coffee grinder, making rapid triple mechanical beats, creates a rich coffee fragrance throughout the shop. A male customer approaches to order ten coffees for his team. The customer abruptly addresses Sun-hwa, a barista:

Customer: Give me my coffees, promptly and accurately. How did you get down from North Korea? Did you cross the *Tumen River*? Did you swim? [*staring at the barista with curiosity*]

Sun-hwa [*very quickly and matter-of-fact*]: I just came.

Customer [*in a cheerful voice*]: Have you seen a concentration camp?

Sun-hwa [*long pause*]: It is uncommon to be a political prisoner, so I do not know.

Customer: Really? There are people who have been there ... I watched it on television.

Neither Sun-hwa nor a co-worker, Hye-ryong, responded to the customer's last question. A while after the customer's departure, Hye-ryong quietly took my hands, pulled me to a corner of the café, stared at my eyes, and asked a question:

Hye-ryong: What do you think? I do not want to see such people any more, and North and South should not be unified. South Korea is trash. I would rather return to China. That person is a *zhaoshi* [找事; troublesome in Chinese language, yet she meant to say a nasty customer]. (FN, 2/15/17<sup>1</sup>)

On a typical day at a seemingly mundane coffee shop in Seoul, the topic of conversation may not be typical. Sun-hwa and Hye-ryong's responses are rooted in experiences beyond their surrounding vicinity. The barista's response is molded by a life in the neighboring state of North Korea. Sun-hwa, the manager of the coffee shop, is clearly aware of how to serve her customers at a café. Her "nasty customer" will return tomorrow for more coffee, and Sun-hwa knows that she should respond to his question to guarantee his return. Given the severe competition with neighboring cafés, securing a regular customer is imperative. Sun-hwa is also aware that the nature of his question is not about her. Rather, it represents an alienating image of North Korean migrants<sup>2</sup> in South Korea colored

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<sup>1</sup> My field notes were originally written in Korean and the excerpts were translated into English. To translate from Korean and capture cultural and social meanings, I adopted both Romanization of academic application of Korean and administrative descriptions (e.g., proper nouns, names, locations) of revised Romanization.

<sup>2</sup> In South Korea, multiple terms are used to refer to North Koreans who live there. Since Korea was divided, North Koreans have variously been described as defectors, refugees, and migrants. Each of these terms carries distinctive connotations. These changing designations reflect social and political shifts in South Korea

by the media. To ensure the customer's return, Sun-hwa provides a short, moderated answer. Hye-ryong's lament discloses the nature of her experiences as a North Korean migrant in South Korea, who has also spent time in China. Many times, her emotions cannot find an outlet, and so Hye-ryong learns to be mute. The only uncommon event happening today is when there are no South Korean customers; then she quickly opens up her broken heart to me. The bitterness reflects her perception about South Korea and the national fiction of "one Korea." As a way to disguise her irritation from customers, she translates "nasty customer" from Korean (*Jinsang Gogaeak*) to Chinese (*zhaoshi*<sup>3</sup>), and teaches me how to label such a customer between us; *zhaoshi zhaoshi...zhaoshi ...* I repeat *zhaoshi*, and Hye-ryong responds in Korean, correcting Sun-hwa's pronunciation, highlighting the pitch. Sun-hwa, who is also fluent in Chinese, repeats *zhaoshi* like we are a playing game.

While working with North Korean migrants in social enterprise cafés and restaurants during my participant observation, I pondered my experiences and questioned my assumptions regarding migrants' resettlement through a workplace. From this experience, I learned about the concerns and hopes for Korean unification and how North Korean migrants may be a bridge between North and

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(Hough & Bell, 2020; Kim, 2012). The current official term used by the Ministry of Unification is *Pukhan it'al chumin*, residents who have fled from North Korea. The designation is often abbreviated to *t'albukcha* (North Korean defectors) or sometimes used as *saet'omin* (new residents). Depending on how my North Korean research participants view themselves, they used different terms to describe own identity. For instance, one participant who wanted to avoid the negative connotation of defector, used *saet'omin* (new resident); yet other participants hated this term because they had spent considerable time (a decade or more) in South Korea and considered themselves South Koreans. Others who became familiar with South Korean communication referred themselves as *t'albukcha* (North Korean defector) because it can help clear communication. Others who had experienced political prison camps and persecution of family members used *t'albukcha* to indicate their antipathy toward the North Korean regime. Some other participants who still considered themselves as North Koreans in South Korea, called themselves *Buck-Choseonin* (North Korean), whereas one participant who wanted to construct a unified Korean identity called himself *hanbandoin* (Korean peninsula person). Depending on their personal, social, and political situations, participants had differing motivations and intentions for choosing what to call themselves. In this dissertation, I primarily refer to research participants and their North Korean peers as *migrants* because it is a relatively neutral term, it projects the multicultural social environment in South Korea, it links North Koreans with other migrants, and it helps me analyze their transnational border-crossing experience as a part of their learning (Chung, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> *Zhaoshi* (找事) means to cause trouble in Chinese and *Jinsanggogaeak* (진상고객) means a problematic customer in Korean.

South. This social enterprise has been founded through the sector collaborations (i.e., government, corporations, and non-governmental organizations) to employ migrants and connect them through real social interactions with South Koreans. Yet, from Hye-ryong's perspective, unification is a delusion, and many "nasty, rude, and ignorant" South Koreans will never be ready for unification because of their strong opposition and ignorance toward North Koreans.

As I have questioned my own ideological orientation and stance in learning from Hye-ryong and Sun-hwa, I remembered a song from my childhood, one that every South Korean memorized in school, which presents unification as being *our* hope. Yet, who are *we*, and how does this myth fundamentally shape North Korean migrants' experiences and their learning in South Korea? North Korean migrants come from a different culture and have widely different social experiences that are imprinted in their thoughts and behaviors.

Sun-hwa and Hye-ryong are North Koreans who have been South Korean citizens for more than two years. Their experiences at the social enterprise café are common experiences for North Korean migrants in South Korea rooted in and originating from the ideological gap between the two countries (Hough & Bell, 2020; Ju, 2016). The socio-political, economic, and cultural differences<sup>4</sup> between the two countries inevitably create a mental and physical distance between North Korean migrants and South Korean citizens (Cho, Son & Choi, 2020). Those migrants' workplace experiences in South Korea require learning a new dialect, social cues, and skills, and they simultaneously need to manage unfavorable social relations related to the historical and ideological tensions between the two Koreas. To ignore these multi-layered socio-political and cultural differences is to lose sight of North Korean migrants' perspective on their workplace adjustment and how they learn from those contexts.

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<sup>4</sup> Per 2020 figures, South Korea's Gross National Income is 52.9 times higher than North Korea's. While North Korea has pursued a military-first policy, South Korea has achieved the "miracle of the Han river," became a part of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1996, and boasts the world's 12<sup>th</sup> largest economy in GDP (Koen & Beom, 2020). The types of employment that North Korean migrants can participate in are shaped by individual, social, material, linguistic, and ideological constraints.

## **Problem Statement**

The workplace plays a significant role in migrant and refugee employees' social adjustment (Finch, Catalano, Novaco, & Vega, 2003). In South Korea, government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) support North Korean migrants' employment by designing and providing training programs<sup>5</sup> and employment opportunities. These methods are rooted in a behaviorist approach (See Chapter Three, Job Support and Incentive Systems) to training that measures competence and skill sets, providing financial incentives upon completion of the training. These supports, however, are mostly planned and developed by South Koreans (Hana Foundation, 2020a). Although North Korean migrants are the recipients of these opportunities, policy makers and scholars have neglected migrants' learning experiences and their unique sociocultural backgrounds and characteristics as people who were raised in socialist country. Except for a few research studies conducted with North Korean migrant students in higher education (Lee, 2014; Park, 2016; Yoo, 2012), adult learning scholars and educators have seldom examined how North Korean migrants learn in their everyday workplace.

A high percentage of migrants work in the service industry (Hana Foundation, 2020b), where good communication skills are particularly important for success at work. In such environments, North Korean migrants' culturally distinct communication and behaviors can be a main source of conflict and tension in interacting with co-workers, customers, and supervisors. Indeed, it has been reported that North Korean migrants often struggle with maintaining good interpersonal relationships in the workplace (Cho, Son & Choi, 2020; Hana Foundation, 2020a). Without understanding the differences in communication that may complicate migrants' social interactions, people may interpret

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<sup>5</sup> In South Korea, a little more than half (51.4%) of North Korean migrants participate in job training programs provided by government organizations and NGOs. Although their completion rate is 89.4%, only half (49.8%) subsequently work in a related field (Hana Foundation, 2020b).

these differences as evidence of maladjustment or pathological dispositions (Cho, 2004; Cho & Chung, 2006). Much of the existing discourse about North Korean migrants' workplace adjustment is based on reports from South Koreans and from dropout rates rather than migrants' own perspectives. The literature is relatively silent regarding migrants' views of the sociocultural factors that shape their social interactions and how they navigate challenges to learn to interact with co-workers, customers, and supervisors. Research on these topics can support a nuanced understanding of North Korean migrants' social adjustment and promote tailored workplace training programs. The present study aims to fill the gap in knowledge of migrants' workplace experiences in social enterprise cafés and restaurants.

In face-to-face service business, employees experience emotional labor as an integral part of daily operations (Hochschild, 2012). Specifically, service providers may suffer from social labeling and bias that cause people to discriminate against their ethnicity, gender, and social class (Grandey, Houston & Avery, 2019; Nath, 2011). In response, employees develop personal or collective coping strategies to manage or release stress to get through each work day. Although published articles have reported that North Korean migrants suffer from prejudice and stigmatization in South Korea (Chun, 2020; Schemer & Meltzer, 2020), there has been no attention to how such social factors affect North Korean migrants' emotional labor in service work.<sup>6</sup> By exploring how North Korean migrants learn to manage their feelings to fulfill the emotional requirements of the service workplace in general and the social enterprise work environment in particular, the current study seeks to highlight how migrants learn to overcome sociocultural challenges in the workplace. Their experience is particularly important in the case of social enterprise service businesses because they advertise the fact that they hire North Korean migrants, whereas in other workplaces migrants can more easily hide their status.

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<sup>6</sup> Service work consists of both tangible and intangible labor (Korczynski, 2005). A tangible element of a barista's work, for instance, is making coffee. The intangible aspect is related to the people work—how the barista interacts with customers and colleagues.

Throughout the research literature (Barraket, 2007; Bidget & Jeong, 2016) and policy documents (OECD & UNHRC, 2018; Patuzzi, Benton & Embiricos, 2019), social enterprises are assumed to provide better opportunities tailored to migrants, thereby facilitating socio-economic integration. Policy makers, scholars, and practitioners need to examine migrants' experiences in social enterprises and inquire how their work settings foster or hinder migrants' learning.

### **Purpose and Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this research study is to interpret and understand North Korean migrants' learning at work in South Korean social enterprises, particularly, how they learn to interact with others and manage their feelings and how the social enterprise environment influences their coping strategies. I have characterized those migrants' experiences of workplace learning by focusing on how their informal learning occurs and how their prior experiences in North Korea and China shape their learning approaches in South Korea. Exploring migrants' perceptions of their reality and how they learn to adjust in a new, emotionally-laden environment can help policy makers, practitioners, and scholars to accommodate, facilitate, and promote programs and activities for North Korean migrants that better aid their workplace and community integration.

This study contributes to the adult learning literature by enhancing our understanding of migrants' workplace learning, in this case, North Korean migrants in the service business at social enterprises. Migrants learn in multiple ways, depending on their experiences of social spaces (Jackson, 2010). Prior research on North Korean migrants has primarily relied on surveys and structured interviews, whereas this study uses ethnographic descriptions to convey migrants' emic perspectives. My study, therefore, creates a deeper, more nuanced picture of North Korean migrants' learning and workplace experiences.

Second, this study contributes to the literature on emotion and workplace learning by providing empirical evidence of coping strategies and how these are related to identity construction and power dynamics. Although emotion affects adults' workplace learning in multiple ways (e.g., identity construction, power relations, and well-being), few studies have been conducted to identify how adults learn to manage and/or protect their emotion by developing coping strategies (see e.g., Bierema, 2008; Dirkx, 2001). Particularly for refugees and migrants, sociocultural factors benefit or undermine their learning by creating a sense of vulnerability and shame (Morrice, 2013). This study can help identify how migrants learn to manage emotions at work by adopting various coping strategies, which is an integral part of migrants' workplace learning.

Third, this study reveals both the strengths of and barriers to North Korean migrants' learning, which is rooted in their experience of two distinct cultural and political systems. Few comprehensive studies have explored adjustment from the perspective of North Korean migrants and how they learn to navigate in an ideologically conflicting post-Cold War South. A nuanced understanding of the migrants' experiences can be used to improve their workplace training and social adjustment programs. To my knowledge, this study is the first ethnographic description of North Korean migrants' workplace learning in South Korea.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

- 1) How and what do North Korean migrants who are employed at social enterprise cafés and restaurants learn about working in South Korea?
  - a) How do they learn to interact with co-workers, customers, and supervisors?

- b) How do they learn to manage their feelings to fulfill the emotional requirements of their jobs?
- 2) How does the social enterprise work environment shape North Korean migrants' coping strategies?

Answering these questions revealed how participation in a social enterprise workplace shaped adult migrants' informal learning.

### **Background: North Korean Migrants' Employment, Cultural, and Policy Context**

Despite limited labor opportunities and an unfavorable job market, North Korean migrants' economic participation in South Korea is high. A total of 62.1% of migrants are employed (70.6% for men, 54.1% for women), working an average of 46.5 hours per week (Hana Foundation, 2020a). Although North Korean migrants work 8.7 hours per week longer, on average, than South Korean citizens, they earn \$480 less per month (\$1,600). In terms of job security, the majority of those migrants are hired into flexible and temporary jobs. Among the hired migrants, 72.6% have a guaranteed employment period in their contract. The average North Korean migrants' length of service in one workplace is 27.7 months, compared to 43.3 months for South Koreans. They are primarily employed in simple and unskilled labor (24.3%), service work (19.6%), and skilled jobs (11.0%; Hana Foundation, 2020b).

North Korean migrants report workplace challenges of oppression by peoples' ignorance and stereotyping in their social interactions (Kim, 2017; Lee & Lee, 2020; Yeo, 2015). North Korean migrants describe their experience as being "stigmatized person[s]," apparent "outsider[s]" in South Korean society, and the "seed[s] of trouble" who become "public and social burden[s]" by receiving social welfare and public benefits funded by taxes (Choi & Kim, 2013, pp. 203-205). Some South



Korean citizens perceive North Korean migrants as “trouble makers,” “selfish betrayer[s] (of their own family),” “tax-consumer[s],” and “spy[ies]” (Choi & Kim, 2013, pp. 203-205). Some South Koreans acknowledge feeling uncomfortable around North Korean migrants and feel fear, hatred, and untrustworthiness towards them. North Korean migrants experience being a “permanent, semi-hereditary underclass” in South Korea (Ju, 2016, p. 40).

North Korean migrants attest that they are particularly discriminated against based on their national background, which is a source of constant discrimination similar to racial and gender discrimination. They report that South Koreans react with hostility towards anything connected with North Korea. Jung (2017) observes that an ideological framework, North Korea as the enemy, has become embedded in South Koreans’ psyche over seven decades of separation. Understanding the sociocultural elements of North Korean migrants’ working environment is critical to anticipate how their workplace experiences are structured; to ignore or misunderstand the differences between the two societies is to do violence to the experiences of this vulnerable population.

In promotional material, the South Korean government emphasizes North Korean migrants’ stable employment and customized job training and financial support, both of which affect their work-related choices and experiences. All newly-entered North Korean migrants spend 40% of their compulsory education (166 out of 400 hours) on vocational education and certificate programs provided by the government (Ministry of Unification, 2019). During their re-education, men<sup>7</sup> and women<sup>8</sup> have opportunities to explore potential jobs in construction, restaurant, beauty, and healthcare

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<sup>7</sup> Men explore 11 potential jobs in technical (e.g., maintenances in machinery, automobile, and electronic) and construction industries (e.g., woodworking, surface treatment, and welding). These 11 jobs are the only ones available to North Korean migrant men.

<sup>8</sup> Fifteen jobs for women include simple and unskilled labor (e.g., assembly and quality controls), beauty (e.g., nails, hair, and skin care), healthcare and social services (nursing, social welfare), and food (Korean and Western cuisines and baking) industries.

industries.<sup>9</sup> During their job-seeking period, the government offers educational and financial support to encourage prolonged employment. For this process, both the Ministry of Employment and Labor and the Ministry of Unification provide Employment Success Packages and Settlement Incentives to financially motivate North Korean migrants to engage in job training and attain prolonged employment.

One of the policies to support North Korean migrants' work integration is the establishment of social enterprises. Since 2006, in collaboration with the Ministry of Employment and Labor, the government has certified social enterprises as part of the Social Enterprise Promotion Act, which has provided exclusive financial, consulting, and educational benefits to social enterprises that hire North Korean migrants. According to the Social Enterprise Act and the North Korean Refugee Protection and Settlement Support Act, North Korean migrants are categorized as a vulnerable group and qualify to receive the government's financial and training support (Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2016; Ministry of Unification, 2019). With systematic orchestration and coordination among the central and local governments, employment centers, and workplaces, North Korean migrants can benefit from job access and employment.

## **Theoretical Framework**

I conceptualize learning through a social-constructivist approach. This approach is based on the assumption that learners build mental structures that interact with their sociocultural environments. This study incorporates Illeris' (2009, 2016) learning in working life because the framework

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<sup>9</sup> Research participants in my dissertation project, such as Sae-bom, described this job training as "domestication reflecting South Koreans' perception of North Koreans as inferior workers." She believed that this initial education frames the type of jobs that North Korean migrants can obtain and therefore limits their "social mobility."

conceptualizes the complex learning dynamics in relation to three dimensions (cognition, emotion, and sociocultural environment). In particular, his model for learning (Illeris, 2009, 2011) explains how learning in the workplace relates to social practice. I also account for barriers to learning, such as socio-cultural obstacles that hinder or delay North Korean migrants' learning. The use of both lenses, learning and learning barriers, allows me to conceive of learning beyond individual deficits or incompetence. Using Illeris's workplace learning framework, I identify how individual learning takes place through socio-cultural interactions at work and shapes workplace practice.

To investigate North Korean migrants' emotional labor, I employ Hochschild's (2012) conceptualization of emotion as the byproduct of nature and culture interacting. This theoretical perspective explains how people can regulate their feelings and emotions and how they can exercise emotional control to satisfy the emotional requirements of their service jobs. As such, emotional labor (Hochschild, 2012) entails managing the physical expression of feelings in publicly acceptable ways, such as in baristas' interactions with their customers (Laurier, 2008, 2017; Warner, Talbot & Bennisson, 2013).

In cafés and restaurants, North Korean migrants are expected to provide face to face services, necessitating emotional labor, while interacting with South Korean customers. Because of their prior experiences in North Korea and China and their reception in South Korea, North Korean migrants might have different patterns of perceiving, interacting, and displaying their emotional expressions than South Koreans (Lee, Kim & Jin, 2011). Owing to the nature of service work and business expectations, migrants either learn to adjust their emotional expressions and social behaviors toward their South Korean customers or make the choice to resist and not adjust their expressions appropriately.

## Overview of Methodology

**Research settings and sites.** The research sites were two cafés and three restaurants located in a busy neighborhood in a large South Korean city. The cafés were certified as a social enterprise by the Ministry of Unification and Metropolitan Government, which means they receive government and corporate subsidies. The restaurants were social enterprises built by a non-governmental organization that specialized in hiring, training, and promoting North Korean migrants to become the owners of each restaurant. The cafés and restaurants have sought to solve migrants' employment concerns by creating business opportunities with an emphasis on self-reliance. I chose these sites because I could gain access through personal and professional networks.

**Data collection and analysis.** This dissertation is based on a total of nine months of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork that began in 2017. A three-month pilot study at the cafés (January to March 2017) involved interviews with North Korean employees, participant observation while working as a barista, and collecting documents and artifacts. Fieldwork from February to July 2018 involved additional informal and semi-structured interviews, participant observation as a part-time employee, field notes, and access to an employee's personal diary written over three years. This study includes a total of 25 participants who have worked at service jobs in cafés and restaurants for more than one month in China and South Korea. I conducted more than 90 interviews.

I volunteered as a part-time employee to gain access to the research sites, developed rapport with participants in the workplace setting, and gradually became familiar with their emic (insider) perspectives. Observations included North Korean migrants' daily lives, special events, and their experience of crises, such as hospitalization or bankruptcy. These data helped me situate the meaning of learning in the context of North Korean migrants' work and daily lives.

For data analysis, I used both Narrative Analysis (Chase, 2011; Riessman, 1993) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Van Dijk, 1993) to investigate North Korean migrants' understanding of their

reality. This combination of analytical frameworks enabled me to understand the connections between abstract ideologies and everyday narratives of North Korean migrants' learning (Souto-Manning, 2014).

## **Summary**

In this study, I conceptualized learning through the social-constructivist approach based on the assumption that learners build their knowledge and understanding while interacting with their sociocultural environment. Drawing from Illeris's working life model (Illeris et al. 2004, 2016), I have framed the workplace as a "space for learning" (Illeris, 2016, p. 205). Using Illeris's framework in my analysis of workplace practices reveals how learning occurs at service jobs within a particular socio-cultural environment. Using an ethnographic approach, I have developed thick descriptions elaborating North Korean migrants' informal learning at work in hopes of providing practical insights to policy makers, educators, and researchers, and encouraging enhanced cultural sensitivity that would enable South Korean and international communities to better understand North Korean migrants.

## **Overview of the dissertation**

This dissertation consists of eight chapters, which explain North Korean migrants' workplace learning experiences in South Korea. Chapter One provided background information and outlined the purpose and significance of this study, also presenting the theoretical framework and research methods in this study. Chapter Two reviews scholarship on North Korean migrants in South Korea, drawing from literature in sociology, criminology, political science, socio-culture, history, linguistics,

psychology, and counselling. This chapter demonstrates the major trends in empirical research on migrants' workplace adjustment in South Korea and how this study contributes to that scholarship.

Chapter Three reports an overview of North Korean migrants' characteristics and demographics and the policy context in South Korea. I survey migrants' demographic information and their defection journeys. I then provide detailed information about government support for their resettlement in South Korea, including financial and administrative provisions for social enterprises. Chapter Four describes the detailed information about ethnographic research, including the methods used for data collection and analysis. I elaborate on my pilot study, fieldwork, data collection, and analysis, including issues of trustworthiness, translation plans, and research limitations.

Chapter Five presents findings of this study, beginning with the hurdles and barriers in participants' social interactions and identifying factors that foster or impede new learning. By highlighting their experiences with tensions and conflicts, I demonstrate how participants develop new knowledge and understanding of the South Korean dialect and workplace skills. Chapter Six continues to present study findings through exploring how participants learned to manage their feelings to fulfill the emotional requirements of frontline service work. This chapter begins by exploring feeling rules that participants experienced in their working lives and their interactive coping strategies. Chapter Seven describes how social enterprise settings shaped workplace dynamics and participants' strategies for coping with customers. First, I examine how social enterprises' business and social goals were manifested in physical and cultural artifacts such as mission statements and websites. I then explore how the organizational settings shape participants' coping strategies in response to customers' discriminatory statements and behaviors. The final chapter (Chapter Eight) discusses insights from the findings and suggests implications and recommendations for scholars and educators.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

In this chapter, I draw on selected literature to develop a rationale for my current study. First, I sketch out relevant empirical studies on North Korean migrants in South Korea in the context of migrant workforce integration. These pieces of literature locate the context of this study by demonstrating both the importance of the proposed study for understanding migrants' learning at work and the lack of adequate investigation into this topic. Second, I outline the literature that supports the theoretical framework for this study by focusing on Illeris' learning framework (2003, 2004, 2011, 2016) alongside Hochschild's concept of emotional labor (1979, 1990, 2012). Bringing these two frameworks together is necessary to articulate participants' workplace learning through service enterprise employment. Finally, I provide a summary of the main points of this literature and their contribution to my conceptual framework.

### **Context of International Migrant Workforce Integration**

The growing number globally mobile workers has caused policy makers and scholars to focus on migrant workforce integration (OECD, 2019; Szkudlarek, Nardon, Osland, Adler & Lee, 2019; Zetter & Ruaudel, 2018). Scholars in migration and ethnic studies (Ager & Strang, 2008; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007; Connor, 2010) have focused on issues of migrants' and refugees' resettlement and workforce integration attending to specific demographic characteristics and issues related to sociocultural and linguistic differences that hinder workplace integration. Management scholars (Bizri, 2017; Campion, 2018) have paid attention to issues on displaced populations' working conditions, ranging from job searching to retention and skill acquisition. Scholars in refugee

entrepreneurship (Bizri, 2017; Kong, 2019; Kong, Bishop & Iles, 2018) have focused on financial, social, and professional advantages that social enterprises can present on refugees' resettlement. Taking emerging interests as a whole, this work has generated important knowledge and insights into migrant workforce integration, particularly given the specific case of North Korean migrants in the social enterprise, sector collaboration (government, business, and NGOs) model.

### **Studies on North Korean Migrants to South Korea**

Some scholars take a sociological approach (e.g., Bell, 2013; Choo, 2006; Chung, 2008; Kim, 2009) to the study of North Korean migrants by problematizing the structural constraints that create barriers in the job market. Specifically, they have found strong structural and cultural homogeneity in South Korean society, which is detrimental to migrants entering into major social groups formed around hometowns, schooling, or kinship (Choo, 2006). Migrant and refugee populations often lack sufficient social capital and social connections (Ager & Strang, 2004; Putnam, 2000). This structural constraint provokes major problems in migrants' and refugees' job entrance and employment in the host society's market economy (Lee, Szkudlarek, Nguyen & Nardon, 2020).

Some scholars in criminology and political science (e.g., Cho, 2004; David-west, 2014; Jeon, 2000; Lee, 2014; Lim, 2005; Yang, 2005) have criticized the North Korean government's systematic indoctrination contributing to the social habits of migrants. Such scholars have indicated that the ideology embedded in the North Korean educational system and social practices, such as a collective criticism, aggressive language, and systematic brutality, is the cause of migrants' hostile and irregular behaviors at work. Particularly, South Korean employers, job consultants, and nongovernment staff members identified language as an explicit consequence of North Korean ideological education; therefore, language has become an urgent concern that required prompt correction for appropriate



socialization (Lee, Lim, Cho & Su, 2012; Nam et al., 2011). However, North Korean ideology and its influence on migrants has had limited attention in academia due to political and security concerns in South Korea (Keum, 2015; Chung, 2013). Additionally, focusing on North Korean social characteristics can be dangerous because it reproduces stereotypes about migrants. However, Yoo (2012) studied how prior cultural frames of reference, such as the North Korean *Juche* ideology [self-reliance], influenced migrants' learning in theological education. Her study indicates that North Koreans experience tensions in understanding different viewpoints and practices between two societies. Yoo's study is helpful in explaining how migrants use their past ideological orientations to create an *in-between* identity by negotiating past and present experiences. Pointing out that "neither North Korean nor South Korean cultures and systems are ideal" (p. 352), Yoo illuminated the potential to view migrants as constructive individuals by privileging their learning experiences beyond stigmatized discourse.

Some scholars (Bell, 2013; Eric, 2011; Kang, 2012) have suggested the use of alternative support systems created through non-government and religious organizations and social enterprises as a way to compensate for structural constraints and scarce social capital. These findings provide a useful lens for my study due to their multifaceted approach to migrant issues. For instance, ethnographic findings revealed how religious institutions can help build social connections to create an alternative support system for North Korean migrants (Bell, 2013). However, the data were limited to adolescent migrants.

In social enterprise scholarship, study of refugees' enterprise participation has expanded (Bidet, 2009; Bidet & Jeong, 2016; Eric, 2011; Kang, 2012). For instance, Eric (2011) and Kang (2012) explored the potential of social enterprise models that integrate migrants' jobs with social support; however, these data lack migrants' perspectives. Overall, one of the limitations in focusing on social structure is that most scholars either criticize government policy or suggest an alternative

support system, such as social enterprise, that can increase the social capital that North Koreans lack (Beak, 2007). In this case, however, the acquisition of more or less social capital represents learning as a linear trajectory rather than scrutinizing how learning takes place in the migrants' workplaces at various individual, communal, and social levels. I concur with adult education scholars, such as Baptiste (2001a) and Hager (2005), that human capital theory is not sufficient to describe various dimensions of adult learning because it reduces learning into the accumulation of social, cultural, and human capital.

Similarly, Park (2016) identified how learning can help young migrants negotiate and develop their new identities through daily activities. Using Cultural Historical Activity Theory, Park attested that new identities are the product of learning outcomes ascribed to participation in adaptation and enculturation activities. Although some research has focused on migrants as ideologically different *others*, Yoo (2012) and Park (2016) use a constructivist approach to explore how migrants' learning, connected to past experiences, enables them to negotiate and reconstruct new identities. Nonetheless, neither study examines the function of South Korean ideology in migrants' daily lives. For instance, values specific to South Korea, such as capitalism and the idea of unification, are presented as legitimate rather than as shaping North Korean migrants' learning.

Some scholars in applied linguistics and Korean studies (e.g., Bea, 2013; Kim, 2016; Kown, 2012, 2014) have researched North Korean migrants' struggles with language use and identity formation as well as their functional illiteracy in everyday vocabularies (Bea, 2013; Chung, 2008; Chung & Cho, 2008; Kown, 2012, 2014). English is a struggle for migrants because of the lack of learning opportunities due to anti-American policy in North Korea. In contrast, widespread Konglish use in South Korea is a result of U.S. cultural influence. North Korean migrants' English illiteracy leads to strong negative emotional responses like "inferiority, miserable... shame" (Kim, 2016, p. 10-11). Not only is English troublesome but also differences in South Korean language and socialization

can become barriers at work (Lankov, 2006; Lee et al., 2012; Nam et al., 2011; Kim, 2013). For instance, migrants' distinctive language markers, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, can trigger miscommunications and misunderstandings at work (Bea, 2013; Chung & Cho, 2008; Kown, 2012, 2014). Nevertheless, how migrants adjust differences in communication styles with colleagues, supervisors, and customers has not been studied.

In contrast, some scholars in psychology and counselling studies have maintained that migrants' past mental illness and physical health problems, including prior traumatic experiences from living in North Korea, greatly affected their maladjustment to South Korea (e.g., Ahn et al., 2015; Chang, Kang, Lee & Lee, 2000; Chung & Seo, 2007; Jeon et al., 2005; Jung & Choi, 2017; Kim & Choi, 2013; Yoon, 2007), as well as their poor nutrition, eating habits, and physical conditions (e.g., Choi, Park & Joung, 2010; Suh, Shin & You, 2015; Yoon, JJang, Jo & Yoon, 2016). These findings demonstrated the embodiment of prior life conditions and its detrimental influence on migrants' new lives. Most of the time, however, scholars have measured migrants' psychological and physical conditions using statistical analyses (Keum, 2015).<sup>10</sup> Although migrants are unaware of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), likely because North Korean society lacks sufficient understanding of mental illness, such as depression (Couch, 2017), few scholars in psychology have considered the effect of such contextual characteristics upon migrants' cognition. Moreover, these studies have oversimplified and imposed a pathological lens on migrants' mental conditions to legitimate their social positioning and inability to adjust in new, challenging conditions (Ryoo, 2006). I agree with scholars that migrants' mental and psychological conditions can affect their workplace adjustment. However, the ways those internal conditions manifest and influence migrants' learning, either aggravated or improved through workplace interactions, should be examined.

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<sup>10</sup> According to Keum (2015), almost 90 % (n=45) of North Korean research in major psychology journals used survey methods over the last 14 years (2000-2013).

Recent scholars have also conceptualized migrants' adjustment to South Korea's neoliberal market ideology (e.g., Kim, 2009; Lee, 2017; Park, 2015; Park, 2015; Park, 2011, 2016). Based on years of ethnographic and archival study with North Korean diasporas in China and South Korea, Park (2015) argued that North Koreans unconsciously learned capitalism across borders through the exchange of services and commodities even before their defections. Therefore, in this case, "capital has already unified Korea in a transnational form" (p. 1). According to her interpretation, in a market economy, North Koreans' "freedom" and "free labor" (p. 251) are synonymous. Likewise, drawing upon five years of participant observation data in government facilities, nonprofit organizations, and schools catered to new migrants, Kim (2009) demonstrated how neoliberal hegemony shaped North Korean migrants as "citizens of capitalist society" (Kim, 2009, p. viii). Similarly, Lee (2017) described the process of re-educating migrants based on the neoliberal agenda of government facilities and early educational institutions. Using a Foucauldian theoretical framework to examine official archives and interviewees' narratives in re-education centers, she maintained that the biopolitics of neoliberal governmentality have shaped migrants' adjustment discourses and practices. Likewise, Park (2011, 2016) used ethnographic research to investigate how semi-government facilities and nongovernmental organizations impose a neoliberal agenda onto migrants. Her examination of national agencies' local practices revealed the flexible, performative, and emotional nature of service interactions based on neoliberal cultural politics. Nevertheless, few scholars have examined the influence of neoliberal capitalism in workplace practice and how national and market ideologies are involved in typical interactions between North and South Koreans.

The results of these studies of North Korean migrants leave questions concerning the influence of the neoliberal market agenda on migrants' daily practices in South Korea. The existing body of literature highlights the importance of understanding how formal and non-formal educational institutions shape migrants alignment within neoliberal market practice (Park, 2011, 2016). However,

North Korean migrants' informal learning in the workplace is still contested, requiring study of the role of agency in learning, the mediation of different ideological orientations within the neoliberal market economy, and the function of migrants' emotions at work. Informal learning occurs beyond educational programs and curriculums (Livingstone, 1999), and I expect that migrants' narratives and social behaviors in the workplace will reveal their structural, social, and individual experiences of ideology and emotion, as well as their informal learning, through their own voices.

### **North Korean Migrants' Workforce Training and Learning**

Many government officials, scholars, and civil organizations have emphasized the importance of supporting North Korean migrants' workplace adjustment for their complete cultural and social adjustment (Lee et al., 2012; No et al., 2007, Ministry of Unification, 2020). The majority of research funded by or in collaboration with government agencies begins with the unification rationale and how migrants can help bridge the differences between two countries using their cultural resources (Jang et al., 2016; Korean Hana Foundation, 2020; Lee et al., 2012; Ministry of Unification, 2020; Nam et al., 2011; No et al., 2007). Little empirical research has been done on how social discourse shapes migrants' experiences in general and workplace learning in particular. This literature review categorizes research on North Korean migrants' workforce training and learning as studies that explore skill acquisition, participation, and work experience. Additionally, this literature review uses studies that compare North Korea with post-unification East Germany to outline ideological considerations.

**Skill acquisition.** Some scholars (e.g., Lee et al., 2012; No et al., 2007) have equated learning with accessible and measurable skill acquisition focused on North Korean migrants. The Korean Employment Information Service (Lee et al., 2012; No et al., 2007) has conducted a mixed methods

study with migrants and South Korean support staff members to establish two employment assistance manuals and programs designed to equip North Korean migrants with skills suitable for the South Korean workplace. Findings from these investigations revealed the gap between migrants and South Korean staff members in considering migrants' workplace competency. For instance, although the majority of migrants perceived themselves to be well prepared for work, South Korean staff members, trainers, and employers pointed out their insufficient skill sets and inappropriate attitudes (e.g., hostile, abrupt, and culturally inadequate social interactions). Most of these studies, however, prioritized South Korean staff members' and employers' perspectives to demonstrate North Korean migrants' inadequacy. Conforming to these findings, various trainings were recommended, such as time-management, self-portrayal, and networking.

This skillset-based training can be problematic because of its linear approach. Although migrants' subjective difficulties are found to be complex and profoundly intertwined with their prior work ethic, experience, and mental and physical well-being, adjustment concerns are oversimplified as merely deficits that can be remedied with skill acquisitions. Because migrants' problems are conceptualized as the absence of skills and knowledge, complex learning dynamics that migrants bring to negotiate with past and current experiences and knowledge are under-investigated. Furthermore, this skill -acquisition discourse could result in marginalizing migrants' voices by giving weight to South Korean professionals who work with migrants rather than listening to migrants. This approach can neglect how and what migrants learn from a society that operates differently, without prioritizing the experience of the learner or their social reality.

**Participation.** Cho and Chung (2006) interviewed 28 North Korean migrants to examine their workplace participation and conflict experiences. Overlapping migrants' experiences of difficulties were parallel to other studies (e.g., Lee et al., 2012; No et al., 2007), such as insufficient professional skills in computing, English, and communication, and low confidence attributed to South Koreans'

prejudice. However, Cho and Chung's (2006) findings demonstrated that migrants who spent a decade in South Korea were able to perceive that their deficits were not because of their birth origins but because of their experiences of capitalism. Specifically, interview results revealed how migrants were able to contextualize their low social positions. Authors framed this "perspective change" (p. 50) as a learning outcome of their social participation.

Focusing on conflicts and difficulties, Cho and Chung (2006) adequately situated migrants' struggles as due to the gap between North and South Korean workplace practices and systems. However, all 28 migrants in their study were likely to have diverse jobs in the past (e.g., doctor, pharmacist, soldier, and teacher etc.) and present (e.g., sailor, construction worker, and office worker etc.). Therefore, categorizing their experiences of conflict under unilateral workplace experiences is controversial. Depending on the jobs, the extent of their expertise and customer interactions can diverge in degree and depth. In addition, the authors state the importance of taking an emic perspective to explore migrants' perception of reality. However, the authors do not demonstrate that they collected their data by establishing relationships with 28 North Korean interviewees. Furthermore, the authors used a set of research questions that focused on eliciting accounts of conflict but failed to identify other experiences of conflict, such as stories of overcoming challenges.

**Work experience.** A case study of four successful migrants who graduated from South Korean universities and attained jobs implied that migrants actively use their prior and current experiences in the workplace (Ro & Oh, 2016). Ro and Oh used in-depth interviews to investigate factors leading to success in overcoming various challenges in the South Korean job market. Although success was narrowly defined as getting a job, Ro and Oh explored how past tragic experiences, including life-and-death circumstances while fleeing from North Korea and China, can transform migrants' minds and help them to overcome social barriers. Connecting the migrants' strength to *resilience* (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2007; Rutter, 2012), a strengthening effect that occurs after

stress or adversities, the authors discovered the value of prior experiences that provided an interpretive lens for migrants to create new meaning and performative actions that allowed them to overcome current hardships. However, the authors' definition of learning is only limited to strategies for expanding human capital and cultural capital to supplement their deficiency, and this outcome is reduced to job attainment. Therefore, learning is narrowly grounded in a capitalistic evaluation of their achievement.

Similarly, Kim et al., (2013) interviewed 25 socially successful migrants, focusing on their life histories in North Korea, China, and South Korea (Kim, Lee & Kim, 2013). Based on life history findings, these scholars matched migrants' past and current career paths and job types to elicit various strategies that successful migrants employed to overcome their challenges in the South Korean workplace. The emphasis on migrants' life histories elucidated how they contextualized challenging situations through the reconstruction of personal meaning grounded in past difficulties and barriers. Congruent with Ro and Oh's (2016) study on job attainment, Kim et al. (2013) highlighted the importance of recognizing migrants' past experiences in North Korea and China (e.g., employment, difficulties, and networks) to enhance their vocational competency. Although Kim et al. (2013) framed learning as an outcome of achieving success, they highlighted the importance of paying attention to migrants' views and re-contextualization of past hardships.

In addition, Kim (2017) investigated 23 migrants' career experiences to explore the relationship between labor mobility and its influence on defection. She examined migrants' prior job transitions in North Korea and China and the effects on their defection by changing their understanding about market economy. Kim (2017) claimed that migrants' past experiences have shaped relevant career characteristics, such as—career-seeking, job-seeking, and personal-benefit-pursuit attitudes, and increased their motivation to defect from North Korea, an ultimate learning outcome. Unlike other scholars (Cho & Chung, 2006; Lee et al., 2012; No et al., 2007) who only focus



on current workplace experiences and conflicts, Kim's findings helped me to connect the role of migrants' undocumented experiences with their changing thoughts and behaviors while fleeing from North Korea.

Nonetheless, Kim's (2017) argument contradicts Lankov's (2006) claim that migrants' skills that help them cross borders are useless in South Korea because those skills are not applicable in an advanced market economy. This is contradictory only if we consider skills that are workable in capitalistic system rather than understanding the change of mind that allows migrants to overcome multiple challenges across borders. Following Kim's findings, prior experiences in the workplace mediate various dimensions of learning, such as new knowledge, motivation, and social relationships, and need to be explored. In this respect, focusing on migrants' learning beyond skillsets and exploring relationships between present and prior experiences seems critical to situating migrants' workplace learning as a whole. Although Kim's (2017) study was limited by the small sample size and its focus on voluntary escapees, her findings align with a migrant journalist's investigation (Ju, 2016) about current migrants' trends. Namely, migrants had advanced preparation for the market economy because of their business experiences in the North Korean underground market and the Chinese illegal labor market system. Some scholars in immigration studies (Constant, 2017; Fong, 2008) have framed this similar pattern as the *healthy immigrant paradox*, referring to the relatively good health and mortality among voluntary immigrants because those who are healthier and have more resources tend to migrate. This perspective can be useful for viewing migrants as more than a maladjusted group of people in South Korea.

**Post-unification East Germany.** Some scholars have connected North Korean migrants' learning challenges in relation to Eastern Germans' post-unification experiences (e.g., Nam et al., 2011; Seoul National University Graduate School of Public Administration Unification Policy Team, 2005). Using survey and interview methods with 22 North Korean migrants and 17 Eastern Germans,

Nam et al. (2011) illustrated mental and psychological challenges that East Germans experienced in a radically different system and culture, and even after unification, the “Berlin wall still exists in people’s minds” (p. 158). Nam and colleagues also stated that it is important to explore how the capitalist system detrimentally affected East Germans’ sense of identity and self-esteem. Centering on the state of mind from the post-unification East German case, Nam et al., proposed the importance of understanding North Korean migrants’ minds. Despite variations between East Germans’ and North Korean migrants’ socio-cultural and historical backgrounds, it is worth noting how they explored migrants’ emotional changes caused by radical social change.

Considering East Germans’ socialistic characteristics, *Ossies*, in contrast to West Germans, *Wessies*, scholars have various opinions about personality deformations ascribed to the prior lives in socialist country. As a native East German psychiatrist who treated many post-unification East German patients, Maaz (1992) pointed out the strong influence of socialist characteristics on East Germans. Alternatively, Eghigian (2007) contested Maaz and his scholarship, highlighting West German ethnocentrism that denigrated East Germans as abnormal. Eghigian further problematized Maaz’s claim as likely to impose a pathological epistemology in understanding East Germans, even though their cultural frames of references were different from Western Germans. Nonetheless, Maaz’s opinion has been echoed throughout South Korean scholarly research on North Korean migrants (e.g., Nam et al., 2011; Seoul National University Graduate School of Public Administration Unification Policy Team, 2005). Accordingly, it is worthwhile to pay attention to Eghigian’s (2007) argument to be aware of any potential South Korean ethnocentrism.

## Summary

Migrants' learning should be grounded in their point of view; however, a few ideological barriers hinder such a focus in South Korea. Some scholars have problematized the South Korean unification ideology centering on One-Korea, ethnic-nationalism (Shin, 2006; Shin, Freda & Yi, 1999). Similar to German unification that emphasized a common ethnicity to legitimate unification, the South Korean government uses nationality to justify unification, echoed in scholarly investigation of North Korean migrants (Roh & Lee, 2013). Particularly, this shared ethnicity claim holds potential danger by aligning North Korean migrants with South Korean-centric conformity (e.g., similar to West German ethnocentrism) and excluding migrants based on their non-conformity (Shin et al., 1999). Scholars like Yoon (2008) maintained that differences between North and South Koreans should be outlined to better support North Korean migrants' economic adjustment (Seoul National University Graduate School of Public Administration Unification Policy Team, 2005; Yoon, 2008). It is important to investigate how South Korea's emphasis on unification imposes homogeneous conformity on North Korean migrants because it could misguide or hinder migrants' learning.

Nonetheless, some authors have failed to recognize their own premise of capitalist ideology embedded in unification discourse. In several scholarly research articles, such as Cho and Chung (2006), North Korean attributes, namely socialist characteristics, are demonstrated as inferior attributes that should be eliminated to survive in global competition (Cho & Chung, 2006; Seoul National University Graduate School of Public Administration Unification Policy Team, 2005). This assumption can be problematic. Based on Eghigian's (2007) comparison of West and East German ideology, East Germans' frames of reference and knowledge sources are different from those of West Germans. Accordingly, using South Koreans who have been raised in a capitalist system to evaluate North Koreans can end up marginalizing North Korean migrants based solely on their birth place. To explain how North Korean migrants learn, their ways of thinking, prior knowledge, and frames of

reference need to be understood beyond South Korean ideological impositions and assumptions about migrants.

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

**Adult learning.** The emphasis of North Korean migrants' learning is often reduced to employability (Yoon, 2008). In addition, workplace research focuses on instrumental and vocational trainings that are restricted to economic adjustment, specifically skills acquisition. Workplace research is grounded in human capital theory, focusing on developing migrants' employment and productivity. Learning, however, should deal with more comprehensive life experiences (Fenwick, 2010; Hager, 2008; Illeris, 2016).

This section unfolds in the following order. First, I define learning from Illeris' (2009, 2010, 2016) comprehensive learning framework. In addition, I describe learning barriers. By presenting both learning frameworks and hurdles, I provide a clearer definition of learning. Next, I delineate what workplace learning means, to situate North Korean migrants' learning in the workplace (Illeris 2003, 2011, 2016). Navigating various learning metaphors, including product, participation, and construction, I demonstrate ways to better represent North Korean migrants learning.

**Illeris' learning framework.** Illeris' (2009, 2010, 2016) learning framework is a comprehensive model that embraces various dimensions of learning theories (e.g., cognitive, emotion, and social aspects). An explanation of the Learning in Working Life model (Illeris et al., 2004, Illeris, 2003, 2011, 2016) that focuses on social dynamics at work, with Illeris' learning framework, helps me to identify how learning occurs individually and better demonstrate workplace interactions. Use of both frameworks illuminates learning at the intersection of individual acquisition and the sociocultural

context. In addition, I layout learning barriers (mis-learning, non-learning, unlearning) to show the social dimensions of learning.

Learning is “any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change” (Illeris, 2007, p. 3). That is, learning is a constant process relating to both the learners’ internal and external conditions and encompasses the learners’ biological, psychological, and sociocultural characteristics. This triangle model in *Figure 1* is a social-constructivist approach, based on the assumption that learners build up their mental structures by interacting with socio-cultural environments. Illeris (2016) divides these five areas of learning into the two processes (internal and external) and the three dimensions (content, incentive, and environment).

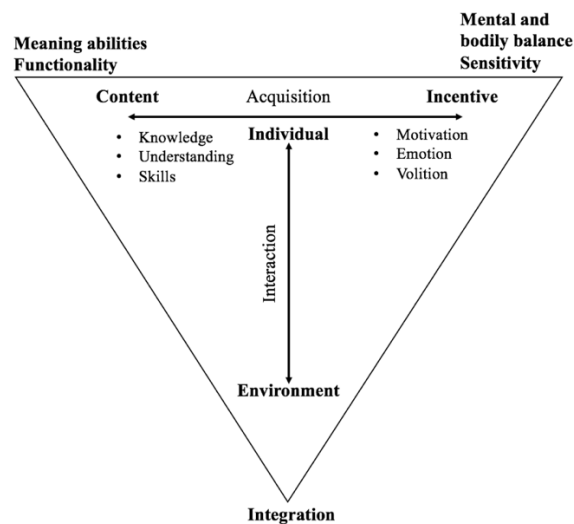


Figure 1. The contemporary learning framework (Illeris, 2016, p. 12).

**Two fundamental processes.** The primary learning condition “implies the integration of two very different processes” (Illeris, 2016, p. 10). The external process refers to the dynamics between the learner and his or her socio-cultural and material situations. This dynamic is described as a vertical double arrow between an individual and the environment. It represents the radical and critical philosophical tradition that points to the social and material influences on the learner. The internal process is related to the psychological approach, or learning as a cognitive brain function. The

behaviorist tradition that measures knowledge acquisition is similar to this approach. A horizontal double arrow in the diagram depicts the individual's mental activity when engaging with new learning. The arrow between the content and incentive illustrates the mental process between the subject and their motivation. Accordingly, the external and internal "processes must be actively involved" to enhance new learning (p. 10).

**Three dimensions.** The three dimensions illustrate the content, the incentive, and the interaction. The content dimension is not only limited to the subject (knowledge and skills) but also implies the ability (values, behaviors, attitudes, and methods) to construct new knowledge. A learner should develop "meaning and ability" to overcome challenges and increase "functionality" when acquiring new content (p. 11).

The incentive dimension acknowledges the mental aspects necessary to continue learning, such as emotions, feelings, and motivations. This dimension allows the learner to make a "mental and bodily balance" by enhancing a personal "sensitivity" (p. 11). In the inner psychic process, two dimensions are interacting and integrating together to gain knowledge and create new learning. Both dimensions influence and are influenced by each other to sharpen functionality and sensitivity.

The integration dimension in sociocultural environments inspires learning. Once an individual is integrated to social community, new learning takes place through "perception, transmission, experience, imitation, activity, [and] participation" (Illeris, 2007, p. 100) and increases the learner's "sociality" (Illeris, 2016, p. 12). This activity, however, cannot arise without the help of the previous two dimensions. That is, learning is the development of functionality, sensitivity, and sociality, which directs and contributes to competencies.

**Barriers to learning.** People, sometimes, do not learn what they should learn. Barriers to learning may be rooted mainly in the "incentive dimension" (Illeris, 2007, p. 91) and partly in contents dimension. This can be explained with three general notions: mis-learning, non-learning, and

unlearning (Illeris, 2016). Mis-learning stems from misunderstanding, insufficient background knowledge, miscommunication, and poor concentration. It is related to the ability to capture what is going on, what is error and non-error, and what is the point of learning. Once mis-learning builds upon new knowledge, it accumulates and becomes more severe. People learn differently, based on what is placed in them; therefore, to remedy this vicious cycle, “empathy, dialogue, and tolerance” are needed (Illeris, 2004, p. 101) from outside supporters.

Non-learning is linked to mental defense, resistance that may lead to potential learning. When new knowledge contradicts what is already registered, people reject or distort what is new. This refusal of new knowledge is also known as “confirmation bias” (Mercier & Sperber, 2010, p. 63) caused by persisting registered knowledge based on biased reasoning or absence of reasoning. Because it is related to the deeper sense of identity, overcoming non-learning can be an opportunity for expanding learning.

Unlearning is defined as subconsciously ignoring past experience (Britzman, 1998), which is not usually articulated in explicit language. It begins to operate against new learning. This enigmatic condition is also described as “unclaimed experience,” meaning the “paradox of having painful experience but being unable to know just what has happened or why it is important” (Caruth, 1996, qtd. in Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 758). Unlearning, therefore, hinders new learning subconsciously. This subconscious is part of “threatening memories of mental injuries from the old life or bitter and embarrassing insights” (Bleiker, 2003, p. 407) and can cause problematic behavior.

I use Illeris’ framework to investigate how learning takes place within a person, because it provides a concrete learning process and uses multiple dimensions to conceptualize learning as a whole. Illeris’ framework, along with an ethnographic approach, make this abstract construct a concrete form. Accordingly, these two processes (acquisition and interaction) and three dimensions

(content, incentive, and environment) will be what is observed and recorded during the participant observation and informal interviews.

Prior researchers have ascribed North Korean migrants' difficulties to the contents dimension, such as different ideological beliefs, values, and knowledge (Jeon, 2000; Lim, 2005; Yang, 2005) as well as language barriers (Bea, 2013; Chung, 2008). Similarly, research has explored the incentive dimension, like psychological concerns, of migrants (Ahn et al., 2015; Chung & Seo, 2007; Jeon et al., 2005; Jung & Choi, 2017; Kim & Choi, 2013). However, the components have not been connected as a whole to understand how each part supports, hinders, or collaborates to adjust migrants' learning in natural settings. In this respect, I go into the *barriers to learning* (mis-learning, non-learning, and unlearning) as a backdrop to better ground North Korean migrants' learning. I also identify hindrances to learning. These barriers, however, focus only on learners' problems as either contents or incentive dimensions. Therefore, such examinations might lose sight of the social context influencing the obstacles to learning. In this regard, articulation of both learning and learning barriers help me to verify each other within a more comprehensive picture.

### **Framing workplace learning**

Workplace learning has several conceptualizations: product, participation, and construction (Fenwick, 2010; Hager, 2004, 2005, 2008). I will briefly summarize the strengths and weaknesses from each metaphor to demonstrate why the *Learning in Working Life* model (Illeris et al. 2004) is the best fit for this study.

**Product.** The concept of learning as a product emphasizes that the acquisition of knowledge is like “the contents of mental filing cabinets” (Bereiter, 2002, p. 179). From this view, learners lack knowledge and ability to perform the anticipated role due to insufficient information and knowledge



processors. By adding more contents to their mind, learners can become competent and productive (Hager, 2005, 2008). Currently, this product-centric approach is a dominant Western way of defining learning in the field of organizational learning, psychology, human resource management, and formal educational settings. Scholars in sociocultural learning have criticized this attempt to reduce learning to brain work in institutional settings (Elkjaer, 2003; Lave, 2009). Likewise, this approach has been criticized as ignoring the historical relationship between those in power and the powerless, as diminishing the minority's voice for economic productivity. Freire (1972) criticized this approach as the "banking model," characterized by those in power depositing knowledge into learners' mind. It is interesting to note that knowledge acquisition has become South Korea's lifelong learning and human resource development strategy since 1960 (Choi & Kim, 2018) and applied as predominant epistemology to shape North Korean migrants' workplace adjustment programs and trainings focusing on skill and knowledge acquisition (Lee et al., 2012; No et al., 2007). This approach is problematic because it is likely to situate learning under the evaluative notion of superior versus inferior, based on normative evaluation without considering various sociocultural backgrounds and different ways of perceiving things.

**Participation.** Learning as participation frames learning that occurs in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In this metaphor, learners accumulate situated knowledge through legitimate peripheral participation. Using this framework, Yoo (2012) found that migrants have very limited opportunity to participate in the South Korean communities of practice because of the stigma attached to their origins of birth. This participation metaphor, however, has several shortcomings when articulating learners' identity change: how social participation reshapes an individual learner (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004) and the influence of a broader socio-historical, cultural, and institutional context in which the community is situated (Fuller, 2007). These limitations exclude this framework from applying to migrants' learning because both changes of identity and changes in

sociopolitical and cultural context are critical components to understand ideologically contested North Korean migrants' learning experiences in South Korea.

From the constructivist view (Engestrom, 2001; Salomon & Perkins, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978), learning is “an evolving process” (Hager, 2008, p. 10). Learners are able to construct their knowledge through rational and conscious endeavors. Park (2016) investigated young adult North Korean migrants' identity reconstruction and concluded that migrants “became the more active, independent and confident subject to live in the South Korea” (Park, 2016, p. 125). The constructivist view, particularly Vygotskian approach, however, receives criticism for its simplistic and rationalist approach. It does not explore the emotional dimension (Fenwick, 2010). North Korean migrants' learning should consider their emotional reactions to living in an ideologically contested society and their engagement in emotional labor. In this regard, I will use Illeris' constructivist model to understand the three dimensions of learning, including emotion.

### **Learning in Working Life**

North Korean migrants' learning embraces new knowledge acquisition, participation in social practice, sociopolitical, cultural and ideological context, and emotional consequences on learning. In this regard, Illeris' model for “learning in working life” (Illeris et al., 2004, p. 69) can provide a comprehensive framework to cover the breadth of this study. The principle of the *Learning in Working Life* model is parallel to the contemporary framework (Illeris, 2016) described above. Workplace learning conceptualizes “workplaces and working life as a space for learning” (Illeris, 2016, p. 205). Therefore, all workplace situations should be considered to acquire a comprehensive understanding of learning. The emphasis on workplace learning, however, is in the interactive

dimension that includes social dynamics with management, co-workers, and other stakeholders in its social relations.

Accordingly, the *Learning in Working Life* model introduces “a double perspective on learning in working life” (Illeris et al. 2004, p. 69). The second triangle in *Figure 2*, added to the previous model, illustrates the social relation of the workplace with learning. The double arrows between work identity and workplace practice refer to a worker’s experience of “who I am” in relation to “how I am experienced by others” (Illeris, 2003; 2007; 2016, p. 206). In the new triangle that is linked to workplace practice, understanding tools, artifacts, activities, patterns, positions, power relations, and status is important.

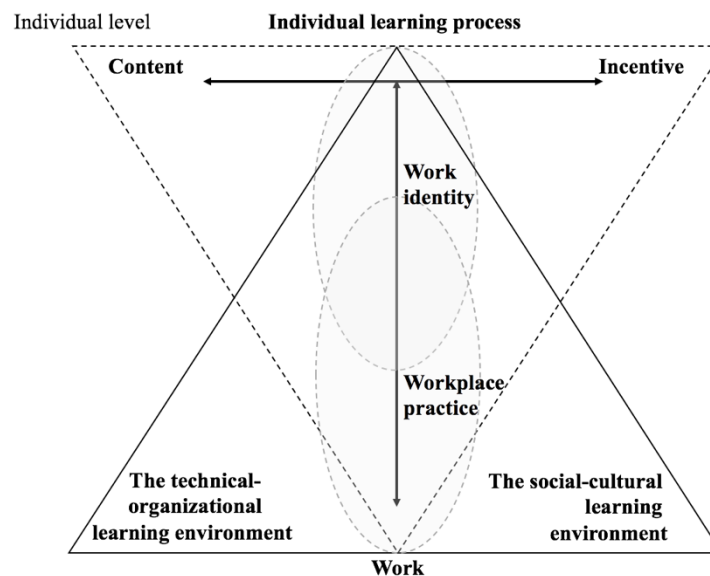


Figure 2. Learning in working life (Illeris et al., 2004, p. 69).

Proposing three basic conditions in the workplace (the individual learning process, the technical-organizational learning environment, and the social-cultural learning environment) with the second triangle, Illeris frames learning as a workplace practice focusing on interaction between the self and the social organization. Therefore, the *Learning in Working Life* model will be useful for demonstrating North Korean migrants’ learning at cafés beyond the individual level. By

contextualizing two environmental aspects in the midst of forging workplace practices (e.g., baristas' labor) I will be able to describe how individual learning takes place through the interaction with social practice and environment.

Specifically, workplace practice will be investigated through an emotional labor framework, relating to how North Korean baristas learn to manage their feelings and their expression of feelings at social enterprise cafés and restaurants. For instance, North Korean employees need to negotiate their North Korean identity (who I am) while serving as employees (how I am experienced by others) by providing services to South Korean customers. More precisely, we need a concept of emotional labor in the workplace because North Korean employees are expected to interact with South Korean customers in particular ways, and these norms may conflict with how they were socialized to interact and express emotion in North Korea. I will uncover how those dynamics are interwoven and how they help North Korean employees to learn to negotiate such complexities through informal learning.

**Emotions.** Among various disciplinary traditions about emotion, I chose the interactional model of emotion (Hochschild, 1979, 2012) that conceives of emotion as an interwoven byproduct of nature and nurture (culture). It differs from a conception of emotion as an evolutionary predisposition for adaptation (Darwin, 1872) or the social constructivist view that equates emotion with a sociocultural artifact (Averill, 1980; Lutz, 1980). In an emotional management framework within the interactional model (Hochschild, 1979, 1990, 2012), emotion is situated between evolutionary and social constructive traditions, between a physiological sense and social artifacts. In other words, emotion is a subject of management in this framework. People can manage “to feel and ... not feel” (Hochschild, 1990, p. 120); feeling happens to people and people can make it happen. This perspective is practical and helps my study focus on how emotion functions within baristas' labor and becomes a subject to learn to manage at cafés.

**Emotional labor.** Emotional labor refers to managing the physical expression of feelings in displayable ways, like a smiling face (Hochschild, 1979, 2012). Emotional labor often requires various efforts to control and shape a “feeling in oneself” (Hochschild, 1979, p. 561) to present a publicly acceptable appearance as a part of business. Based on organizational rules and social norms, employers request employees to shape their feelings and expressions by evoking or suppressing certain feelings. In this regard, emotional labor pertains to a job that requires frequent face-to-face or voice-to-voice interactions. In the service business, to be specific, emotional labor is the central and professional piece that employees ought to engage in to increase their net income. The economic system has begun to conceptualize experience as a commodity and has emphasized the specific roles that employees are expected to perform (Pine & Gilmore, 2011).

**Emotional labor and ideology.** “What is the link between ideology and rules about feelings?” (Hochschild, 1990, p. 124-125). Ideology affects how people perceive experiences through the work of cognition and emotion within a social system (Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1974). Hochschild (1979, 1990, 2012) connects feeling rules<sup>11</sup> and emotional labor under a broad ideological framework. Her study about traditional gender roles and feeling rules shows how ideology regulates what is appropriate to feel or not to feel in given situations (Hochschild, 1990).

In relation to economic activities in particular, the experience of employees in a McDonald’s in Moscow’s in the 1990s shows divergent understandings concerning the emotional labor between Russian employees and the American franchise restaurant. In employee training, Russian employees were pressured to master the American service smile which was, to them at that time in Moscow, a symbol of dishonesty and evil (Montagne, 2016). This example shows how the economic system conceptualizes its product and service and defines the type of emotional labor that employees ought to

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<sup>11</sup> Feeling rules are socially accepted ways of displaying feelings (Hochschild, 2012).

incorporate and display. Correspondingly, the capitalist framework that requires the conceptualization of the customer's experience as a product raises awareness about the emotional labor that employees must perform.

Studies about service-based work, such as at cafés, show the types of emotional labor that employees undergo to create an affective social space (Laurier, 2008, 2017; Warner et al., 2013). To foster a friendly environment, employees learn how to smile, make eye contact, and treat customers well. This caring work, like empathic listening, is an unspoken code of conduct. In contrast, a franchise chain, like Starbucks stipulates the emotional labor that employees should bear: “personally connect with, laugh with and uplift the lives of our customers” (Starbucks, n.d., “Baristas,” para. 1). According to the Starbucks manual (2006) that describes the employees' code of conduct, emotional labor is prescribed as exceeding engagement with customers by initiating connection, discovering customers' hidden desires, and responding to those needs. Accordingly, emotional labor is an explicit requirement for employees that comes from a supervisor and shapes a café's atmosphere to feel homelike, evoke community, and even suggest feelings of celebrity (according to the Starbucks) to increase profits.

**Emotional regulation framework.** Using Hochschild's theory, Grandey (2000) operationalizes the emotional regulation framework. I will use Grandey's framework because it provides a concrete list for exploring emotional labor in practice (Figure 3). Grandey suggests three general categorizations (situations cues, emotional regulation process, and long-term consequences) to examine emotional labor. First, situational cues are external conditions that affect emotional labor, such as interaction expectations (e.g., frequency, duration, and display rules) and type of events (positive and negative). Second, the emotional regulation process refers to the depth of emotional labor that employees perform, either through deep acting or surface acting. It includes both individual factors (e.g., gender, expressivity, emotional intelligence, and affectivity) and organizational factors

(e.g., job autonomy, supervisor support, and coworker support) to be examined. Third, long-term consequences embrace the notion of time in emotional labor that affects individual well-being (i.e., burnout and job satisfaction) and organizational well-being (i.e., performance and withdrawal behavior). In the emotional regulation process, feelings are displayed in two ways: surface acting (outside-in) and deep acting (inside-out).

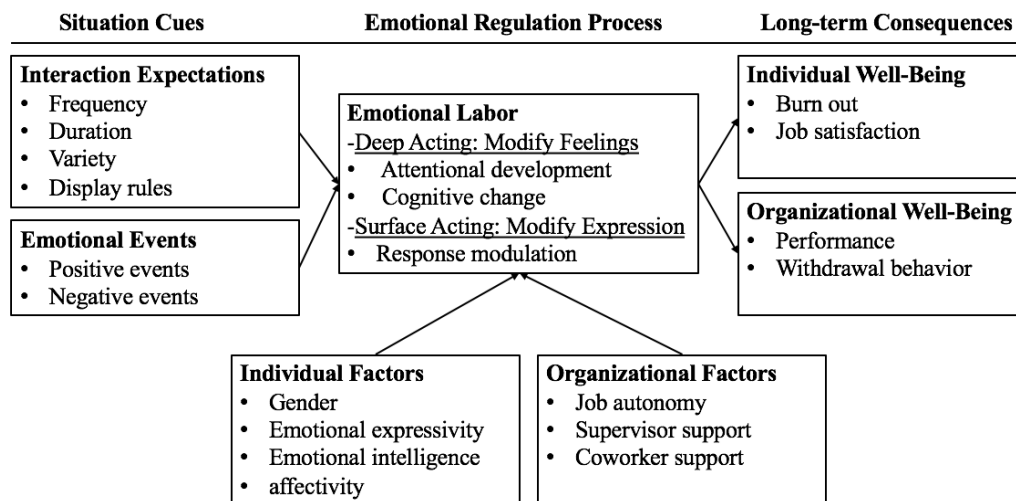


Figure 3. The proposed conceptual framework of emotional regulation performed in the work setting (Grandey, 2000, p. 101).

**Surface acting (outside-in).** Surface acting is the conscious change of outwardly expressions of feelings by using gestures. It follows social rules to express socially appropriate behavior. Just like putting on masks, surface acting is clothed by facial expressions or gestures. The purpose of surface acting is to satisfy somebody: the audience.

**Deep acting (inside-out).** Deep acting originates from the change of feelings (Hochschild, 2012). It manages several types of feeling: body expression, cognition, and imagination. Body expression refers to change of feelings through movement. Cognition refers to a purposeful endeavor to disregard and screen out certain messages or images. Imagination refers to a trained imagination that purposefully visualizes reality in a different way.

***Emotional management assistance (social support).*** Emotional management assistance indicates the social support that can help emotional workers to validate feelings, reduce internal tensions, and assist their emotional work (Thoits, 1985). Once feelings are shared, social groups can understand and confirm the existence of inappropriate feelings based on shared experiences. The validation of the possibility of uplifted feelings can increase a sense of “acceptance” (Thoits, 1985, p. 238). Likewise, mutually confirming feelings can reduce self-hatred or condemnation, which comes from the experience of isolation of feelings relevant to the self. Peers can support emotional work techniques or the residual feelings produced by emotional labor.

## **Summary**

In this study, I conceptualize learning through the social-constructivist approach based on the assumption that a learner builds up his or her mental structures interacting with socio-cultural environments. Drawing from learning theory, Illeris’ *Working Life Model* (Illeris et al. 2004, 2016) helps me to frame the workplace; in his words, “workplaces are working life as a space for learning” (Illeris, 2016, p. 205). Based on Illeris’ two processes (work identity and workplace practice) and three dimensions for learning, migrants learning is identified. The work of ideology is defined in relation to emotional labor (Hochschild, 1979, 1990, 2012) and operationalized by Grandey’s (2000) emotional regulation framework. I combine Grandey’s model with Illeris’ framework in my analysis of workplace practice and how the workplace affects each individual’s learning process. Linking the two frameworks is allows me to better articulate North Korean migrant workers’ learning at their workplaces.



## Chapter 3

### Setting

In this chapter, I begin with an overview of North Korean migrants' information, providing information about their demographic characteristic and their defection journey. Next, I provide a policy and legal framework focused on government support for their resettlement and work integration in South Korea. Then, I describe social enterprise programs which is the background of this project. This information will help readers understand the social context of North Korean migrants' adjustment in financial, educational, and legal supports for their work integration. Particularly, this chapter highlights the policy context, which plays an important role in the present study.

### Introduction of North Korean Migrants in South Korea

**Demographic information.** Since 1990,<sup>12</sup> North Koreans who cross the border have been entitled to South Korean citizenship.<sup>13</sup> At the time of writing, 33,523 North Korean migrants have entered South Korea; the majority of migrants are women (72%) and of working age, between 20 and 60 years old (81%; Ministry of Unification, 2020). Table 1 shows demographic information about North Korean migrants in South Korea, with the first row denoting the year of entry.

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<sup>12</sup> The official records of the Ministry of Unification began in 1998.

<sup>13</sup> The South Korean constitution (through a combination of provisions in 1) the Constitution of Republic of Korea, 2) the Nationality Act, and 3) the Protection of North Korean Residents and Support of their Settlement Act) defines North Korea as South Korean territory and entitles North Korean nationals whose parent (either father or mother) has Korean nationality to South Korean citizenship upon arrival. Article 3 of the Constitution states that "the territory of the Republic of Korea shall consist of the Korean Peninsula and its adjacent lands" (including North Korean territory) and Article 2 states, "nationality in the Republic of Korea is prescribed by law." The Nationality Act further defines "Korean national[s]" as people whose father or mother are "a Republic of Korea's national at the time of his or her birth."

Table 1. North Korean migrants' demographic information. \*

Categories	~'98	~'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'8	'9	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	Total
Male	831	565	510	474	626	424	515	573	608	662	591	795	404	369	305	251	302	188	168	202	9,363
Female	116	478	632	811	1,272	960	1,513	1,981	2,195	2,252	1,811	1,911	1,098	1,145	1,092	1,024	1,116	939	969	845	24,160
Total	947	1,043	1,142	1,285	1,898	1,384	2,028	2,554	2,803	2,914	2,402	2,706	1,502	1,514	1,397	1,275	1,418	1,127	1,137	1,047	33,523
Ratio (%)	12.2%	45.8%	55.3%	63.1%	67.0%	69.4%	74.6%	77.6%	78.3%	77.3%	75.4%	70.6%	73.1%	75.6%	78.2%	80.3%	78.7%	83.3%	85.2%	80.7%	72.1%

\*Ratio refers to the percentage of migrants who are women.

In the mid-1990s, North Koreans began to flee from their hometowns to find employment and make an income (United Nations, 2019). Owing to the collapse of the public food distribution system after several natural disasters, North Koreans started crossing borders to avoid malnutrition and famine. Although border crossing was an illegal<sup>14</sup> and life-threatening experience, North Koreans, particularly women, who were free from military obligations, moved to China to work and some escaped to South Korea. Since 2000, these migrants have also encouraged their remaining family members to follow them to South Korea (Lee, 2013).

The changes in migrants' numbers in Table 1 reflect shifting sociocultural and political environments in North Korea and China. Although the number of migrants increased between 1998 and 2009, the number slowly decreased when the Chinese government tightened their control of the unauthorized residents leading up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008.<sup>15</sup> From this point, many

<sup>14</sup> North Korea's Ministry of People's Security defines defection as a crime of treachery against the nation. Therefore, forcefully returned migrants from China face treatment in North Korea that the UN Commission of Inquiry has condemned as crimes against humanity (UN Human Rights Council, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> The Chinese government digitized their national citizenship system based on the birthplace registration, and the changes motivated some participants, such as Kyung-ok, to come to South Korea. Kyung-ok defected from *Chungjin* in North Korea and lived in China with her daughter for 7 years. She states that "I left China because China wasn't the same as it used to be. Before the changes, I could ride a train without an identification card. But it has changed since around the Olympics. Now I must have an ID card when I use public transportation. One day, I was caught on the highway by the national security officers and I was afraid because my Chinese was insufficient. The security officer knew I was North Korean because he noticed my less than perfect Chinese. He saw my daughter and let me return home. Yet, I was surprised. As I came out home I cried sadly whether it was a good tear or a bad tear. I cried that living in a foreign country without legal protection was not the life of a human. Then, I realized that if I went to Korea, it must be different." Her story is consistent with professional reports (Human Rights Watch, 2020) regarding the Chinese government's tightened control over migrants, such as random checks of electronic IDs on roads and other strong restrictions.

unregistered North Koreans in China who pretended to be Chinese or Chinese-Korean either repatriated to North Korea or fled to South Korea, which contributed to the increasing number of migrants in South Korea in 2008 and 2009, as Table 1 shows. Similarly, between 2010 and 2011, many remaining North Koreans, including construction and Siberian timber workers in Russia, escaped to South Korea to avoid intensified North Korean surveillance under Kim Jong-un. With the emergence of a young leader who emphasized strong borders and vigilance over the remaining population, the number of North Korean migrants decreased after 2011, and only 1,047 arrived in 2019.<sup>16</sup>

**Exodus.** The border crossing is the beginning of a long, uncertain journey full of risk. North Korean migrants cross either the Tumen or Yalu River, where armed national security officers guard the border between North Korea and China (Figure 4). People bribe the national security officers and cross the rivers during certain seasons to increase their chances of safe escape, p (e.g., winter nights, when the current is weaker). After crossing the border into China, North Koreans take either the Mongolian track or the Thai track to enter South Korea. Depending on available resources,<sup>17</sup> migrants

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<sup>16</sup> NGOs and activists partially attribute this decreasing number of North Korean migrants in South Korea to the South Korean government's pro-North Korea attitude and denouncement of international human rights treaties. The most stunning case is the repatriation of two North Korean fishermen to North Korea in 2019: the South Korean government repatriated them without due process, fair trial, and investigation, which is against the United Nations Convention against Torture (UNCAT) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The same year, the South Korean government stopped co-sponsoring the United Nations General Assembly resolution on North Korean human rights (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019). The following letter from 69 NGOs from 23 countries shows how international communities, NGOs, and civil communities have urged the South Korean government take corrective actions:

In November [2019], your government [South Korea] decided to withdraw from co-sponsoring a resolution in the UNGA condemning the human rights situation in North Korea, despite supporting every past annual resolution since 2008. The same month, your government made a decision to deport two North Korean fishermen accused of murder to face a substantive risk of torture and possible death in North Korea... reducing international pressure only reduces the political cost to North Korea of its continuing horrific human rights record. Rectifying those abuses is the key to reach long-lasting peace and prosperity (Open Letter on South Korea's Policies on Protecting Human Rights in North Korea, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> North Koreans' border crossing approach has been diversified as the number of defected family members build resources (e.g., money, technology, and social networks) to bring their remaining family members to South Korea using expert brokers (Baek, 2016; Yoon, 2020).

may arrive at South Korea in fewer than three days (a third track could be on a direct flight from China with a forged passport) or spend more than a decade in China first in order to secure resources.



Figure 4. North Korean migrants' border crossing journey.

*Note.* North Korean migrant route map. From *Wikipedia*, 2015, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:North\\_Korean\\_defector\\_routes\\_map.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:North_Korean_defector_routes_map.png)

To survive in China, many North Korean migrants enter the Chinese labor market and experience exploitation due to their vulnerable social status (Ko, Chung & Oh, 2004). They begin their work in unprotected, dangerous industries that local Chinese people avoid (e.g., shepherding, butchery, and toxic metal manufacturing) and eventually may find work in restaurants and hotel management. On average, North Korean migrants earn 100 to 200 yuan<sup>18</sup> monthly, which is 20-30% of the wages a typical Chinese worker would receive for the same job (Ko, Chung & Oh, 2004). Meanwhile, most North Korean migrants pretend to be Chinese or Chinese-Koreans to avoid the threat of forceful repatriation. Some North Korean migrants are motivated to flee to South Korea to escape from sustained exploitation and risk, including psychological distress because of their experiences in China and North Korea (Chang, Haggard, & Noland, 2010). They hope to find legal protection and economic and political rights.

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<sup>18</sup> Equivalent to 14 to 28 US dollars.

During their time in China, female migrants are vulnerable to human trafficking<sup>19</sup> (Kim, Yun, Park & Williams, 2009; Shua & Liu, 2020) due to their illegal status<sup>20</sup> and insufficient knowledge of the outside world; some participants in my research said they had been sold into forced marriage and had babies with Chinese husbands. North Koreans who could neither return to their hometowns nor endure further exploitation in China escaped to South Korea in pursuit of improved living conditions.

### **Policy and Legal Context**

**Settlement funds.** Upon arrival, North Korean migrants receive social welfare support (educational, financial, and residential) and are counted as citizens of Republic of Korea (The Ministry of Unification, 2020). For the first three months, those migrants receive social adaptation education from *Hanawon* (hana means one/unity in Korean), which provides educational and training programs tailored to the needs of North Korean migrants. The center provides educational services in five areas (i.e., mental and physical care, job search and career building, Korean society, settlement support, and life planning), adapted to each participant's age and gender.

After completing the basic education, North Korean migrants receive two types of settlement funds to cover basic needs and housing: a basic installment payment (33.5%) and a residence grant (62.5%, The Ministry of Unification of Korea, 2019, p. 30). Table 2 shows total amount of money each person receives from each fund.

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<sup>19</sup> Many North Korean women are forced to marry rural, disabled, or elder Chinese men and some are forced into prostitution and sold into sexual slavery. Some human trafficking agencies have arisen specifically to smuggle illegal North Korean women; those women are either sold by local Chinese or by fellow North Koreans. Some North Korean women sell themselves voluntarily to make money for their families (Kim, Yun, Park & Williams, 2009; Shua & Liu, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> China does not consider North Korean migrants to be refugees and has rejected the Migrant Convention and Protocol and UNHCH's assessment of North Korean migrants. Instead, China follows a bilateral repatriation agreement with North Korea and allows the human trafficking of North Korean victims in China (Margesson, Chanlett-Avery & Bruno, 2007).

Table 2. Basic Installment Payment and Housing Fund (Korean won).

Basic installment payment		Housing fund <sup>21</sup>	Total
Beginning fund, One time	Divided fund, One time		
5 million (US\$4,100)	3 million (US\$2,450)	16 million (US\$13,070)	24 million (US\$19,605)

Not all funding is paid at once. Rather, each fund is paid separately each year to encourage North Korean migrants' long-term integration. For the basic installment payment, 20% of the fund is provided immediately after the completion of basic education, and extra funding (12.5%) is deposited within one year of settling into a residence. The housing fund goes toward a rental apartment, and the remaining funds are paid to North Korean migrants after they have completed five years of residence support and protection.<sup>22</sup>

**Job support and incentive systems.** The South Korean government provides incentive-based support, from job training to employment, during the early adjustment period. These incentives are aimed at promoting migrants' participation in job training, certificate acquisition, and prolonged employment by offering extra financial benefits (Ministry of Unification, 2019).

Although these funds and incentives are intended to support prolonged employment, some of the social workers that I interviewed believe that North Korean migrants in South Korea receive “too much support” compared to migrants in other countries. A social worker noted:

When North Korean migrants go to the United States, there is little financial assistance. Australia is not much different. They only offer homes and migrants must do the rest, eating and living, by themselves. So North Korean migrants in other countries are motivated to work. Here, migrants can receive money for certificates and training. This structural condition can demotivate them to work.

<sup>21</sup> Housing support is based on the North Korean Migrant Act, Article 20.

<sup>22</sup> North Korean migrants receive special support (e.g., basic livelihood support and medical/emergent medical support) and protection from the local police and government officials for a period of five years (Ministry of Unification, 2019). The protection is for helping migrants not to be fall into the victims of planned crimes targeting newly resident migrants.

This social worker's statement reveals the discrepancy between policy and reality in terms of supporting and increasing migrants' employability, which may discourage migrants' motivation to work and contribute to the labor market. However, as I note below, South Korea's social spending on underprivileged groups is the third lowest among OECD countries (OECD, 2020c).

Job seekers can apply for the Employment Success Package, managed by the Ministry of Labor, which provides 90% of job training fees and a monthly allowance (0.4 million won, \$335) to supplement migrants' income during the training period. With this package, migrants receive an Employment Success Incentive (one time, 1.5 million won, \$1250) when they find jobs. The package is valid for up to five years.

Table 3. Job-related incentives.

Categories		Description	Amount (million won)
Employment Success Package (Ministry of Labor)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides full job training expenses (within five years after arrival in South Korea)</li> <li>Training support allowance</li> <li>Offers an employment celebration incentive for getting a job</li> </ul>	Training expenses: 3 Allowance: 0.4 Incentive: 1.5
Settlement Support Incentives (Ministry of Unification)	Employment Support Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports North Korean migrants who stay in one workplace</li> <li>Pays ½ of North Korean migrants' wages (maximum 0.5 million won) to employers for 3 years</li> </ul>	6 months: 2 1 <sup>st</sup> year: 4.5 2 <sup>nd</sup> year: 5.5 3 <sup>rd</sup> year: 6.5
	Job Training and Qualification Support Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support training incentive to those who complete 500 hours of job training</li> </ul>	500 hours: 1.2 620 hours: 1.4 740 hours: 1.6
	Certificate Acquisition Incentive Wage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support an Incentive Wage for the people who acquire a certificate after the job training/self-study</li> </ul>	2

Another program from the Ministry of Unification is Settlement Support Incentives (Table 3), which are divided into three categories: 1) Employment Support Fund, 2) Job Training and Qualification Fund, and 3) Certificate Acquisition Incentive. The Employment Support Fund is for working migrants and encourages their prolonged service at one job. Except for the first incentive (2 million won, \$1675), earmarked to celebrate the first six months of employment, other incentives are awarded annually to North Korean migrants who stay at one workplace for up to three years. The Employment Support Fund, available to migrants who entered before November 29, 2014, also pays employers for half of migrants' wages (maximum of 0.5 million won per month, \$ 420) for three years. The Job Training and Qualification Support Fund is tied to migrants' hours in their chosen training programs, starting from the first five hundred hours. This fund increases once migrants spend more hours in training.<sup>23</sup> Lastly, migrants who earn a job-related certificate or license can receive two million won through the Certificate Acquisition Incentive Wage. These three incentive programs are designed to ensure migrants' uninterrupted economic participation and stable employment.

The incentive-based funding programs appear to be effective in terms of enhancing employability. The following table (Table 4) shows the changes in North Korean migrants' economic participation over a decade (Ministry of Unification, 2020).

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<sup>23</sup> According to the 2019 Social Adjustment Investigation (Hana foundation, 2020), which surveyed a sample of 3,000 North Korean migrants, they receive basic computer-based training for specific fields, such as information and communication (26.3%); health and medicine (25.6%); food, baking, and beauty (25%); office work and accounting (22.6%); and machine and heavy equipment (11.8%). Although a high number of North Korean migrants (89.4%) complete their job training programs, half (49.8%) appear to experience a job mismatch. Some migrants changed their minds (28.8%),<sup>23</sup> some failed to find any matching job (19.5%) or job with proper conditions (e.g., wage, distance, and welfare, 13.4%), and others responded that the training was not helpful (8.5%).



Table 4. *North Korean migrants' economic participation (%)*.

Categories	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18
Basic livelihood security recipient <sup>24</sup>	54.8	54.9	51.3	46.7	40.8	35	32.3	25.3	24.4	24.4	24.4
Economic activity participation rate	49.6	48.6	42.6	56.5	54.1	56.9	56.6	59.4	57.9	61.2	64.8
Employment rate	44.9	41.9	38.7	49.7	50	51.4	53.1	54.6	55	56.9	60.4
Unemployment rate	9.5	13.7	9.2	12.1	7.5	9.7	6.2	4.8	5.1	7.0	6.9

In 2008, 54.8% of migrants received the basic livelihood security. Yet, a decade later in 2018, more than half of migrants (64.8%) engaged in economic activities and only a quarter of migrants (24.4%) received the basic livelihood security support. One thing to note in this table is the moderately decreasing number of basic livelihood security recipients over time, while the employment rate increased from 44.9% in 2008 to 60.4%<sup>25</sup> in 2018.

Although migrants' economic participation has dramatically increased, most migrants are still in an insecure position because the majority are hired into flexible and temporary jobs. According to the Hana Foundation (2020b), 72.6% of employed North Korean migrants do not have secure employment.<sup>26</sup> The average migrant's length of service in one workplace is 27.7 months (two years and 3.7 months), compared to an average of 43.3 months (three years and 7.3 months) for South Koreans. Those North Korean migrants are primarily employed in unskilled labor (24.3%), service work (19.6%), and skilled jobs (11.0%).

The quantitative data concerning North Korean migrants' settlement funds, job incentives, and economic participation show government efforts to integrate those migrants into the traditional

<sup>24</sup> North Korean migrants in vulnerable groups (based on age, disability, and single parenthood) receive a special fund. Migrants over 60 years old receive 7.2 million won (\$600) per month. Those with disabilities receive 15.4 million won (\$1290, 1<sup>st</sup> grade) to 3.6 million won (\$300, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> grade). (Grades denote the degree of disability, with 1<sup>st</sup> grade indicating severe physical and/or intellectual disability.) Single-parent households with children under 13 years old receive 3.6 million won (\$300 per month).

<sup>25</sup> The average employment rate in South Korea is 66.8% (OECD, 2020a).

<sup>26</sup> The report describes job security as having a clearly written employment period in their contract.

job market, although they still suffer from job insecurity and instability. In the next section, I describe how social enterprises emerged as an alternative job market to better assist North Korean migrants and be attuned to their unique circumstances.

## **Social Enterprises**

**Social enterprises in South Korea.** A social enterprise is a business that prioritizes social missions as a form of public service (Ministry of Labor, 2020). Since 2006, the South Korean government has certified social enterprises with the Social Enterprise Promotion Act, and it has provided substantive financial and administrative support to social enterprises. In 2020, the South Korean government promoted social economy as a way to expand sustainable and socially responsible business for all and made plans to build social cities and towns that specialized in social enterprise employment and businesses, planning to invest approximately \$23,850,000 per city to design and facilitate infrastructure. Beginning with two cities in 2020, the goal is to establish a robust socio-economic system to support start-ups, research, network, and sales and promotions in multiple cities (Ministry of the Interior and Safety, 2020). Table 5 indicates the types of subsidiary funds and support that social enterprises can receive from the government (Ministry of Labor, 2020).

Table 5. Social Enterprise Support System.

Categories	Description
<b>Financial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The government pays for the percentage of the wages of up to 50 employees               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Preliminary-social enterprise<sup>27</sup>: 50% of the wages of employees (over two years)</li> <li>– Social enterprise: 40% of the wages of employees (over three years)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 20% additional support for employing members of a vulnerable population<sup>28</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Social security insurance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support insurance cost for up to 50 employees (over four years)</li> </ul>
<b>Tax deduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deduct corporate tax and income tax               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 100% (over three years)</li> <li>– 50% (over two years after three years of deduction)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Deduct 50% of acquisition tax and registration license tax</li> <li>• Exempt a value-added tax for education</li> </ul>

Social enterprises receive diverse benefits, including half of their employees' wages, social security insurance aid, and tax deductions. In addition, employers and small business owners who hire North Korean migrants can get wage support of up to 70%.<sup>29</sup>

**Work integrated social enterprise.** Among the four types of social enterprises (i.e., social service provider, work integration, community contribution, and mixed), this dissertation focuses on work integration social enterprises. Members of vulnerable populations account for more than 30% of the employees in this category. Work integration social enterprises are designed to mitigate structural weaknesses in Korea's labor market and provide a social safety net through employment and social

<sup>27</sup> Preliminary social enterprise refers to a company that meets the minimum legal requirements for social enterprise certification without having a sufficient profit model.

<sup>28</sup> Among the four types of social enterprises, a work integration model employ is specialized for hiring vulnerable populations. North Korean migrants are designated as a vulnerable population in the Social Enterprise Supporting Act (SESA) and the North Korean Refugee Protection and Settlement Support Act. According to SESA Article 2, other vulnerable groups include people with lower incomes, the elderly, the disabled, single mothers, marriage migrants, the long-term unemployed, and the homeless.

<sup>29</sup> Although the social enterprises featured in this dissertation project receive governmental and corporate support, they still face hiring challenges, in particular, hiring South Korean staff who both have expertise in the food industry and are willing to work alongside North Korean migrants.

and economic supports for vulnerable populations such as North Korean migrants<sup>30</sup> (OECD, 2020b). Social enterprise scholars (Bidget, 2009; Bidget & Jeong, 2016) have argued that the model can be an optimal solution<sup>31</sup> for migrants, who have less knowledge and fewer skills and networks compared to South Korean colleagues in the workplace.

## Summary

To examine how North Korean migrants adjust in their workplaces at social enterprises, I first introduced the social context of migrants in South Korea, both their demographic characteristics and defection journey. I then provided legal and political frameworks, which were designed to support North Korean migrants' resettlement emphasis on economic participation and prolonged employment. Finally, I describe social enterprise in general and work-integrated social enterprise in particular to set

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<sup>30</sup> South Korea's structural weakness in the labor market can be described with job characteristics and social welfare system in terms of the social spending budget. The unemployment rate in South Korea is 3.7 percent, which is the eleventh lowest unemployment rate among Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (OECD, 2020b). However, the quality of jobs is characterized as poor and flexible. The employment rates for insecure jobs (including part-time employment, self-employment, and temporary employment) are higher than the OECD average. In other words, workers in South Korea face a very flexible labor market. The country's social spending on underprivileged groups is the third lowest among the OECD countries (OECD, 2020c). That is, people in the flexible job market and the unemployed cannot get sufficient social welfare support. Accordingly, South Korea has sought ways to overcome such structural weaknesses, and promoting social enterprises has become one of the answers.

The emergence of social enterprises reflects South Korea's economic development trajectory since the 1997 financial crisis. When the International Monetary Fund (IMF) crisis threatened the South Korean economy, many vulnerable populations--such as the elderly, women, and foreign workers--lost their jobs due to corporate bankruptcy and ensuing business restructuring. The structural changes brought about by neoliberal labor reform rapidly increased social inequality and exacerbated job insecurity, including the expansion of flexible labor, forcing many workers into temporary, part-time, and irregular positions. The national financial crisis created socioeconomic and structural challenges and a high unemployment rate that have persisted since the early 2000s. To expand the social safety net through the integration of a social mission into business activities, the government enacted the Social Enterprise Promotion Act in 2006 to set up the system and increased awareness of the public service work of the social enterprises to the public, businesses, and social actors.

<sup>31</sup> Some North Korean migrants, such as Sae-bom, disagree that social enterprises are the optimal solution for them. Sae-bom said, "There are many options for us. Social enterprise is not the only choice. I could do this and that too, but I chose it among them, but I didn't have to do it. So, when I ask for something from the social enterprise, I bargain. I don't have to do this [social enterprise work], isn't it more you [employer]? Social enterprises need North Korean migrants to run the business."

the tone for my research background. The following chapter describes my research approach for this project.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Research Design**

To describe my research approach, I begin with a purpose statement and the research design that guided the study. I then explain the dilemma of membership roles during my participant observation as a part-time worker, observer, and friend. Through explaining how I negotiated conflicting role expectations and challenges, I raise practical and ethical questions about collecting and analyzing data on North Korean migrants' social realities. Finally, I describe research sites, data analysis, data quality, and limitations of this study.

#### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this research study is to interpret and understand North Korean migrants' learning at work in South Korean social enterprises, particularly how they learn to interact with others and manage their feelings and how the social enterprise environment influences their coping strategies. I have characterized those migrants' experiences of workplace learning by focusing on how their informal learning occurs and how their prior experiences in North Korea and China shaped their learning approaches in South Korea. Exploring migrants' perceptions of their realities and how they learn to adjust in new, emotionally laden environments can help policy makers, practitioners, and scholars accommodate, facilitate, and promote programs and activities for North Korean migrants that better aid them in their workplaces and with community integration.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

- 1) How and what do North Korean migrants who are employed at social enterprise cafés and restaurants learn about working in South Korea?
  - a) How do they learn to interact with co-workers, customers, and supervisors?
  - b) How do they learn to manage their feelings to fulfill the emotional requirements of their jobs?
- 2) How does the social enterprise work environment shape North Korean migrants' coping strategies?

Answering these questions will elucidate how participation in a social enterprise workplace affected participants' workplace learning.

## Ethnography

For this study, I used an ethnographic approach, drawing on naturalistic inquiry<sup>32</sup> to explore North Korean migrants' learning specific to their work situations. Ethnographic approach refers to a research method that originated from the anthropological tradition in which the practitioner or expert spends an extended time in the field to gain deeper insights into their subjects (Fetterman, 2010; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Patton, 2015). Ethnography is best suited to investigate how migrants learn in their workplaces because it provides ways to observe, participate, and explain migrants' daily lives from an emic (insider) perspective (Patton, 2015; Spradley, 1979). Particularly, this approach is critical to explaining migrants' perceptions because prior research paid insufficient attention to their

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<sup>32</sup> Naturalistic inquiry is a paradigm that believes in multiple realities rather than a monolithic truth (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

emic perspectives, although the meanings attached to migrants' learning and behaviors needed to be observed and interpreted from their perspectives.

This study is not seeking generalizability or an objective truth that applies to all North Korean migrants. Rather, I attempted to provide insights using context-rich data that allows interpretation and understanding of particular migrants' realities at these specific social enterprises (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Beuving & de Vries, 2014). This development of a nuanced view of migrants' perceptions of their realities in real-life situations can help reveal their workplace learning in relation to individual perception (Hochschild, 2012). Therefore, I did not have hypotheses to test nor did I bracket myself from the fieldwork (Patton, 2015).

To understand participants' emic perspectives, I conducted participant observation at social enterprise cafés and restaurants for nine months to immerse myself in the local cultures. Participant observation is a data collection method in ethnography that locates a researcher to participate in typical and non-typical settings for data collection (Patton, 2015). In the setting, the researcher can play an active membership role in the community of research site by contributing to the settings (Adler & Adler, 1987). I worked as a part-time employee for food and beverage production and sales, which allowed me to be immersed in social enterprise business settings for data collection, analysis, and writing (Wolcott, 2008).

I drew on a contemporary ethnographic approach to participant observation in building rapport with research participants (Adler & Adler, 1987; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). My participation and contribution to cafes and restaurants mediated my relationships with participants to listen to their stories and feelings to collect thick descriptions (Silverman, 2001). Unlike a traditional ethnography that emphasizes objective distance between a researcher and the subject, I built relationships with participants by contributing in activities to collect internal data and verify research



participants' interpretations.<sup>33</sup> To acquire the emic perspective, I attempted to build trust with participants through daily interactions and practical roles, which allowed me to gain deep insights in the field. In the next section, I describe how I negotiated roles and developed relationships with participants to provide clues into the depth and trustworthiness of the data (Gunzenhauser, 2006).

### **Positionality**

I took a constructivist and interpretative approach, assuming that reality is socially constructed and knowledge is produced by knowers; consequently knowledge about reality is accessible via direct (e.g., five senses) and indirect sources (e.g., beliefs and consciousness). In this sense, North Korean participants' "reality of everyday" is "an ordered reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 35) where they have a shared intersubjective world in their community of practice. Indeed, my participant observation affected the construction of reality through an "interactive process" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 8), and therefore, I described my positionality and mode of observation here and throughout dissertation to better represent my research participants and our co-construction of our reality.

Revealing the researcher's positionality is significant in ethnography because my relationship to the field and participants shaped my data collection, analysis, and writing (Baptiste, 2001b; Patton, 2015; Wolcott, 2008). In this regard, there are three aspects of my presence that play a critical role in constructing current knowledge. First, my positionality, identity, knowledge, and emotions take an important role in constructing present knowledge. Second, North Korean participants' knowledge about me and how they perceive me are significant for understanding the nature of our relationship. Third, I discuss how our relationships have been transformed to provide clues into the depth and

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<sup>33</sup> This is an approach in which temporarily "losing" a researcher's self and theoretic assumptions, a researcher's conscious can "ameliorate" the depth of the members' perspectives, penetrating "beyond a rational to an irrational, emotional, and deep understanding of the people" (Adler & Adler, 1987, pp. 60-61). Having emic and etic perspectives, a researcher can produce both context-sensitive and theoretically-oriented monographs (Wolcott, 2008).

trustworthiness of the data (Gunzenhauser, 2006).

This ethnography is “partially” a native ethnography. I grew up in the Republic of Korea, south of the divide between North and South, and lived in Seoul as an adult. I am the daughter of a colonel who lived in a military zone under the protection of armed soldiers. Surrounded by the display of old military airplanes and tanks at the local park, the division of the nation and the threats of war were always present in my life. After watching movies and reading newspapers on North Korean people who starved and were sold for marriage in China, I developed deep sympathy for North Korean people and suspicion toward North Korea’s regime. I wondered why people were starving and sold for forced marriage in China and what should be the role of the state. This prior understanding is deeply embedded in my native South Korean stance and was contested when I talked about the party-army regime and issues about national security and unification, raising questions like: how can we combine those different political and economic systems? How can we build consensus?

In other ways, this study is not a native ethnography. I am not North Korean and I have never traveled there. Although both Koreas share the same linguistic tradition, seven decades of division have split our language and cultural understandings. Because of my outsider stance among participants, I was not fully welcomed into attending their internal managers’ meetings, and initially I was excluded from informal conversations about my work performance at the social enterprise sites.

My age, gender, and educational background affected research participants and data collection. For the younger participants at cafés, they called me *unni* (older-sister), the same way they would talk of their real *unni*, and helped me to learn about their perception of appearance at service work. They said customers judged their looks, and therefore cosmetics and nice clothes were important for dispelling social bias against poor North Korean migrants. These conversations helped me to understand their perceptions of appearance and how it intersected with gender roles and social bias in the service workplace. Others, who felt uncomfortable having a researcher at work,

intentionally avoided eye-contact and conversation with me. For some who spent more than a decade in South Korea and developed knowledge about the United States and Americans, my affiliation with a U.S. university motivated them to participate in interviews. Those participants seemed to overcome their anti-U.S. sentiment and develop strong trust toward the United States. My work participation and involvement in daily events deepened our mutual understanding and transformed our relationship.

Functionally, many participants considered me a novice worker because of my relatively slow movements and insufficient work skills. They taught me multiple skills (e.g., barista work and cleaning) including reacting with *nunchi* for delivering better customer service. As those tasks mediated our conversations, we were able to share our personal lives. In addition, my participation at work without being paid developed a sense of reciprocity for some participants: “I want to help you.” Those participants considered my membership role (Adler & Adler, 2011) as the evidence of authenticity which distinguished me from other distanced and hierarchical researchers. Some participants who graduated from universities in South Korea cared for my graduation requirements and decided to help me with their stories. Such reactions revealed what they learned about working and being researched in South Korea. Indeed, my daily involvement merged our realities with a “subjectively meaningful world of members” (Rochford, 1985, p.41).

**Dilemmas of being a part-time worker.** Participating as an “unpaid part-time worker,” I became conscious of both the practical advantages and disadvantages of working while researching at the data sites and negotiating role expectations. Before going to Korea, I communicated with social enterprises and agreed to be a part-time worker without payment to gain access to research sites for participant observation and data collection. I was welcomed by social enterprises as an extra laborer. In 2017, I received a welcoming email from a café *Jamboree* representative:

Greetings! Would you like to work as a (unpaid) part timer and help our managers tomorrow? We are always in need of extra hands. A total of six migrants are working in two cafés and you can alternate working in each café. I already introduced you [a researcher from the U.S.

who will help us with our work] to them. One café needs to replace their promotional banner by this Friday and they may need your help to complete the work. They will explain what you need to do. Also, you can teach migrants how to use the computer and email during break hours. You can interview them anytime (January 16, 2017).

She commented that my volunteer participation would benefit both the social enterprises and my research because I would be able to spend enough time to build relationships<sup>34</sup> with participants at work, which I agreed with. The following year, in 2018, I chose a similar approach to expand my sites to social enterprise restaurants to collect additional data.<sup>35</sup> I received the following email from one of the restaurant staff members in response to my inquiry:

I think it would be nice if you can work here as a part time worker for several months. North Korean migrants reluctantly share their stories. In my opinion, you can start work in our restaurants and get acquainted with North Korean migrants, and then you can start to have enough conversation with them. Yet, please be mindful of our restaurants' peak times during and in-between your conversations. We are busy around lunch, approximately 11:00 am to 2:00 pm. After that, when we have lunch and prepare for the next shift, between 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm, you can have conversations/interviews and we can help you to connect with more North Korean migrants after working hours (February 7, 2018).

Working with migrants during regular hours allowed me to explore their daily routines (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I participated in an “interactive [work] process” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 8) involving tangible and intangible activities (e.g., cleaning, washing, chatting, eating, and exchanging ideas and tasks including taking turns at a particular task) with participants, which allowed me to become involved in the local working culture (Brannan, Pearson & Worthington, 2007).

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<sup>34</sup> As I worked with North Korean migrants, their perceptions about me were not limited to the narrow boundary of my status as a researcher because I was also a novice worker. Some participants reacted to me with a sense of reciprocity because I could alleviate their workloads without receiving payment. Others treated me as a person who did not ignore them because I had to listen to their instructions to do daily tasks.

<sup>35</sup> In 2017, I collected data from six participants at social enterprise cafés, and I expanded my study to twenty participants during the second visit in 2018 at social enterprise restaurants.

Meanwhile, I struggled to balance different role expectations as a part-time worker and researcher because activities demanded both physical and mental labor. The following email to a colleague describes my struggles in negotiating my two roles:

I realized that a researcher, especially a qualitative researcher, should have good physical strength to manage her fieldwork. Ethnographic approach is not desk work...not at all. It requires physical and mental work, and needs a constant balance between two. In the beginning of the fieldwork, I could not manage both. Writing field notes also consumed time and energy after the participant observation. Later, I learned to prioritize writing field notes—recording it right after daily chores and conversations with migrants. (February 10, 2017)

I had to learn to draw a line as a researcher and manage the level of my involvement in physical work, a dilemma I had not properly understood before coming to the field. Over the two years of fieldwork, I negotiated time to work and said “no” to the unnecessary work expectations from social enterprises. I also learned to jot down memos during the workday on my phone, and completing my field notes later allowed me to produce thick descriptions.

**Dilemmas of “byeongpung [folding screen].”** My growing understanding of the dynamics of migrants’ social relations accompanied changes in my research approach to be more locally situated. I became a silent observer in responding to encountering migrants’ feelings of vulnerability and distrust around researchers. In the following excerpt from my field notes, I described my first meeting with a migrant who refused to have a researcher close to her:

I introduced myself as “A doctoral student in the U.S.” A North Korean employee at a *Jamboree* café ignored me. She avoided any eye-contact with me and said, “You should not interview me. We are not different from South Koreans.” She denied my engagement, treated me like an invisible person, and returned to her mobile game. Soon, she resumed her daily routines because she pretended I was absent. (FN, 1/19/17)

I had followed the interview protocol—be explicit about introducing myself and the purpose of my research (Spradley, 1979). Yet, this migrant employee reacted negatively to my introduction because

she had had traumatic experiences<sup>36</sup> with the National Intelligence Service<sup>37</sup> and journalists upon her arrival in South Korea. For two migrants, asking descriptive question such as, “Could you describe what happened...” gave the impression of an “investigation” because they were being asked to share personal information.<sup>38</sup> Four migrants, who mostly arrived in South Korea within the past five years, explicitly told me that they had terrible feelings about the terms “interview” and “research” just as one participant who told me her concerns about family members in the North:

The interview itself is not good nor beneficial. I mean, I do not want to say the interview itself is bad. What do you when you do the interview? You will write down your interview. My information can go out there and document it before anonymous audience. I don't know. It shouldn't go out. So, I don't like an interview at all. We have a family in North Korea. Also, there are spies in South Korea. If my information flows over there and my family is hurt, why should I do an interview? So our perception of the interview is hatefulness. All right. People who don't have a family don't care, but I hate it when I say the interview because I'm afraid my family will get hurt. I don't do anything like this. So I'm not going to do it anymore.

After I observed migrants’ reactions to interviews during my first encounters at the research sites, I realized that I had to adjust my approach to gain their consent and participation. For instance, I explained the difference between research articles and newspaper articles in terms of different goals

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<sup>36</sup> Several ethnographic studies on North Korean migrants have described their prior research experiences as: (a) exploitation, (b) financial reward, and (c) resisting bias. For instance, during 18 months of ethnographic research, Lee (2012) observed young North Korean migrants’ rejection to participate in research because of their strong sense of being exploited for a “worthy research object” (p. 51). For adult migrants, research participation became a part-time job to earn easy money (Kim, 2009; Lee, 2012). Because of frequent interview opportunities with researchers and government-affiliated institutions, some participants perceived research participation as an earning opportunity. For some adult migrants, they perceived social stigmas imposed on them and attempted to resist those biases and affect policy discourse through their voices (Lee, 2012). According to South Korean scholars (Keum, 2015; Lee, 2012), many adult migrants are well aware of the research context and social discourse about them because of their prior research experiences, which involved answering questions about their mental and psychological status using assessments such as mental health tests. Consequently, those experiences and expectations shaped migrants’ “scripted narrative” (Lee, 2012, p. 41) and “poor and stereotypical research results” (Jeon, 2000, p. 363).

<sup>37</sup> Upon entering South Korea, all migrants must undergo a thorough investigation by the National Intelligence Service. She later described this experience as traumatic to me and I could gain a better understanding about her hesitation to do interviews, which I applied in the second year of research (2018).

<sup>38</sup> Sharing personal information can be problematic for some participants who may experience political interrogation in North Korea, repatriation in China, and spy accusations in South Korea. Even for some participants, using the term ‘interview’ prompted irritation and suspicion (Jeon, 2000).

and readership, and I reassured them that I would protect their personal information and refer to them using pseudonyms of their choice.

Migrants' perception of interviews seems to be related to their status and to the sociocultural environment that projected political and ideological interests onto them. "Be a *byeongpung*<sup>39</sup> [folding screen]," said one North Korean barista, Mi-yeon, advising me to take a neutral approach:

Why don't you be a *byeongpung* [folding screen] when you are working here? Do not show any of your intentions or expectations to us. Because we are trained to give what people are looking for. Many researchers and graduate students bring us surveys and interview questionnaires with their particular interests, and we give answers that they want to hear from us. If you want to avoid this situation, you must be a *byeongpung*, like you do not exist.

To capture migrants' unbiased thoughts and reality, Mi-yeon suggested, I ought to show neutrality like a *byeongpung*, a flexible and portable wall, between the two groups, North Koreans and South Koreans, without influencing either one. The metaphor powerfully indicates what pressures migrants may receive from researchers' and investigators' data collection and how migrants adapted to the circumstances based on North Korean culture, or a coping strategy they adopted with their status in South Korea.

I had previously planned to use standardized and structured interviews, but I realized those might remind them of their past experiences as passive research subjects and create structured and distanced narratives giving an impression of interviewing under hierarchical regulations<sup>40</sup> (Thielen,

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<sup>39</sup> *Byeongpung* serves as a tool to partition rooms in South Korea. Here, *byeongpung* indicates neutral and value-free positionality. North Korean migrants' reactions to interviews hinted at migrants' sensitivity toward positionality, power, and sociocultural environment, which are integral parts of face to face interviews (Broom, Hand & Tovey, 2009; Manderson, Bennett & Andajani-Sutjahjo, 2006). Both interviewers and interviewees incorporate their social status (e.g., gesture, stance, and tone) when constructing interview narratives; this embodied face-to-face exchange affects the interviewee's choice of themes and deliveries depending on the researcher's age, gender, and class. Particularly, the researcher's biography (e.g., social status, gender, and age) and the participant's vulnerability (e.g., anxiety and fear) affect interview dynamics and data collection because they evoke gendered identity during interview conversation (Broom, Hand & Tovey, 2009).

<sup>40</sup> To understand the formation of refugees' structured and distanced narratives, Thielen's (2009) research provides useful insights and tools. The careful review of the interview process of Iranian refugees in German asylum reveals several sociocultural elements that affected refugees' narratives: (1) positioning, (2) interviewer categorization, (3) narrative regulation. In terms of positioning, refugees tended to exaggerate their stories to acquire more recognition from the public, which resulted in producing and reproducing alienated and atypical

2009). Rather, using informal conversations and semi-structured interviews, I was conscious of minimizing my use of technical terms or structured formats and tried to have conversations and use a flexible and relational approach (Bell, 2013). I attempted to give migrants agency over their stories, which allowed them to construct their own narratives and meanings grounded in their own realities (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Cortazzi, 2007).

**Dilemmas of a “friend.”** Building rapport with North Korean migrants enabled me to develop a culturally responsive and locally situated research approach while maintaining respondent confidentiality. Through these experiences, however, I encountered challenges when conducting interviews because some participants were hesitant at first to engage with me. When I shared these challenging experiences with my participants, one, Won-chul, who had spent more than a decade in South Korea and had many South Korean friends, gave me some advice: “Be our friend. Then, we will tell our stories.” Won-chul’s advice resonated with me as a method to overcome these challenges and another way to build rapport with respondents; initially, what it meant to be a friend with participants was not clear to me because I did not know their perceptions of friendship. With Won-chul’s advice in mind, I later realized the meaning of building friendships with North Korean migrants through an encounter with an experienced pastor.

In 2017, I attended the same church service as one of my participants and heard an interesting story from the pastor, who served migrants for over seven decades. The pastor told me that building relationships with migrants requires a perspective change, particularly for South Koreans who have presuppositions about North Koreans. The pastor said to me:

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narratives distanced from the norm. Also, refugees were found to categorize interviewers (e.g., authority figure, therapist, social worker) and provided appropriate answers. Frequent interrogation situations also affected refugees’ ability to tell their self-filtered stories without building relationships with interviewers. Particularly, repetitive interview situations led refugees to internalize self-regulation and produce standardized narratives. Having a strong understanding of refugees’ situations, Thielen argues that scholars should be cognizant of refugees’ subjective experiences and comprehensive cultural, historical, and organizational dynamics.



One day during the service, we [the pastor and North Korean migrants] read the Bible story of the Good Samaritan together and performed a roleplay. Then, I asked migrants: ‘Who is your neighbor? Everybody, including a priest and a Levite, passed by the man who lost everything after being robbed and beaten. Then, who is your neighbor?’ You know what? [The pastor then looked at my face and explained his insight.] We cannot choose our neighbor unless we experience being robbed. We can only share the experience of our neighbor if we lose something then feel needs and pains and someone comes to us to fill our needs like the Good Samaritan. Our neighbor, then, is not our choice, but is those people who see our needs and brokenness and come to us—they become our neighbors. We cannot argue that we are not able to be a migrant’s neighbor because we do not know their needs unless they tell us or we become that man who requires their help. This is not the case, as we need migrants’ help to become their neighbors. With this recognition, we can avoid seeing migrants as the subjects of our [South Koreans’] ministry or passive recipients in a top-down approach. (FN 3/14/17, paraphrase based on my notes)

The metaphor of a Good Samaritan helped me to reflect on my expectations and attitudes toward migrants as needy people and allowed me to reconstruct my mental framework for conducting interviews with migrants: I was the one who needed their help in completing the research. As this excerpt and various other informal conversations I shared with the pastor illustrate, South Koreans’ attitudes convey a sense of hierarchy to migrants, which may limit opportunities to support each other’s needs and become neighbors. Although I thought my research could directly or indirectly help North Korean migrants through academic contributions, in retrospect, my agenda to complete the research risked interfering with their lives and reproducing hierarchical attitudes that assume migrants needed my help.

Changes in my relationships with migrants gradually occurred over two years as I engaged migrants’ lives, provided my manual labor, and received their personal help.<sup>41</sup> Having informed knowledge of migrants’ typical days and their own perceptions of research, I stopped explaining that the purpose of my research was for making a policy change to benefit migrants’ settlement programs

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<sup>41</sup> My age and gender became the ground of my relationship building. For female baristas, I was a person “who needed consultation on appearance,” according to Mye-yeon. My improvement opportunities allowed them to care for me. Some of them kindly advised me on how to use makeup, styling, and dieting while sharing their definitions of beauty. This helped me to understand their perceptions about appearance and gender roles in the South Korean service industry.

and welfare supports because they were not naïve to believe such a cliché as many participants had told me. Instead, I told them straightforwardly, “I need your help,” which motivated some migrants to help me with their stories. More than half of the participants (13) explicitly mentioned they wanted to “help me” and some of them consulted with me on how to interact with other migrants in a culturally appropriate way (e.g., who to avoid and how to conduct the interviews).

### Research Settings

This dissertation is based on a total of nine months of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork that began in 2017. A three-month pilot study at the cafés (January to March 2017) involved interviews with North Korean employees, participant observation while working as a barista, and collection of documents and artifacts. Fieldwork from January to July 2018 involved additional informal and semi-structured interviews, participant observation as a part-time employee, field notes, and access to an employee’s personal diary written over three years.

The research sites were two cafés and three restaurants located in a busy neighborhood in a large South Korean city. The following table (Table 6) shows information about both the pilot study and fieldwork.

Table 6. Summary of fieldwork.

	<b>Pilot Study</b>	<b>Field work</b>
<b>Period</b>	January to March 2017	January 2017 to July 2018
<b>Sites</b>	Two social enterprise cafés and informal gatherings	Two social enterprise cafés and three restaurants
<b>Activities</b>	Formal: -workplace -manager’s meetings Informal: -migrants’ chorus performance -graduation ceremony -informal gatherings and socialization	Formal: -workplace -manager’s meetings Informal: -informal gatherings and socialization (e.g., amusement park and church services) -hospital
<b>Participants</b>	6	19

The cafés and restaurants were certified as social enterprises by the Ministry of Unification and Metropolitan Government, which means that they receive government and corporate subsidies. The cafés and restaurants have sought to solve migrants' employment concerns by creating business opportunities with an emphasis on self-reliance. The restaurants were social enterprises built by a non-governmental organization that specialized in hiring, training, and promoting North Korean migrants to become the owners of each restaurant. I chose these sites because I could gain access through personal and professional networks.

**Locations.** Metropolitan Seoul in South Korea is one of the largest and most densely packed areas in East Asia. Approximately 65% of North Korean migrants live around Seoul, Incheon, and the surrounding Gyunggi-do region, where there are rental apartment complexes designated for migrants (Unification of Korea, 2020). The figure below (Figure 5) shows the research sites' locations within South Korea.

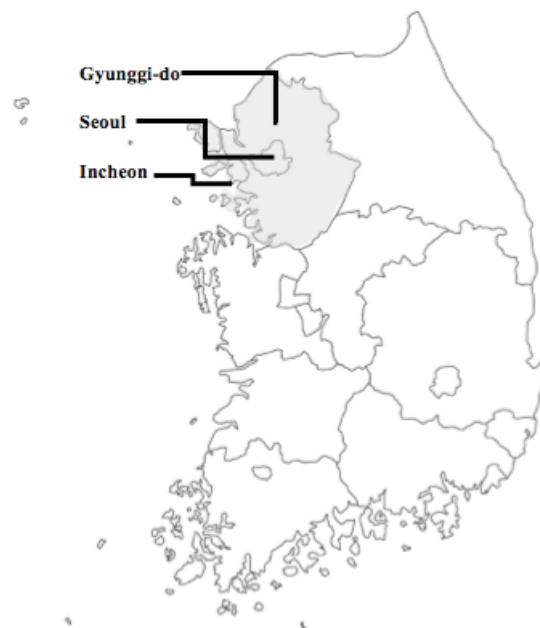


Figure 5. Research sites in *Seoul*, *Gyunggi-do*, and *Incheon* areas.

Two cafes and three restaurants in these regions, all set up as social enterprises, serve South Korean office workers or university students. I do not claim these cafes and restaurants represent all work-integrated North Korean migrants' social enterprises. Rather, in terms of geographic locations and customer characteristics, they exemplify social enterprises positioned in the midst of marketplaces where they must compete with other franchises or individual restaurants and cafes.

**Research sites.** During my participant observation between 2017 and 2018, I visited two cafes operating under the brand name of Jamboree and three restaurants operating under the name Pyongyang House (both pseudonyms). In 2017, I began my pilot study at Jamboree cafes, where six participants worked. I visited each site twice a week and worked part-time to observe migrants' everyday working lives. Having the intensive site visit and work experience, I was able to adapt my research methods to gain more nuanced results in the follow-up research. Table 7 shows the basic information about each site.

Table 7. Social enterprises cafes and restaurants: Typical workdays.

	<b>Cafés A, B</b>	<b>Restaurants A, B, C</b>
Brand	Jamboree	Pyongyang Noddle House
Target Customers	Office workers	Office workers and students
Price	\$1 or \$2 per beverage	\$7 to \$10 per dish
Hours	Monday to Friday 7:30am – 5:00pm	Monday to Saturday 11:00am – 9:00pm
Research Period	January to March 2017 (3 months)	February to July 2018 (6 months)

The following field note excerpt describes the appearance of the two Jamboree cafes, including their sizes and organizational artifacts:

Each cafe has a different size; one is about 400 square feet and the other is less than 300 square feet. Cafe A is inside of a building and the other is near a street where people commute. *Jamboree* has its special logo on the signboard, banners, cup holders, websites, and flyers, and it gives a unified impression of the brand name. In Cafe A, the Ministry of Unification certificates are displayed on the shelves along with several books related to North Korea. Cafe A and B have six baristas. All of them have worked for more than two years and have sufficient barista skills. (FN, 2/05/17)

Depending on the migrant baristas, Café A and B offer different levels of cleanliness and service. Yet, the repeated logos on aprons and signboards give an impression of consistency across the two locations. Specifically, cafés share many internal (e.g., mission statement, service manual) and external (e.g., interior designs, logos, and menus) characteristics.

In 2018, I expanded my sites to Pyongyang House<sup>42</sup> in multiple locations to observe and listen to more North Korean migrants' experiences. The excerpt below describes common characteristics of Pyongyang House restaurants:

Restaurant sizes are different depending on location; the smaller restaurant in the popular area is 460 square feet and has nine tables,<sup>43</sup> and the bigger one near the suburb region is around 700 square feet with 14 tables. On average, two to three migrant employees work at each, and sometimes I could see South Korean part-time workers during the busy lunch hours. Regardless of restaurant size and location, all of them share the same logos, uniforms, and interior design. Each site has a certificate/license from the Ministry of Unification. (FN, 3/20/18)

Having a unified brand name seems important to social enterprise restaurants because they must increase their brand value and customer awareness in the competitive marketplace. Customers search for information about these restaurants through the internet and books, and they can place orders by phone. Within my dissertation, I consider these characteristics, consistent branding, and availability through online searching as factors that shape migrants' working environment.

**Typical working days.** North Korean migrants must follow regular schedules because of insufficient labor power at each site. To provide a grounded understanding of migrants' typical work experiences germane to learning, I describe how social enterprises cafes and restaurants operate. The field note excerpt below describes work that I did with participants on a regular workday:

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<sup>42</sup> The restaurants were open Monday to Saturday from 11:00 am to 9:00 pm. The number and type of customers vary depending on each location. Each dish costs on average between \$7 and \$10, which is somewhat higher than the average cost (\$5-7) for Korean meals. Each employee receives intensive apprentice training.

<sup>43</sup> For two of the restaurants, I visited twice a week, and at the smallest restaurant, I only conducted interviews. The working experience in the two branch restaurants was helpful to build rapport and have nuanced communication.

- 8:00 am: I come to café B; both migrant baristas are busy receiving new orders and making coffees. We make 50 coffees in 30 minutes, while receiving new orders simultaneously. More than 50% of earnings comes from this intensive morning work, and we did not have any conversation during this time. As soon as I come, I do the dishes. Yeon-hwa requests of me, “three ices, sister.” People who are waiting in the lines are looking at us, watching what we are doing. So, I feel pressure to make neat-looking coffees before the customers.
- 10:30-11:00 am: We eat early lunch together. Since the official lunchtime for office workers is 12:00 pm, we must eat lunch before customers visit.
- 12:30-1:15 pm: People visit the café in groups or as individuals to pick up their beverages to start their afternoon work. Because customer visits are infrequent, we chat and prepare fruit juice for tomorrow. (FN, 2/23/17)

In terms of the busiest time, Pyongyang House has an intensive lunchtime:

Upon arrival at 9:30 am, we wipe the floor, tables, and set cutlery and side dishes on the tables. Cleaning is the beginning of every day’s routine! While cleaning and setting up tables, I usually chat with participants until 11 am. Usually, personal or group customers visit around 11:10 am and order their food. Then, we separate our roles. Either I or migrant participants stay in the hall to serve customers and choose music for the day and adjust the volume. Today, five women customers visit at 11:00. Min-hyuck, a migrant participant, whispers to me, “*Ajummas* [married women] come around this time and spend more than two hours for their conversations with only small dishes. They even split a dish between themselves,” he adds. It seems like their appearance during the busy time (12:00 pm to 1:00 pm), when there is no space to eat, disturbs the restaurant turnaround and makes it less profitable. Today, we have a group of ten customers in one party. Si-bom tells the kitchen quietly, “You will be in trouble – we have ten people.” Group customers play with their cellphones and make small talk as a team. When the dishes are not served at the same time and three people must wait, all customers look at the hall and signaled to us that they want all the food served at once. The eyes of hungry customers are very embarrassing to receive; I think this is a part of invisible pressure. It happens frequently, particularly with male customers. Whether individual or in groups, men, without having topics to discuss, stare at the hall and kitchen to see when their dishes will arrive. Receiving their unspoken pressure, I move to the kitchen to check and tell the customer that the food is not ready yet. Min-hyuck, who is making their meal in the kitchen, told me “It’s coming out of the kitchen soon, please wait.” Later, Si-bom agrees with me, “South Korean customers want quick delivery and it is stressful compared to China. There, people were slow and did not care about late food.” (FN, 4/24/18)

The descriptions of field note excerpts show how social enterprises run regular businesses and what kind of labor migrants do at cafés and restaurants. As each field note excerpt describes, local sites have regular business hours, yet the intensity of the labor fluctuates; some times are busier than others depending on location and traffic. Jamboree cafés earn more than half of their daily income in the morning (between 8:00 am to 9:30 am) when office workers show up on the way to their offices.

Pyongyang House, depending on local traffic and types of customers (e.g., either office workers or students), earns most of their income during the lunch hours between twelve and two. During the less-busy hours after lunch, participants had opportunities to chat with customers about their typical days and business. Overall, participants do physical labor and interact directly with customers when receiving orders and charging bills. These descriptions help to capture how workplace dynamics look which are integral to understanding participants' social interactions leading to workplace learning.

### **Sample Selection**

The sample size for participants represents those available at the work sites (Table 8). This study includes 25 North Korean participants who have each worked at a social enterprise café or restaurant for more than one month. A total of 68% are women (17 participants) ranging between the ages of 20 and 60, and 32% are men (eight participants) mostly in their 20s. Twenty percent of the participants are from the social enterprise cafés over two years (2017-2018). Eighty percent are from restaurants or from participants' networks, such as those who also managed their own businesses in China and South Korea.

Table 8. Participants' demographic characteristics.

No.	Pseudonym	Gender/Age	Years in Korea	Workplace
1	Sun-hwa Choi	F/20s	2	Café
2	En-shim Choi	F/30s	10	Café
3	Min-hyuck Choi	M/30s	15	Restaurant
4	Si-bom Choi	F/50s	7	Restaurant
5	Yeon-hwa Ha	F/30s	12	Café
6	Hye-ryong Han	F/30s	13	Café
7	Sung-chul Han	M/30s	13	Restaurant
8	Gwan-chul Ha	M/30s	15	Restaurant
9	Kyong-ok Kang	F/40s	1	Restaurant
10	Yong-ok Kim	F/30s	5	Restaurant
11	Sung-hee Kim	F/40s	6	Restaurant
12	Hye-ok Kim	F/40s	7	Restaurant
13	Hye-ja Kim	F/30s	13	Restaurant
14	Eun-sil Kim	F/30s	15	Restaurant
15	Sung-ok Nam	F/20s	8	Restaurant
16	Hwan-chul Nam	M/30s	15	Restaurant
17	Yong-su Park	M/30s	12	Restaurant
18	Chul-su Park	M/50s	10	Connection
19	Sun-ok Park	F/50s	16	Connection
20	Ok-ja Lee	F/60s	13	Restaurant
21	Mi-yeon Lee	F/30s	15	Café
22	Won-chul Lee	M/40s	16	Café
23	Hye-jin Lim	F/50s	14	Restaurant
24	Hye-song Lim	M/20s	4	Restaurant
25	Yong-ja Lim	F/50s	12	Restaurant

I limited the number of participants because of logistical constraints: both time and resources were limited for recording, analyzing, and organizing the data of this fieldwork. When using an ethnographic approach, the purpose of selecting participants is not to seek generalizability and replicability based on large sample size (Reilly, 2012; Schram, 2006). Rather, this study focused on collecting data that is “rich [in] quality and thick [in] quantity” (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p. 1409).



## Data Collection

Throughout the inquiry, I was conscious of applying culturally sensitive and localized research tools<sup>44</sup> to naturally collect data concerning migrants' experiences (Bell, 2013; Donà, Esin & Lounasmaa, 2019; Thielen, 2009). I collected data from four sources: observations recorded in field notes, interviews, a reflective journal, and artifacts and documents.

**Participant observation.** In the busy workplace where I continued to interact with participants and customers, I observed and recorded data focused on how participants handled ambiguity and challenges in their social interactions, how meaning emerged through conflicts and misunderstandings, and how participants adjusted their interpretations and actions (Emerson, Frets & Schaw, 1995). I visited each site alternately and worked Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. During the week, I accompanied participants to everyday events, such as cleaning, promotions, and sales, and documented typical and non-typical events. During the weekend, I was invited to personally meaningful and important events (e.g., a baby shower, graduation, and holidays) as well as group activities (e.g., worship services, a chorus competition, and afternoon tea chatting), and I documented major occurrences and conversations after these events.

While working as a part-time employee, I changed my approach to document data in locally appropriate ways. In situations where I used water and food ingredients for my part-time work, I felt that writing a traditional field note, such as using a pencil and paper was obtrusive because it drew attention. Principally, my participants' perceptions of being observed and recorded were never positive. Responding to my pilot study experience, I jotted down memos in my phone and left simple

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<sup>44</sup> Several refugee studies scholars (Bell, 2013; Thielen, 2009) have proposed to adopt a localized research approach informed by sociopolitical and economic situations in the field. In Cuba, Bell (2013) discovered the strong influence of historical (e.g., governmental mediation on research), political (e.g., public vs. private opinions), and individual (e.g., inexperience) situations that shaped participants' interview narratives and patterned reactions, and therefore he adjusted his approach to be more conversational, flexible, and relational.

illustrations of the situations using a drawing option on my phone.<sup>45</sup> Jotting down even short conversations helped me avoid distortion of my memory (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). After daily operations, I reorganized my field notes and supplemented them with detailed descriptions within 24 hours. That principle was helpful to increase the accuracy, textuality, and richness of my documentation.

**Interviews.** As I described in my negotiated role as a *worker*, *byeongpung*, and *friend*, I attempted to conduct field-oriented approaches drawing on a framework of seeing an interview as a conversational social practice (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003; Silverman, 2001), which involved identity work (Zimmerman, 2008) engaging participants' motivations and behaviors (Dijkstra 1987). Because I became more aware of participants' perceptions of formal and structured interviews, I adopted informal conversation, such as casual chatting about current events and experiences during work, break hours, and other activities (Pattons, 2015). I also used semi-structured interviews because I became aware of my participants' interview experiences, as I mentioned previously. A total of 73 semi-structured interviews were conducted and ranged from 45 minutes to 4 hours, and I audio-recorded and transcribed data upon participant approval.

To build a research sample, I used two main criteria. First, participants were North Korean migrants who came from North Korea and held South Korean citizenship. Second, they had officially registered with and were selected to work at social enterprises. After gaining entrée to the research sites, I used purposeful snowball sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) to access participants who were working in these social enterprises or had previously worked in others. Not all of the North Korean migrants where I worked agreed to be part of my study. However, my consistent participation in their workplaces over two years help me gain trust and positively affected recruitment. For example, some participants invited their friends at other social enterprises to be interviewed for the

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<sup>45</sup> I used a Galaxy Note 4, which had an integrated pen and drawing function.

study. In addition, one person who initially declined to engage with me because of my researcher status later changed her mind and agreed to be interviewed.

Semi-structured interviews (Pattons, 2015) enabled me to collect participants' stories from general answers about life stories (see Appendix A for interview guide). At the end of my participant observation period, I scheduled at least two semi-structured interviews at dates and times of their choice. Most audio-recorded interviews were conducted after work, between 2:30 pm and 4 pm in workplaces, cafés, restaurants, cars, and home, or wherever participants felt comfortable. The first set of interviews focused on their past working experiences in North Korea and China, the second on their present experiences in South Korean workplaces, including emotionally challenging events and the perception of their work environment. Although I attempted to maintain the flow, I did not strictly follow the linear interview sequence because each participant's interview engagement was different depending on personal characteristics, motivation, and the quality of their relationship with me (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). After explaining the purpose of research and getting consent, I provided space for participants to choose their own ways of delivering stories as they narrated parts of their life that were important to them. With some participants who were less vocal, I guided their stories with my question outline. For more vocal participants, I let them control the direction of their own stories to express matters important to them (Chase, 2011; Riessman, 2008). Particularly, those participants who were willing to be reciprocal through supporting my research tended to narrate their stories for more than three to four hours. I did not stop them because I was aware of the importance of mutual dynamics when vulnerable topics are shared (Campbell, Adams, Wasco, Ahrens & Sefl, 2010). At the end of interview, some participants told me they benefited from the interviews because they had not had an opportunity to verbalize personal thoughts and organize past experiences and meanings that were otherwise left untold. Those participants' sense of comfort

reminded me of therapeutic experiences after engaging in authentic conversations (Campbell, Adams, Wasco, Ahrens & Sefl, 2010) with empathetic researchers.

Informal conversation (Pattons, 2015) allowed me to access stories of daily lives, business operations, and service difficulties while at our common workplace. Everyday events at work inspired my participants to share stories of related events, including how they coped with similar situations. Within these natural circumstances, I inquired of participants' perceptions and how they managed unexpected events. Data from informal conversation included: a) the past workplace experiences, b) perceptions of social interactions, including the quality of their workplace (e.g., management, payment, and business potential), 3) personal and interactive efforts to manage feelings at work. The stories of how participants managed unfamiliar events and challenges were summarized and documented at the end of business hours.

**Reflective journal.** Writing a reflective journal is a strategy to develop my positionality, which helped me to become more aware of potential bias and emotional challenges. Following Glesne's (2011)<sup>46</sup> recommendations, I attempted to write my reflective thinking after daily fieldwork. After my participant observation experiences, I had a deep emotional attachment to the participants, which created a new stereotyped image of South Koreans. In my reflective journal I described:

When I ... worked, chatted, and ate with the North Korean migrants, I was able to see the restaurant from the employees' perspective ... as I listened to their stories about a cruel employer, I started to distrust South Koreans and assumed hidden intentions behind their words. Particularly, I developed negative feelings about one South Korean staff who I did not even know after listening to participants' stories. (May 3, 2018, transcripts and other data sources)

Next, I classified data by defining and grouping the tagged data with attribute coding to integrate extensive data forms (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). Attribute coding helped me to

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<sup>46</sup> The list of questions for daily journaling was: 1) what surprised me? 2) what inspired my curiosity? 3) What disturbed me? I could not write every day yet I tried to record my assumptions when I encountered emotionally challenging days. Particularly, question 3 allowed me to identify my bias and stereotypes.

identify basic descriptive information of the sites, participants, and interview topics for thorough analysis and interpretation. While categorizing data, I labeled each datum using sub-coding (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014) to connect relevant data to my research questions, such as learning to interact, learning to manage emotions, and learning to cope. Using MAXQDA from the earlier stage, I was able to recognize and link the empirical relationships among different types of data (e.g., transcription, images, and artifacts) through effective data management (Dey, 2005; Dohan & Sánchez-jankowski, 1998; John & Johnson, 2000). In addition, I benefited from checking the accuracy and consistency of data for strategizing additional data collection in the field (Dey, 2005).

Once I began grouping, I identified groups of data that had similar characteristics. These categories of data (e.g., learning interaction → challenges → interpersonal, language and communication, conflicts) were overlapping and incomplete. As the data categorization evolved, I defined each category with an explicit term and refined them based on my constructivist orientation and theoretical framework. For instance, to elaborate “learning to interact,” I reclassified with “the subject of learning” and “learning approaches” to answer the what and how of workplace learning. The nature of the inductive and deductive process between data and theories honed my data and theoretical construct, focusing on my research questions.

The overall data analysis took place in Korean, because it was the language of the participants and of the research context and so conveyed rich textuality for better analysis (van Nes, Abma, Jonsson & Deeg, 2010). For some North Korean terms that I did not properly understand, I asked questions of a close participant and rewrote my notes. After the analysis, I translated only the final version into English, following van Nes and his colleagues’ (2010) recommendation to stay with the original language as long as possible.

**Narrative Analysis (NA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).** After performing the general data analysis described above, I used both Narrative Analysis (NA, Chase, 2011; Riessman,

1993) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA, Van Dijk, 1993) to investigate selected data. The combination of these two analytic frameworks enabled me to connect ideologies and everyday narratives (Souto-Manning, 2014). Both NA and CDA helped me to unpack how North Korean migrants' learning experiences connected to their personal narratives and ideological experiences at social enterprise cafés and restaurants. That is, migrants' narratives revealed what was personally meaningful, and the meanings that influenced migrants were identified through the work of CDA. NA gave a voice to participants by allowing them to narrate the workplace stories that were meaningful to them.

**Narrative Analysis (NA) in ethnography.** Narrative is one of the fundamental ways to organize people's understanding of the world (Reissman, 1993) and NA is a way to analyze how participants make sense of personal stories through prioritizing their voices (Chase, 2011). In this study, I wanted to understand my participants' experiences of learning and how they adjust their learning approaches through interpreting the influence of the social practice in their narratives. In this regard, participants' narratives allowed me to access storied ways of learning: how participants constructed the meanings of experience with their own voices from their realities.

I analyzed participants' direct or indirect accounts of the meaning from their interpretations, explanations, and evaluations of events. Thereby, I stipulated their learning as an integrative process of adjusting their thoughts and actions to a new environment by constructing their own meanings. I used a narrative analysis framework to investigate North Korean participants' understanding of reality, focusing on workplace interactions and emotional labor. Narrative analysis includes three common forms: thematic, structural, and performative approaches (Reissman, 2008). I used thematic analysis because it was appropriate for analyzing interviews' emphasis on "the told" events and cognitions that participants referred to (Reissman, 2008, p. 58). NA allowed me to explore what kind

of participants' experiences were being framed by outsiders and how they framed their experiences themselves in a personally meaningful structure (Riessman, 1993, 2008).

Based on migrant-narrated stories, I started my inquiry: what can I learn from the way they are shared? Using NA, I elicited themes from the migrants' workplace experiences to explore how these experiences were framed by participants themselves. An analysis of themes revealed the meanings behind migrant stories, offering explanations of how migrants learn based on their own values and perspectives. An attentive analysis of narratives (the telling of the event) revealed how participants constructed their social worlds in relation to key events (what happened) and experiences (the images, feelings, and meanings they attached to events) in relation to current experiences (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Cortazzi, 2007).

CDA allowed me to link how social discourse interacted within the narrated migrants' stories and how participants were influenced by their practice and emotional labor. Particularly, CDA helped me to examine how the sociocultural narrative influenced the participants' narratives of work in the social enterprises. Owing to time constraints, however, I selectively applied CDA to explore social enterprise working environment. I also used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to understand the sociocultural workplace environment at social enterprises. CDA is primarily a socio-linguistic framework for analyzing the relationship between discourse<sup>47</sup> and society (Fairclough, 1989, 2003). I used CDA to understand social enterprises' mission statements and their official and unofficial documents to identify how ideology has reconstructed, deconstructed, and contradicted migrants'

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<sup>47</sup> In CDA, discourse is a sociohistorical and ideological product for controlling social order. Therefore, discourse influences various social practices—such as politics and media—and underlies “activities, subjects and their social relations, instruments, objectives, time and place, forms of consciousness, values” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 205). Discourse is open to investigation because it is expressed and signaled by “language use” (Wodak & Meyer, 2015, p. 2) and manifest in daily texts. Based on the belief that society is a complex social structure that uses discourse as a way to maintain social relations (Fairclough, 1989; Lemke, 1995), CDA is dedicated to unveiling the work of dominant ideology and the unequal social conditions within society (Van Dijk, 1993).

social experiences within their workplace practices. I also used CDA to describe and interpret participants' emotional requirements and social enterprises' influence of social discourse.

For archival sources such as social enterprises' official documents, flyers, and websites, I focused on their characteristics as official organizational materials. They "are constitutive of bureaucratic rules, ideologies, knowledge, practices, subjectivities, object, outcomes and even the organizations themselves" (Hull, 2012, p. 253). The documents lead people to actions and mediate how people make the meanings related to institution (Latour, 2005). In analyzing the official documents, I paid attention to how these documents mediate people's interpretation and actions, and how participants perceived such actions in relation to such official descriptions.

### **Data Quality**

In qualitative inquiry, "useful and believable" data is important (Schram, 2006, p. 174). This can be framed as trustworthiness (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used Guba's (1981) model because it is widely respected and used by qualitative researchers (Krefting, 1991). In Guba's model, trustworthiness is comprised of three elements: (1) truth value, (2) applicability, and (3) consistency.

Truth value is how a researcher establishes confidence between the truth of their findings and the research context. I was engaged with participants for a considerable amount of time and my prolonged engagement in the field helped me to build relationships and trust with participants. Likewise, I verified my data through member checks, in which I asked follow-up questions during subsequent interviews, including participants' use of North Korean-Chinese terms. This approach helped me to closely address meanings and stories from the participants' perspectives. Additionally, collaborating with professional translators during the final stage of the translation of the research increased the trustworthiness of my study (van Nes et al., 2010).



Applicability refers to transferability that is available to be applied in another context. To increase transferability, I provided contextual details not only of my positionality but also on the social enterprises' particularities to convey their contextual characteristics. When providing such descriptions, I privileged participants' voices to highlight what matters to them. Consistency refers to the regularity of data. My prolonged work participation as a part-time employee at the two cafés and three restaurants helped me to check data regularities until data saturation was reached. Lastly, I maintained research notes, drawings, and memos to document my inferences and analytic procedures.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited in the participants' diversity and site selection. The majority of participants worked at social enterprises. They cannot represent a singular North Korean population because I had a limited set of migrants: their hometowns, past work experiences, and defection journeys were all different. Their arrivals to South Korea ranged from one to 16 years prior to the study, and depending on the time they spent in South Korea, their understanding of the South Korean cultural context and workplace dynamics differed. In particular, their language proficiency in the South Korean dialect and in English influenced their interactions with customers.

Moreover, the site was a government-supported social enterprise, whose unique characteristics affected North Korean migrants' workplace experiences, including recruitment, employment, and participation. Therefore, this site has limited transferability to other migrants' workplaces. For example, other workplaces, like an office or manual labor worksite, would provide different experiences.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I elaborated how my research design was developed over the course of nine months of participant observation with participants at social enterprises. I demonstrate how I negotiated conflicting role expectations and challenges as a part time worker, observer, and friend, what concerns were raised, and how I changed my approach to solve practical and ethical issues. I reviewed why an ethnographic approach with naturalistic inquiry was best suited for this study, including the data collection strategy I employed. I then summarized how the combination of NA and CDA helped to explicate North Korean migrants' learning experiences based on their narratives and ideological backgrounds. Lastly, I reviewed the trustworthiness and limitations of this study.

## Chapter 5

### Learning Social Interactions

To explore participant learning in their social interactions with South Koreans, I begin with how participants develop new dialect and communication skills. First, I describe participants' experience of tensions (e.g., mistakes, conflicts, and misunderstandings) in pragmatic, semantic, and subject matter dimensions. Next, I demonstrate how participants learn new knowledge and develop linguistic competency (e.g., Southern dialects, English/Konglish, and pronunciations). I focused on how participants apply their own cultural repertoire of behaviors, chiefly memorization and *nunchi*, an ability to read intentions and social context, as major strategies that they employ to adjust to a new environment. This chapter describes and analyzes the hurdles and barriers that participants experienced in the past and those they encountered in their current service workplaces to identify factors that foster or impede new learning.

#### South Korean Dialect and Workplace Literacy

In service workplaces where participants must interact with co-workers, customers, and supervisors, they encountered barriers and obstacles in their communication. These barriers primarily centered on their distinct dialect use, which triggered social bias and prejudice from South Koreans. Therefore, participants strove to reduce their linguistic and knowledge gaps and concomitant social obstacles. Consequently, they developed knowledge that helped them transition from one linguistic and sociocultural environment to another.

**South Korean dialects.** As with other displaced populations like migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, who suffer from language obstacles, discriminations, and social barriers in their host

society (De Fina & King, 2011), North Korean participants encountered multiple challenges in their communication due to use of a different dialectic. Although the two Koreas use the same Korean language, the two nations have developed distinct dialects: the Korean language [*hangug-eo*] used in South Korea vs. Joseon language [*joseon-eo*] used in North Korea, grounded in their 70-year geographical, sociocultural, and political divisions (Lee, 1990; Song, 2001). Since 1966, the dialectic difference has expanded dramatically in semantic, stylistic, and vocabulary dimensions, as well as the writing system, resulting in separate “mother tongues in the divided father land” (Lee, 1990, p. 71).

Participants in my research mentioned dialectic challenges arising in pragmatic, semantic, and linguistic dimensions in their communication with South Koreans. In terms of pragmatics<sup>48</sup>, all participants experienced miscommunication with South Koreans due to different dialect use<sup>49</sup> and inability to distinguish between their communication errors and non-errors. For instance, Hye-ryong, who came to South Korea two years before the study, became perplexed when a customer asked about her “hometown” in a casual conversation:

Customer: How are you?  
 Hye-ryong: *il-eobs-seub-ni-da*. [*None of your business’ in South Korean; ‘everything is okay’ in North Korean*]  
 Customer: [*short silence*] Where are you from? I don’t think you are Korean. Are you Chinese-Korean?  
 Hye-ryong: Why are you asking? [*furious look*] Is it relevant?

Although Hye-ryong and her customer both used Korean, they communicated with two Korean dialects and misunderstood each other. The problem is that they each associated different

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<sup>48</sup> Pragmatics focuses on language use. It pays attention to the conversation between speakers and listeners, how words are interpreted differently based on dialogue situations. It is the study of context dependent, non-truth-conditional meanings (Bach, 1997).

<sup>49</sup> Regarding the dialect gap, one North Korean described his experience as crossing the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in linguistic practice (Park & Kim, 2016). Echoing the statement, an applied linguistics scholar from Pyongyang Teacher’s University described his experience with the Seoul dialect as, “I am prostrated every day because I could not understand what people tell me. I find North and South dialects have changed dramatically over the last half century” (Kim, 2013, p. 279). These testimonies point to what dialectic gaps North Korean migrants encounter in daily social communication rooted in the changes caused by different political, geographical, cultural and ideological factors.

meanings with the same Korean expression “*il-eobs-seub-ni-da*.” While Hye-ryong meant “everything is okay,” the male customer interpreted her comment as, “it is none of your business.” Therefore, the customer considered Hye-ryong rude in her response, while Hye-ryong was upset that a customer asked a private question in a business situation, because one’s “hometown is not relevant to barista work.” The misunderstanding shaped each other’s thoughts and emotions, including adverse reactions when the customer was unaware of her North Korean status and they were both unaware of the dialectic gap.

The semantic gap between the two Korean dialects also created both conflicts and learning opportunities. North Korean participants learned about the differences in social environments reflected by South Korean linguistic choices and interpretations. For instance, when Hye-ja asked a question about *pog-tan* (bomb), she encountered troubles at her work due to different meanings and cultural nuances with the same vocabulary:

I saw a department store flyer entitled with *pog-tan se-il* [‘bomb sale’ in South Korean and ‘clearance sale’ in U.S. English]. I assumed South Korea may sell bombs in a department store and the war preparation might be stronger than North Korea as I formally learned. Out of curiosity about bomb sales, I stood in line with the female customers to enter the department store and wondered why more women wanted to purchase a bomb than men. Yet, entering into the department store, I only saw clothes and underwear and I could not find any bombs. The next day, I asked about this situation to my co-worker—a bomb sale without selling a single bomb. My co-worker laughed at me yet she also developed doubt, considering me a North Korean spy. She was ignorant of North Korea yet my inattentive question without knowing South Korean society gave her a sense of threat. This inspired me to learn about South Korea. I started to read newspapers.

Hye-ja applied her previous conception of bomb in North Korea to understand a “*pog-tan se-il*” (bomb sale) in South Korea; yet, her inquiry was inappropriate and even caused her co-worker to feel threatened and wonder if Hye-ja was a North Korean spy. Hye-ja did not realize at first that “bomb” in South Korea often does not refer to an explosive weapon, rather it is used figuratively to describe something ‘extreme’ or ‘maximum,’ and is often associated with clearance sales. Her abrupt

inquiry, unfortunately, revealed her migrant status at work. With this embarrassing experience, Hye-ja became determined to avoid asking direct questions without having sufficient contextual knowledge.

These examples of misunderstandings are consistent with research studies about how North Korean dialect in vocabulary manifested “the most serious divergence” from the South Korean standard dialect (Lee, 1990, p. 80). Five research participants reported that a semantic gap, conversational mistakes caused by different word meanings, was “bigger than the simple dialectic differences,” reflecting 70 years of social changes. Accordingly, participants had to reduce the linguistic gaps grounded on different political, ideological and cultural systems. According to a social worker who trained migrants for over two years, they “lose confidence, with low self-esteem, because of their inability to properly communicate with South Koreans” in everyday conversations.

Apart from pragmatic and semantic differences, participants encountered barriers in their conversations with South Koreans because the subject matter of conversations were grounded in different understandings of economic systems and material conditions of the two Koreas. For example, Sung-chul avoided specific topics in his conversations, such as “hunger” and “food,” that he did not think South Koreans would understand:

My colleague [who knows I am a migrant] asked me one day, ‘When and why did you flee to South Korea?’ I honestly said, ‘In North Korea, I could not eat enough and suffered from hunger so I defected.’ Then, the colleague told me, ‘If you did not have food, why didn’t you eat instant noodles?’ I lost my words for a moment because his response was shocking to me. If I had instant noodles, would I defect? [*Sung-chul told me this to express his embarrassment.*] So I realized we have fundamentally different experiences of famine. People could not really get what I meant because they did not experience it themselves so I tried not to talk about such topics.

For Sung-chul, “hunger” was a real, embodied experience of persistent poverty in North Korea. Yet, for his co-worker, hunger is something that can easily be solved with something like instant noodles, a product Sung-chul could not access in North Korea. Indeed, Sung-chul’s co-worker could not understand the exact situations and feelings of what it means to experience hunger and what

hunger looks like that Sung-chul had tried to communicate. This is because South Koreans, especially the younger generation, have not experienced desperate poverty and famine. Realizing that existential threats like poverty were not properly communicable nor necessary to share, Sung-chul minimized talking about his past experiences because such topics relating to differences in material prosperity were hardly comprehensible.

Realizing huge dialectic gaps in pragmatic, semantic, and subject matter dimensions, driven by two distinct economic, cultural, and ideological systems, led participants to intentionally limit their conversations with South Koreans to avoid misunderstanding. One participant, Ok-ja, narrated her experience of minimizing social interactions to diminish potential miscommunication:

Why we minimize our interactions [with South Koreans] is because of the differences. North Korean dialectic has negative or opposite meanings in South Korea. So without fully knowing the gap, I am afraid of interacting with South Koreans because I do not know how they would accept my message. Also, it is not only about dialect gap. Conflict is caused by cultural differences, the result of seventy years of division. People cannot understand some vocabularies or misunderstand certain expressions [in North Korean]. For instance, we use “*jeon-tu*” [battle] a lot to describe group activities to empower our revolutionary spirit in daily routines to overcome economic challenges caused by our enemies<sup>50</sup> such as kimjang *jeon-tu* [kimchi-making activity], *mo-nae-gi jeon-tu* [rice-planting activity].<sup>51</sup> So, it is hard for me to approach them [South Koreans] and communicate with them fully.

Ok-ja expanded her understanding of dialectic gap as cultural semantics, seeing the Northern dialect as a cultural carrier. Giving an example of *jeon-tu* (battle), she described North Korean group activities, such as kimchi and rice-planting competitions. She found that North Korea makes more use of warlike metaphors in contrast to South Korea (Lee, 1990). Accordingly, she developed the belief that miscommunications and misunderstandings are inescapable aspects of her social interactions, and

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<sup>50</sup> North Korea describes America and Japan as *won-su*, the enemy of the nation, who separated Korean peninsula.

<sup>51</sup> In North Korea, Kimjang *juntu* [Kimchi-making activity] and Monegi *juntu* [rice-planting activity] are regular group activities controlled and measured by the communist party to increase food production. This is because food production in North Korea is connected to military power. According to The Chosun Central News Agency (1952) “sowing this year is the front line battle. If you win on the seeding front, it means victory on the front in the battle (pp. 465-466).

controlling her engagement with South Koreans was her strategy have ordinary interactions with South Koreans. To minimize miscommunications and misunderstandings, some participants altered their interactions by “using formal and restricted language,” “removing useless words,” “thinking before talking,” and “keeping silent.”

**Foreign loan words, English, and Konglish.**<sup>52</sup> North Korean migrants in South Korea experience overwhelming challenges with everyday use of foreign loanwords, giving them the impression of having entered a foreign land (Choo, 2006; Kim, 2007; Song, 2001). The different dialects<sup>53</sup> are based, in part, on different national philosophies and international policies since 1945<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Konglish (portmanteau of “Korean” and “English”) *콩글리쉬* [*kong-geul-li-swi*] words are comprised of loanwords from English and are distinguishable with two factors: phonological and semantic. In terms of phonological factors, some English loanwords lost their English phonological features and merged into the Korean phonological system. Depending on degrees of modification, these loanwords (e.g., *싸인* [*ssa-in*] sign) share similar features with English; other cases with substantial changes (e.g., *테마* [*te-ma*] theme), some loanwords are not comprehensible for Anglophones. Koreans consider these words broken English. In the case of semantic features, Korean has borrowed many words with English semantic content so there are many overlapping loanwords. These overlaps can be either identical (e.g., *커피* [*kopi*] coffee) vs. non-identical (e.g., *샤arp* [*syapu*, mechanical pencil] sharp).

<sup>53</sup> Dialectal variation is common whenever there are distinct regions, especially when two speech communities have minimal contact over a period of time. In the case of the Korean peninsula however, two nations established different policies and incorporated those in national systems which expanded the dialectical divisions.

<sup>54</sup> Aligning with the United States, South Korea embraces liberal democracy and capitalism, with an emphasis on foreign trade and globalization, whereas North Korea accepts the communist influence from China and the Soviet Union (Russia) in its political and economic systems and remains isolated from the global economy. The different political and ideological orientations of the two Koreas led them to develop a foreign language policy, which affected changes in many other domains—political, economic, education, cultural, and technological—where language influences practice. The following excerpts from the two first foundational political leaders, Rhee Syng-man and Kim Il-sung, showcase a stark contrast between South Korean and North Korean perspectives of foreign languages. The first president of South Korea, Dr. Rhee Syng-man, emphasizes that one of the primary conditions of nation building must be studying foreign languages:

[We] should first study foreign languages and scripts so that we can contact foreigners in order to share thoughts and feelings, and [we should] also explore subjects that cannot be fully communicated by the use of our language, written or spoken. At the same time, [we] should also go abroad to study, to see foreign lands with our own eyes, and to observe directly various novel objects and advanced methods, thereby broaden our experiences and vision and mastering academic subjects and [practical] skills. If we come into contact with foreigners without such thought, we may be led to believe, reluctantly, that we are always inferior to them and cannot mingle with them. We then cannot escape being subordinate to foreigners, which means that we will only be their slaves. How then, can we maintain independence? (Rhee, 1910; 2000, p. 262)



(Han, 1980; Kim, 2018). In this regard, participants struggled with linguistic, ideological, and practical challenges<sup>55</sup> in their use of foreign loan words, English, and Konglish. Research participants reported that they suffered from difficulties and low productivity because of insufficient language knowledge at work, where efficiency mattered. For example, one of the participants, Sae-bom, could not fulfill any of her customers' and co-workers' requests due to her limited knowledge of Konglish:

My co-workers asked me to give them a “napkin.”<sup>56</sup> [I was thinking] What is it? Other colleagues said they get a lot of “stress.” What is “stress”? Customers often called and asked

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This excerpt shows that from the beginning, the South Korean approach to building an independent, strong nation began from “study[ing] foreign languages” to understand and interact as equals with peoples from other countries.

On the contrary, Kim expresses his contempt toward the “mixed” language practice in South Korea and his belief that such practices are corrupted by bourgeois lifestyles:

Firmly rooted in the rotten feudal, bourgeois life, the Korean language now spoken in Seoul still uses the type of nasal twangs favoured by women to flirt with men...; on top of this, English, Japanese, and Chinese loan words, now swarming in Seoul speech, amounting to more than half the total Korean vocabulary, have turned it into a mixed language. Therefore, we should now take Pyongyang speech as the standard since it is the language spoken in Pyongyang, our revolutionary capital... (Kim Il-sung, 1966 cited from Yeon, 2008)

The excerpt from Kim Il-sung explains what motivated North Korea to ban foreign language based on the national philosophy of Juche (self-reliance). That is, in the hope of building and representing the “revolutionary capital” of Pyongyang, which is operated differently from “the rotten feudal, bourgeois life,” North Korea intentionally shapes a pure Pyongyang language through policy and education. The North Korean view of language was as a weapon to accomplish workers' society, which began with ideological indoctrination.

For following quotation from a government language journal can help to identify the connection between language education and ideology education:

The prerequisite for rearing inheritors of our revolution is improved and strengthened Korean language education. We must train our new generation of communist revolutionaries in order to ensure that the task of accomplishing our Juche revolution be transmitted from one generation to the next. The issue of teaching our children the Korean language well, in both theory and practice, has emerged as a crucial one as we must ensure that they, as the protagonists of the Korean revolution, perform their duties efficiently and carry out revolutionary work and construction (Cited in Song, 2019, Munhwaehaksup, 1984, 1).

Accordingly, the North Korean government used language to influence North Koreans' thinking, communication, and actions (Kim, 1973).

The language policies articulated by the first leaders of each Korea demonstrate the gap between their uses of a once-similar language. Because the two nations hold fundamentally different philosophies and approaches, which are reflected in their attitudes toward foreign languages, the two Koreas have developed a language gap that is “much more than dialectal” (Yeon, 2008, p. 147).

<sup>55</sup> English loanwords, Konglish (a blend of Korean and English expressed in abbreviations, acronyms, and blending), and code switching between Korean and foreign loanwords are common practices in workplace communication, so being adept in all three is important to work productivity.

<sup>56</sup> North Korea used new Korean terms to indicate imported or invented concepts. For example, a *napkin* is *napkin* in South Korea although North Koreans created *judungi heangju* [mouth towel]. In Korean 냅킨 [*napkin*] is 주둥이 행주 [*judungi heangju*] in North Korean. 주둥이 행주 used original Korean language combining mouth and towel.

me about the location of the restaurant's "parking-lot"; but what is "parking-lot"? Those expressions are Konglish,<sup>57</sup> which are different from English. I can hardly put these words into my mind and action because these were totally new. So, I made numerous mistakes and lost jobs in my early career. I felt like I was stupid, illiterate and a useless person in South Korea. At work I was humiliated and distressed. It is unfortunate. Another problem with Konglish is my bad sentiment against America and imperialist *won-su* [the enemy]. Although I love to watch Hollywood movies to learn about the external world, I still do not trust America and do not accept everything shown in American movies. While Konglish is essential in South Korea, I do not like it or the American influence.

Sae-bom described her everyday challenges in communications and work function owing to foreign words. Without knowing foreign loan words, English, and Konglish terms for specific objects and location descriptions, Sae-bom felt she was unable to serve her customers' requests. Being insufficiently fluent in everyday social language was not acceptable in a busy workplace. This experience overwhelmed her emotionally because she felt like she could not meaningfully contribute to the workplace.

The above excerpt also reveals the type of challenges Sae-bom experienced beyond cognitive and practical concerns. Rather, her difficulties were about norms and beliefs about *wonssu* (the enemy) of the nation and mental resistance against the foreign influence in her communication practices. During the interview, Sae-bom chose a term, "Konglish" to denigrate English loanwords (e.g., "parking-lot," "napkin," and "stress"<sup>58</sup>) and to express her negative sentiment against "the big-nose Yankee" who she learned "cannot live under the same sky"<sup>59</sup> as Koreans. Compared to other

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<sup>57</sup> Almost every South Korean conversation includes Konglish expressions to indicate machines, facilities, and actions. My barista learning started from learning unfamiliar Konglish and a few Italian terms that were adapted to Korean linguistic expression (e.g., espresso machine, vacuum brewers, brew coffee, and cafeteria). Konglish was present in the majority of conversations, except for postpositional Korean particles between foreign terms. For example, I wrote what barista taught me: "Salamdeul-i peuleswi[fresh]han keopi[coffee]leul chaj-euni eseupeulesomeosin-eulo [espresso machine] naelyeoyo. Naebkin [napkin]gwa seuteulo[straw]neun yeogiissgo, keob[cup]gwa holdeo[holder]neun jeogiiss-eyoyo. [사람들이 프레쉬한 커피를 찾으니까 에스프레소머신으로 내려요. 냅킨과 스트로는 여기있고, 컵과 홀더는 저기있어. People are looking for a fresh cup of coffee, so they go down to the espresso machine. There are napkins and straws here, cups and holders there.]

<sup>58</sup> Stress is a Konglish noun. For instance, 'I get a lot of stress (from it)' is a Konglish expression. In comparison, 'It really stresses me out' is a native expression (Lee, 2019).

<sup>59</sup> These phrases come from North Korean propaganda that opposes Americanisms.

research participants, who did not express such strong resistance to American influence in interviews or observations, it seems that her military service, which secured her food supply, left a significant impression of and loyalty to Kim Il-sung, whom she called the “great leader.” Nevertheless, Saebom’s internal conflicts reflected some participants’ struggles and the contradictions they faced in learning a foreign language that seemed to contrast with their personal convictions.

Through their social and working lives in South Korea, North Korean participants reframed the ways they thought about Korean language. Their beliefs about the Korean language were rooted in homogeneity of the language. However, changing this belief created emotional turmoil, although they had to deliberately pursue ways to advance their foreign loan words, English vocabulary, and Konglish terms in order to survive in the job market. For instance, Won-chul changed the way he thought of homogeneity in the Korean language and was deeply overwhelmed because of his broken hope of living an easier life in South Korea in contrast to China:

Jinhee: How long did you work at the bar?

Won-chul: For a week. I was kicked out of the job not because of English but because of Konglish.

Jinhee: [*short silence*] What did you think about that time?

Won-chul: I lost my confidence and self-esteem. I felt I was a failure.

Jinhee: What did you think about that feeling as you compare your life in China?

Won-chul: Different. In China, I thought I was the weakest [without having any legal protection] so I became determined to humble myself. There was no choice but to survive. Yet, in South Korea, I thought it would be different. I mean, I assumed, I can make myself successful. I survived in China. So, why not in South Korea? I can be rich because we (two Koreas) share the same Korean language. Yet, I realized we are different. Maybe because of my low self-esteem, I felt this difference made it harder for me than in China. We use different vocabularies like a foreign country and I suffered from foreign loanwords such as *geullaseu* [glass] and *tisyu* [paper tissue]. My boss made fun of me and I was seriously humiliated.

Jinhee: What did you think?

Won-chul: I had never thought about studying English to survive in South Korea. I had never imagined how much of an influence that English can have on my life. It was brutal. My ignorance of foreign loanwords made me the subject of being ignored. I was an outsider.

Upon arrival, Won-chul thought he could successfully manage his new life in South Korea, having a firm belief in people using the “same Korean language.” With his limited knowledge of foreign words, however, he realized that he was lacking in practical and functional knowledge to perform at work. For Won-chul, foreign loan words, English, and Konglish terms were more than a language. Rather, it was the everyday nuances embedded in South Korean social practices, particularly at the workplace, and his insufficient knowledge showed he did not belong to the society and was an “outsider.” With this broken hope and inability to function, he felt a deeper frustration because he had to abandon his belief in one Korea with one unified language that would guarantee his success with legitimate citizenship. Unfortunately, Won-chul was not an exceptional case among participants, many of whom held false assumptions about One-Korea ethnic-nationalism (Kim, 2007; Shin, 2006; Shin, Freda & Yi, 1999)

Having experienced the humiliation of unemployment, all participants reported their desperate need for learning foreign loan words, English, and Konglish terms to “survive” in a globalized South Korea. Foreign loan words were embedded in everyday practical knowledge that must be acquired to get a job, regardless of migrants’ insufficient education and beliefs about language. With limited knowledge of common words and concepts, participants were called “outdated,” or “*jo-seon-jog*”<sup>60</sup>, because Konglish was “common sense” in South Korean society.

**Northern pronunciation.** Research participants appeared to realize their pronunciation<sup>61</sup> left a negative impression on South Koreans. In particular, prosodic elements such as increased loudness

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<sup>60</sup> An expression referring to a Chinese-born Korean with Chinese citizenship. In this context, *Josun-jock* is a slur.

<sup>61</sup> One of the most noticeable differences in the two Korean dialects is their pronunciation. The following excerpt explains differences between Seoul Standard language and Pyongyang Standard pronunciation: To SS [Seoul Standard] speakers in the South, PS [Pyongyang Standard] sounds in general provocative and militant, and such an appalling feeling is no doubt conveyed by the unique stress and intonation system characteristic of PS. Stronger stress and higher pitch are used in PS compared to SS, and a sentence in PS tends to be broken into more rhythmic units of shorter length than in SS; each rhythmic unit usually ends with a high falling intonation of extremely high pitch and strong stress. (Lee, 1990, p. 77)

and emphasized pitch can be interpreted as anger and negatively influence their interactions with South Koreans. Hye-ja was one of many participants who described their experience of being misunderstood due to pronunciation:

I did not intend to fight or offend anybody. Yet, when I talked to my South Korean co-workers, they thought I was furious. I realized we [North Koreans] have strong accents and put emphasis on negative words, which is different from South Koreans' kind, polite, and gentle tones. I have heard that our [North Koreans'] typical conversation could have nuances of fighting and criticism [from South Koreans' view] because of our strong and rapid speech and arguing voice. So I tried to slow down my conversation, observe and follow their [South Korean] tempo.

Hye-ja noticed that her different use of prosodic elements could be interpreted negatively and create tensions in her relationship with co-workers. South Koreans misinterpreted the content and emotion of her message based on her different emphasis on stress and intonation including general volume. Participants recognized that their pronunciation signaled aggressive and hostile emotions that they did not intend to convey and created misunderstandings and relational problems (Frick, 1985).

Northern pronunciation also signaled migrants' social status. In the service workplaces, most participants felt vulnerable and anxious due to their particular pronunciation, which led them to be seen as illegal workers although they were authorized, legal citizens. One participant, Sung-chul, shared the results his language, which made him consider his pronunciation to be a curse:

Different pronunciation always invited follow-up questions. "Where are you from?" people asked me after listening to my Northern pronunciation. I said I am a *Jo-seon* person [meaning North Korean in North Korea language] once. Then, South Koreans fired me because they misunderstood me as *jo-seon-jog* [Chinese-Korean], an illegal migrant. I did not like to be seen as *jo-seon-jog* or Chinese because of my negative experiences in China, and also their undesirable reputation in South Korean society. When I disclosed my real nationality—North Korean—South Koreans started to ask nonsense questions. This is a typical experience to receive such attention and questions in any settings like work, bank, and churches. To avoid these situations, oftentimes I introduced myself as from *Gang-won-do* [a Northeast region of South Korean] although I have never visited the region. This made me afraid of building relationships with co-workers, because I was concerned about being exposed by somebody as

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Lee (1990) explains how North Koreans modify the stress and intonation of their dialect with an emphasis on "provocative and militant" tones. Consequently, South Koreans can easily identify Northern pronunciation (Kim, 2014), which they perceive as strong, hostile, and less civilized (Cho & Chung, 2006; Jun & Shin, 2018).

a liar. I resent my accent that either exposed my original nationality or pushed me to lie publicly.

Sung-chul recognized the consequences of his pronunciation, which stirred up South Koreans' prejudice and provoked unwelcome inquiries about his hometown. Indeed, his pronunciation signaled he did not belong in South Korea (Lee, Han & Hyun, 2016). Because people considered him an outsider, a *Choseon-jock* [Chinese Korean], he often lied about his birthplace as *Gang-won*-province<sup>62</sup> so he would be considered an insider and a legal worker, a situation frequently found among North Korean migrants in South Korea (Cho & Chung, 2006; Ju, 2016).

Research participants became aware of how Northern pronunciation resulted in immediate assumptions concerning social stigma and exclusion. For example, Hye-ryong experienced discrimination due to her pronunciation, and mastery of it became a priority for her to expand her identity beyond that of a legal resident to a social citizen of South Korea:

After my arrival, I worked at a bar and customers considered me Chinese or Chinese-Korean due to my pronunciation and mocked on me as a *jjangkkae* [literally, Chinese food; also used as a racial epithet for Chinese people]. What a hopeless nation! I felt uncomfortable to be called a *jjangkkae*. The discrimination was a huge cultural shock. So I registered in a Korean language academy to adopt South Korean pronunciation quickly. I learned almost everything like new and tried to clean myself of the North Korean dialect.

Hye-ryong recognized that North Korean pronunciation differentiated her from native speakers and felt like her pronunciation lessened the value of her labor and legal identity. Encountering the cultural shock of being addressed with a racial epithet, *jjangkkae*, she decided to change her Northern pronunciation. Her expression “cleaning” indicates that for her, Northern pronunciation is a blemish. Similarly, many other participants reported that they experienced culture shock due to the stigma attached to Northern pronunciation. They said that the experience of stigma also involved customers' staring and inquiries, seeing them as “others” (Cho & Chung, 2006).

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<sup>62</sup> This is a place North Koreans frequently use as a fake birthplace when South Koreans asked, because of their strong pronunciations.

After confronting situations that instigated stigma and exclusion, participants developed knowledge of the “proper” pronunciation in that context, in contrast to “wrong” or “incorrect” North Korean pronunciation (Gee, 1989). This comparative knowledge, according to participant descriptions, involved the idea that South Korean pronunciation is “feminine, soft, and calm” and “patient with a slow and gentle speed,” and features a “rounded peach sound” that was associated with cheating and cunning in North Korea. With these associations, participants were conscious of limiting their “strong,” “vociferous,” and rapid sounds, which were perceived in the South as “aggressive,” “angry,” and even “muscular.” Participants became conscious of how their pronunciation could create unintended impressions. To avoid disadvantages from misinterpretations, Hye-ja paid attention to the level, rhythm, and tone of others and fit her speech to be situationally appropriate. Similarly, some participants, like Kyung-ok, developed strategies such as practicing her speech by observing my lips and shadowing my tone during her interview.

### **Cultural Repertoire and Learning Strategies**

In workplaces where research participants had limited resources for individual development, they applied cultural repertoires of practice<sup>63</sup> in their learning of both the new language and social practices (Swidler, 2001). Memorization and *nunchi*, an ability to read intentions and social context, were identified as major parts of strategies of action in adapting to new workplaces.

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<sup>63</sup> *Cultural repertoire of behaviors* indicates a set of cultural resources that is “an oddly assorted tool kit containing implements of varying shapes that fit... more or less well, are not always easy to use, and only sometimes do the job” (Swidler, 2001, p. 284). As Swidler claims, people bring selectively applied strategies and cultural practices in their decision making and behaviors. From the cultural repertoire perspective, memorization is a cultural strategy and practice among North Koreans.

**Memorizing.**<sup>64</sup> Memorization is a pedagogic approach often found in North Korean ideological education,<sup>65</sup> and it seemed to be participants' preferred way of acquiring language and skills, enabling them to communicate with South Koreans in their routines. Hye-ok described the everyday memorization practice she used for over two years, giving an example of her Konglish acquisition:

I collected Konglish vocabulary at work. When I listened to unknown words during my service, I jotted them down and checked the meanings using my computer at home. I repeated these words to myself when I was alone and memorized them. The next day, I used the same words at work to practice and see if I am memorizing them. In this way, I can collaborate with

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<sup>64</sup> Memorization is a common cultural and traditional approach practiced in Asian countries (Tan, 2011; 2015), religious education (Wagner & Lotfi, 1983), and Central and Eastern European countries (Perry, 2005). In Confucian influenced Asian countries, rote learning, repetition, and memorization are considered as foundational strategies to master content knowledge to develop deeper understanding (Tan, 2015). Particularly in Muslim schools, where preserving "textual integrity of the Quran" (Wagner & Lotfi, 1983, p. 117) is highly esteemed, rote learning has been integral part of building group solidarity and worship to promote Islam. In European Countries, including post-communist Czech Republic, memorization has been applied in authoritarian school systems to educate passive and less critical citizens (Perry, 2005). As such, memorization and rote learning have been applied in diverse religious and ideological contexts to maintain cultural values and group solidarity and promote a unified world view. Similar to other religious and authoritarian social systems, North Korea appears to underscore memorization of important texts about the deified former leaders to preserve a unified world view and common convictions.

<sup>65</sup> Memorization is a teaching and learning strategy that is used around the world and in many community and educational settings, including formal education and non-formal religious education (e.g., Christian, Jewish, and Muslim memorization of Scriptures). In North Korea, memorization is also an integral part of ideology education. North Koreans' autobiographies and testimonies, as well as that of an American political prisoner, provide sufficient descriptions of memorization practice, described like an "injection" of ideology, the *Juche* (self-reliance) world view, into the country (Jenkins & Frederick, 2009; Jung, 2020; Kim, 2006; Shin, 2015). Similar to other religious and authoritarian social systems, North Korea appears to underscore memorization of important texts about the deified former leaders to preserve a unified world view and common convictions.

The following descriptions provide an idea of systematic memorization as a part of indoctrination practice: Robert Jenkins, who was detained in North Korea for over 37 years (from 1965 to 2002), reports how he memorized Kim Il-sung's teaching under the regime's control: "Leaders oversaw our propaganda indoctrination—the hours of forced study and memorization of Kim Il-sung's teaching [even though Jenkins did not know the Korean language at that time] that we endured" (Jenkins & Frederick, 2009, p. 36), teachings that remained in his memory even after a decade passed from his release. What Jenkins experienced has some parallels in the experience of Kim Hyun-sick, a formal Pyongyang Teacher's School professor, who elaborates on his experience of a memorization competition in his autobiography: "We had to memorize enormous lists. The Ten Principles accompanied multiple small lists and we had to remember all. I stayed up all night, memorized with my mouth and hands with speaking and writing" (Kim, 2006, p. 225). In his book, Kim describes that when Kim Jung-il established Ten Principles (i.e., The Revolutionary Ideology of the Suryong) in 1974, all North Koreans were forced to memorize the Ten Principles through national memorization competitions in schools and work organizations. This practice appears to be the present practice in North Korea according to media releases and North Koreans' testimonies. For instance, people had to memorize Kim Jung-eun's annual report, which is more than 17,000 words long (Shin, 2015). Kim Jung-en emphasizes memorization of Ten Principles every day to enhance loyalty, according to the recent defected elite, Tea Yong-ho (Lee, 2019).



my South Korean co-workers as if I knew Konglish. Memorization is our study method in North Korea and China. In school, we memorized Kim Il-sung's and Kim Jong-il's teaching, and entire books [e.g., *With the Century*] thoroughly and got tested next day.

Starting with what she did not know, such as language errors and mistakes, Hye-ok repeated and practiced specific expressions at work, where she heard the unknown words. This process also involved learning conceptual knowledge, because some Konglish terms, such as stress,<sup>66</sup> introduced her to new concepts. Memorization was helpful because she could privately look up and practice the memorized words without informing others about her ignorance.

Memorization appears to be a natural part of research participants' learning and working lives, which I observed in my interviews, participant observations, and field notes. Kyung-ok, who had recently arrived in South Korea, heard a new term, "navy blue," from one of her customer's conversations and applied the term to her co-worker the next day. Three participants memorized food menus; for instance, Hye-ok began with "Windsor, Valentine, and Johnnie Walker" in a bar where she started to learn the English alphabet. Those specific vocabularies show how participants began with domain-specific, practical terms that would help them to serve their customers.

The ability to memorize, as a part of cultural repertoire of behavior, greatly enhanced the knowledge participants applied to new contexts. Ok-ja, who served in the North Korean army as a chef, pointed out how she benefited from memorization by giving an example of past educational patterns at work:

- Ok-ja: I memorized all the details in recipes because we were tested on our knowledge. For instance, this ingredient has "x" amount of protein per 100 grams.
- Jin-hee: Do you use a teaspoon?
- Ok-ja: We measured grams with a scale. In the military kitchen, we had a unified recipe so all chefs must memorize the standard. Like, ten grams of garlic and six grams of spring onion.
- Jin-hee: Did you memorize it all?

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<sup>66</sup> In North Korea, there is no concept like stress. According to a Radio Free Asia news report, a North Korean said in an interview that, "In North Korea, mutual criticism is extremely oppressive and stressful. Yet, we do not have such terminology. I know this as an ugly feeling that comes from mental tension and pressure. There is no specific terminology there, but it is assumed that this is stress" (Lee, 2019).

- Ok-ja: Absolutely and endlessly. For example, we learned thirty menus per month and we were tested on all of them every 25<sup>th</sup> day. On the test day, we all stood up before a teacher and responded to his spontaneous questions. For instance, when a teacher said, *Imansu* soup, then we had to recite the full recipe in front of the class without missing a single detail. If we failed in one detail such as the number of grams, we needed to repeat the entire exam again.
- Jin-hee: How do you think this practice could help you work in South Korea?
- Ok-ja: I am very good at memorizing because of past training. I think past learning style instilled in me a way to memorize long and difficult sentences.

In North Korean army kitchens, Ok-ja was required to memorize detailed recipes, and she then applied the same memorization strategy in South Korean kitchens. She acquired workplace literacy that was directly applicable through reciting unfamiliar words and expressions. This memorization involved constant repetition and verbal utterance of vocabulary until she could accurately apply each term. Her workplace provided opportunities for her to notice and discover common terms that she could memorize. The 11 participants who had served in formal institutions, such as the military, particularly reported that the North Korean emphasis on memorization had exceptionally prepared their brain function to learn in this way: “We (North Koreans) are excellent in memorization” (Kim, 2007).

This memorization served as a survival strategy during their migration journeys, helping participants self-initiate language learning. My field notes contained themes that related to participants’ elaboration on memorization: Hwan-chul had noted he remembered the Chinese dictionary while he worked at Chinese inns and bars; Sae-bom had memorized Chinese vocabulary by watching television and reading dictionaries; and Hye-ryong received a Chinese language book from her mother to master Chinese. Four participants reported mastering basic Chinese communication as a self-initiated language approach.

Memorization served not only to fill the dialectic gap but was also useful when serving customers. Some participants memorized customers’ information to provide personalized services.

One day, Sung-hee remembered a customer's eight-digit phone number, to my surprise, which I described in my field notes:

- Sung-hee: [*Sung-hee received a phone call and responded to her customer*] Okay. I will prepare the menu by seven. I see, oh, you visited our restaurant before. I am sorry I could not remember [*Sung-hee checked the phone number on the screen.*]
- Jinhee: Why you are checking the phone number?
- Sung-hee: To memorize the phone number. Then, I can remember this customer next time. [*Sung-hee reviewed the phone number again and went to the kitchen.*]
- Jinhee: [*During the break hours*] What does it mean for you to memorize customers' information? [Why do you memorize customers' information?]
- Sung-hee: When I remember customer's information, they like it. So, I try to memorize their characteristics like faces, voices, and past orders, and special requests. It doesn't cost money, but it satisfies them a lot.

Sung-hee knew what good bartenders and waiters do for their customers by remembering their favorite drinks and meals. Another day, I observed what it means to remember customer information and why it was important for her to satisfy customer needs. In my field notes I described Sung-hee's incorporation of memorization into her service:

A customer with a thick black glasses who visited yesterday returned to the restaurant. Sung-hee greeted him with "Welcome." The male customer asked her: "Can you give me what I ate yesterday? Was it this?" The customer indicated a Teriyaki-curry with his finger. Sung-hee corrected him, "That was the very first menu item when you visited here for the first time. Yesterday, you ate Indian curry with a side dish." "That's it." The customer and Sung-hee laughed together. In the kitchen, she told me, customers hoped she would remember the menu items that they ate. When a customer ate his dish, she visited the customer and asked "How does it taste?" She remembered the customers' opinions. (FN, 3/15/18)

Memorizing customer information, including their preferences, helped Sung-hee provide personalized services and maintain strong customer relationships. She said she memorized approximately 60 regular customers' characteristics such as face, favorite menu items, visiting frequency, and phone numbers. For instance, when a young male customer visited, she greeted him by referring to his visiting frequency: "How are you? I have not seen you this week at all. Hope everything is fine." Simultaneously, she ordered him a "curry dish with two eggs without onion"

because he “hated onion.” She remembered information that counts as important to impress the customer and used it to greet them.

I observed similar patterns in other participants. As I wrote in my field notes, Sun-hwa told me:

Remembered the last four digits of more than a hundred customers’ phone numbers to be able to quickly enter their bonus points. Yeon-hwa provided specific coffee orders to her regular customers through memorization which satisfied her customers. Hwan-chul remembered regular customers’ favorite seats and guided them to the very seats or similar seats as an alternative in order to help them feel comfortable. Sun-hwa believed memorizing gave an extra effort to touch customers’ hearts. (FN, 3/12/17)

Memorization, coming from their past practice and skills, allowed participants to acquire workplace literacy, which greatly improved the customers’ comfort and experience.

**Nunchi.**<sup>67</sup> In my participant observation, participants suggested that *nunchi* was an important part of their cultural repertoire developed under insecurity and deprivation<sup>68</sup> (Swidler, 2001). Research

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<sup>67</sup> *Nunchi* refers to an ability to perceptively and swiftly decipher the mind of others (National Korean Language Institute, 2020). Specifically, it is an indigenous cultural concept that serves to attend to other’s intentions in East Asian Confucian countries, where collectivistic cultures and high-context communication are pervasive (Heo, Park & Kim, 2012; Yim, 2017). People with a high *nunchi* are quick at fitting in to the dominant social norms of their own culture with implicit and situational cues because they can read people’s intentions within social contexts (Heo & Park, 2013). A similar concept in Western contexts is emotional intelligence, which involves competencies like interpersonal awareness and attention to feelings.

<sup>68</sup> Although there has been no research on North Koreans and *nunchi*, some of the previous literature on North Koreans’ autobiographies suggest that North Koreans have developed an exceptional level of *nunchi* in response to their unique social context. In *Unification Together with North Korean Migrants* (translated by Cho & Kim, 2009), which explores North Koreans’ experiences of challenges in South Korea, one North Korean interviewee reports how important it is to have a *nunchi*:

Even though North Korean migrants are often viewed as deficient or inferior to South Koreans, not having common knowledge of the South Korean society, we can read and transpierce the thoughts of others because we survived with *nunchi* under the regime that says one thing and means another. (p. 191)

For the interviewee, *nunchi* appears to be a survival skill under the authoritarian regime which made them strong to adjust in any circumstance. The term *nunchi* is used in both Koreas, yet North Koreans have experienced it as a strategy to help them survive under control and poverty. In a book entitled *North Koreans During Arduous March*, interviewees applied the expression *nunchi* strongly associated with survival under conditions of famine and surveillance:

There was no single house in North Korea where people had enough food... My father was in charge of the train, and the restaurant lady bribes *nurungji* [the crust of overcooked rice] to my father. My family lived well because we use *nunchi* to bring *nurungji* at home. My father wrapped *nurungji* and called me. I pretended to be not my father’s daughter, and he [my father] gave me a bag of *nurungji*. I brought it at home. We used *nunchi* because we must not let our neighborhood know. I bring it out at night [to

participants explained *nunchi* as an ability to understand “people’s minds” or “interpreting the *gwansang* (face),” and “reading the situation,” mostly related to power and control. Some participants defined *nunchi* as the combination of preventive and intuitive actions in response to unexpected dangers. Sun-hwa reported that she always used *nunchi* like “*nun-chi-bab meog-da* (eating *nunchi* like a daily meal)” in a Chinese restaurant for about two years, because a Chinese employer or any customer could report her and she could be repatriated to North Korea. She said she ought to use *nunchi* to cater to employers’ tastes, even abusive ones.

Having such experiences, participants believed that they developed distinctive expertise like “learning by *nunchi*,” which led them to life in the land of opportunity. Eleven North Korean participants reported in their interview that they were superior in *nunchi*, and two participants connected the concept with “emotional intelligence,” describing their expertise to sense the thoughts of people. As one participant reported, “without especially high *nunchi*, it would be impossible to be successful in crossing the border. Only one out of six can be successful in their border crossing.” For research participants, *nunchi* was an essential skill that shaped their identity and led them to their new status.

Interestingly, once a North Koreans successfully enters South Korea, *nunchi* becomes a strong self-initiated learning tool, providing a cultural reservoir of actions in language acquisition and communication development. For instance, Won-chul described his strong cross-cultural *nunchi*

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work it secretly] to dry it, and my mom use it to make food for family. People without having such, it was hard to eat and live. (Kim& Jung, 2012, p. 126)

In North Korean contexts, *nunchi* appears to be adopted to secure personal and family interests and increase chances of survival in collectivistic and oppressive circumstances. Interviewees in the book use in many of the similar cases using “quick *nunchi*,” “noticed with *nunchi* (understanding situations without any explanation),” and “seeing *nunchi* (being alerted/careful)” to hide and secure food. In South Korean society, to have *nunchi* is a matter of facilitating social intercourse, whereas in the North side of Korea, the context of using *nunchi* is a matter of life and death. It served them well not only because of the collective organizational life in North Korea, but also because of their border crossing experiences as illegal migrants, which required them to be sensitive to external threats and oppressions (Ju, 2010; Ju, 2018; Jung & Kim, 2012).

capacity, which enabled him to learn basic Chinese and which he later applied to South Korean dialect and English language acquisition:

- Won-chul: I left North Korea when I was nineteen and lived in China for five years.  
 Jin-hee: You said you engaged in informal business...?  
 Won-chul: I went back and forth between North Korea and China to sell mushrooms and Chinese clothes in North Korea.  
 Jin-hee: What was your experience like in China?  
 Won-chul: I worked on a farm as a shepherd for about two years and spent three years in Chinese inns, bars, and night clubs. I started to work in a service business.  
 Jin-hee: How did you learn Chinese then?  
 Won-chul: I used my *nunchi*. Nobody taught me what to do. Everything, Chinese and work responsibilities, I had to learn by *nunchi*. There was no formal training nor modern vaccination treating cattle.  
 Jin-hee: What does mean to use *nunchi* in language learning?  
 Won-chul: I learn Chinese from Chinese-Koreans by observing their interactions, and I memorized and mimicked them using *nunchi*. While working, I watched the television and checked spelling and used the terms to communicate with customers. Also, I used this *nunchi* to gain more tips at the bar.  
 Jin-hee: Could you please explain more about this?  
 Won-chul: When customers visited, I figured out some of the customers were powerful men, such as a South Korean CEO who came to visit China for his business trip, and read their minds using my *nunchi*. When the man wanted to gain advantages [to sleep with a woman] he used his money to show off to the women, and I intentionally created situations to stimulate his vanity. For example, I brought an ashtray at the exact time that women [female brought to entertain male guests] were introduced and at that moment, the male customer tipped me triple, with cash, to appeal to the women.

Won-chul claimed that in China, he learned Chinese by *nunchi* both as a shepherd and as a waiter. Based on the excerpt above, he maximized his capacity to infer meanings from hearing daily Chinese conversations and watching television, and practiced Chinese using *nunchi*. His socially nuanced activities engendered from *nunchi* allowed him to orchestrate complicated inputs and outputs; *nunchi* functioned like a control tower by mediating his inputs (e.g., listening, observing, and reading) into situated outputs (e.g., repeating, practicing, and responding). *Nunchi* enabled Won-chul to react to social circumstances with situated responses, and his language acquisition enhanced his competency. For him, *nunchi* was a tool box he used to his advantage in every social circumstance.

One interesting point is how he applied *nunchi* to increase gains. With high *nunchi*, according to Won-chul, he could create situations to inspire male customers to willingly pay him higher tips so they could boast in front of women. By reading contextual dynamics at the bar, for instance when he perceived the desire of the customer to appeal to the hostess, he could take advantage of the scenario by creating lucrative situations. Won-chul was confident: “I could see what people desire; so, I earned much higher tips and purchased a plane ticket to South Korea.” In his case, *nunchi* appeared to be more than a language learning tool to help North Koreans to achieve their goals.

Won-chul’s use of *nunchi* to learn languages is not an exceptional case. Seven participants explicitly mentioned the role of *nunchi* in their learning practices, including language acquisition. These participants phrased their “workplace as everyday school,” because they not only learned new dialects and practical knowledge but also adopt new social skills with *nunchi*. For example, Hye-ryong recognized that her Korean learning ought to involve some “real practice at sites, similar to my Chinses learning using *nunchi*”; she worked at bars and cafés in her first two years because routine social encounters in those contexts would lead to real learning. In the case of Yeon-hwa, who declined to attend school because she felt school was not practical, she said, “I learned every necessary skill [including her Korean and Konglish] at work” thanks to her past experience of *nunchi bap* (consuming *nunchi* like a daily meal). Most of these participants had spent more than a decade in South Korea and spoke fluent South Korean dialect, foreign loan words, English, and Konglish at work.

As in Won-chul’s case of using *nunchi* for earning tips, the concept also applied to providing individualized services to satisfy customers in cafés and restaurants. Yeon-hwa explained *nunchi* when she trained a new employee at the café:

Hey, you should work by *nunchi*. If ten people should compete for a piece of bread, will you line up for it? [meaning you should be vigilant and take action to feed yourself] Prepare yourself before customers’ order as I do. When your customer orders “iced coffee” you

should prepare ice simultaneously. Be sensitive to customers' needs and take actions prior to any order.

In the excerpt above, Yeon-hwa appeared to serve her customer remembering her past living situations. In her teaching, *nunchi* referred to an enhanced ability to respond to customers' orders with immediate actions. Sung-chul applied the same strategy when he heard a customer drop his chopsticks in a restaurant. Although he was working in the kitchen, his *nunchi* enabled him to immediately deliver new chopsticks to a customer in the hall. He reported, "I trained myself to promptly react to the sound of dropped chopsticks either in the kitchen or hall." Other participants also used *nunchi* to serve their employer and customers to increase sales.

Although *nunchi* appeared to be an all-purpose tool in precarious situations, some participants found limitations in relying on *nunchi* in places that operate on a fundamentally different system. Won-chul, who claimed the benefits of *nunchi*, equally developed a doubt of having too much *nunchi*, which might limit direct and authentic communication with South Koreans:

North Korea does not have a system like South Korea. In North Korea, we have to move from restriction and create changes using *nunchi*; giving bribes is part of tacit *nunchi* in North Korea to make a progress in my business. Yet, South Korea has a different operating system compared to North Korea. We [North Korean migrants] do not need to see *nunchi* in South Korea compared to North Korea or China [because North Koreans are legal citizens of South Korea]. Rather, we have to confront and have actual conversations with South Koreans to get better understand about their thoughts. So now, depending on people, I do not apply *nunchi*. I'd rather straightforwardly speak.

Won-chul found his *nunchi* originated from living in North Korea, with a vulnerable status and in a restricted social system. Having South Korean citizenship, he might not need to be and feel bounded to his past experiences in China or North Korea, because his thoughts and attitudes in his current circumstances could be limited by his *nunchi*. Rather, having authentic communication with South Koreans would help him to learn deeper meanings and knowledge of the society, rather than acquiring shallow and surface knowledge based on *nunchi*. Similarly, Sung-chul and Gwang-chul reported that they preferred to ask direct questions to find "what people really wanted" in their service



interactions with South Korean customers. *Nunchi* may not be sufficient for them to learn what people want, beyond their assumptions. Six participants reported that after “intentionally” stopping the use of *nunchi*, they experienced reduced stress and fewer complications in their interactions with South Koreans.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I examined how research participants learned to interact with South Korean co-workers, customers, and supervisors through introducing participant-narrated stories, informal conversations, and observational records from my field notes within the restaurants and cafés. These stories included their past work experiences in North Korea, China, and South Korea. I have highlighted how language and workplace literacy caused functional difficulties and interpersonal troubles, which in turn provided new learning opportunities. Participants’ narratives revealed how they developed cultural repertoires of learning approaches (i.e., memorization and *nunchi*) based on their past status and precarious social circumstances across borderlands. Their narratives described how they negotiated, applied, and evaluated their self-initiated learning in new social situations. The data I collected also illustrated what participants learned about cultural and linguistic differences and similarities between North and South Korea through their social engagement at work. The following chapter outlines how participants learned to manage their feelings to fulfill the emotional requirements of their jobs.

## Chapter 6

### Learning Emotional Management

This chapter explores how North Korean participants hired in South Korean service enterprise businesses learned to manage their feelings to fulfill the emotional requirements of frontline service work. First, I begin with the layers of feeling rules that participants experienced in their working lives due to the sociocultural context on the Korea peninsula. Second, I examine research participants' coping strategies through participant observation, interviews, and informal conversations, in which they described interactions they had that involved self-defense mechanisms. Through participation in the service industry, participants developed knowledge about feeling rules to set their emotional boundaries and develop interactive coping strategies.

#### Feeling Rules and Emotional Labor

Scholars (Hochschild, 2012; Nath, 2011; Scrinzi, 2009) have described different forms of emotional work based on racial, ethnic, and gender identities. However, there is little understanding of how migrants experience feeling rules<sup>69</sup> and emotional labor<sup>70</sup> in their workplaces in host societies. What North Korean participants experienced in South Korea is unique in terms of geopolitical and historical contexts, where two nations are still divided and have fought for legitimacy since the Second World War. Within this context, South Koreans project both positive and negative discourses

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<sup>69</sup> Societal norms are about the appropriate type and amount of feeling that should be experienced in a particular situation (Hochschild, 1983; Wharton, 2009).

<sup>70</sup> Emotion management occurs as people work to accommodate these norms. This work involves attempts to align privately felt emotions with normative expectations or to bring the outward expression of emotion in line with them (Hochschild, 1983).

onto migrants, underscoring their shared ethnicity and historical *oneness* while retaining a sense of national hierarchy and security concerns (Son, 2016). This chapter begins with participants' experiences of discriminatory statements and attitudes that they have faced, which required emotional labor and coping strategies.

**“The enemy.”** In a service workplace where employees meet their customers face to face, they must perform emotional labor, an invisible yet demanding tasks (Hochschild, 1983). Because this emotional labor is shaped by dominant norms and social bias, employees perceive feeling rules and learn to manage the boundary of their emotional expressions with respect to content, intensity, and diversity (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989; Wharton, 2009). Particularly for minority populations with marginalized social status, such as immigrants, migrants, and refugees, customer-instigated abuse is experienced as a source of intensive emotional labor (Mirchandani, 2003; Nath, 2011). The same is applicable to North Korean participants' emotional labor in South Korea, where co-existing positive and negative discourses shape North Korean migrants' social labeling (Son, 2016).

In participants' narratives, they described their experiences of hostile feelings from their customers, which were directed toward the invisible enemy, North Korea. One participant, Hye-ja described her experience in service work when North Korea conducted a missile test in 2017:

That day, customers came to the restaurant and discussed the military confrontation angrily while eating. When I served them, I pretended I did not listen or know about the matter because I was very uncomfortable. South Korean customers, who knew I was a North Korean, talked about North Korean things and insulted them [North Korea] as the enemy. When I listened to South Korean customers talking to me in such ways, I felt wounded and could not say anything. It further increased my hatred toward South Koreans, although I do not like North Korea. I came here to escape from famine and poverty, and I did not know about politics and military power. Yet, some South Korean customers discussed military actions and considered themselves powerful while verbally oppressing me. However, I could not react to them directly in the business setting because it is useless to react to them.

Hye-ja was embarrassed when she faced the misplaced aggression toward the North Korea regime through the customers' negative conversations, even though she was not responsible for any

North Korean military confrontations or political decisions. Despite the unfair expressions of hostility directed at her instead of at the North Korean regime, Hye-ja felt pressure to disguise her feelings by ignoring the situation and providing service to customers. Customers' aggression led her to develop ways to manage emotional challenges while working in the social sphere.

This sense of being labelled as the enemy, generalized as "North Korea," appeared to be a common experience for participants throughout their daily routines. Gwang-chul, who spent 17 years in South Korea, shared his experiences of facing deeply rooted hostility ranging from his school to his current workplace:

Still, even in the restaurant, I feel uncomfortable to talk with South Koreans due to my accumulated experience of being hurt by being seen as the enemy. When I was a high school student, my closest South Korean friend asked me about the sinking of the *Cheonan* navy ship<sup>71</sup>: "Why did you, North Korea, provoke war and threaten us after receiving rice and all that humanitarian aid?" I was hurt and suffered deeply because my friend looked at me as North Korea. So, I physically fought with him. I told him, "I am a South Korean citizen and that is my nationality; my identification card proves it." I told him, "Do not weave politics into our relationship. Politics is politics." It was not an isolated case at school. Here, I met a South Korean co-worker who asked me questions like, "What if war would occur, where will you go? Which side will you support?" Then, I said, "Why do you think war would break out? If that happens, I would like to mediate." Even during the Pyeong Chang 2018 Olympic Winter Games, customers asked me which side (North or South Korea) I supported. I said to them, "both." I felt sickness listening to such questions. They (South Koreans) use North Korea and migrants interchangeably and treat us (the regime and North Korean people) as one to justify their mistreatment.

When military and political confrontations occurred (e.g., the *Cheonan* navy ship or *Pyeong Chang* Olympics), he felt like he was treated as the enemy, receiving abrupt questions and political comments. Gwang-chul became a South Korean citizen upon his arrival and considered himself a legitimate South Korean. Yet some South Koreans, including his close friend, co-workers, and customers, treated him as a North Korean by asking unjustified questions charged with assumptions and bias against North Koreans. He realized South Koreans categorized North Koreans as

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<sup>71</sup> The South Korea's *Cheonan* sinking occurred on 26 March 2010 and evidence points to North Korea as the cause of the sinking.

indistinguishable from the North Korean regime and were unable to separate their political notions of North Korea from North Korean migrants.

Alongside Hye-ja and Gwang-chul, all participants reported their experiences of being called as: “the enemy,” “spy,” “*ppalgaengi*” (literally “red,” akin to “commie” or “pinko”), “cold-blooded,” and “betrayer.” Won-chul described the experience of aggression like an “equation” when South Koreans heard about military and political conflicts. Yeon-hwa shared her story of an old lady who suddenly shouted to her, “All North Korean things must die,” which was similar to other migrants’ experiences after the Second Battle of *Yeonpyeong* in 2002 (Ju, 2016). The narrated stories revealed that the hostile incidents were more frequent when there were specific conflicts between South and North Korea.

**“Ignorant.”** Educationism refers to an education-based social bias, describing beliefs and behaviors of an educated group who treat a less-educated group with reduced respect and trust (Kuppens, Spears, Manstead, Spruyt & Easterbrook, 2018). Because of South Koreans’ “educational fever” (persistent pursuit of credentials based on schooling and degree; Seth, 2002, p. 256) and their understanding of North Korea as outdated and uneducated, South Koreans assume North Koreans have low educational background and lesser intelligence (Kim, 1999). This bias seems to affect participants’ feeling rules in the workplace.

In settings where participants’ status as migrants was exposed, the participants had to tolerate humiliation and shame when customers expressed their bias against participants, whom they perceived as uneducated, ignorant, and uncivilized. In my participant observation, I observed and described how participants received unwelcome attention through questions and statements that reflected social assumptions. In my field notes, I described the following episode with Hye-ryong:

Today, Hye-ryong was furious when several customers complimented her English fluency. During a short break, she had an English conversation with her friend over the phone and three female customers, who observed her conversation, asked a question: “How can you

“speak English?” She responded with a slight smile. After customers left, she came to me and questioned: “*Unni* [Sister], why did they think it was their business to listen to my English? Why do they feel it is inappropriate and unrealistic because I am a North Korean migrant? They see me as an uneducated migrant. This is why I told you, unification must not take place, because South Koreans always look down on us [North Korea] and suppress us as inferiors.” I listened to her challenges, yet I could not respond to her directly because I did not know what to say. In the beginning, I could not understand why she was upset; yet, after listening to her sense of being categorized as a North Korean migrant and the persistent projection of low educational attainment, I realized we [South Koreans] imposed our assumption of unintellectual North Korea to all migrants. So, even a word of compliment can trigger her anger, which was suppressed for long. (FN 2/01/17)

When customers complimented Hye-ryong’s fluent English, she felt insulted because of the implied low expectations of North Koreans’ educational level. However, she disguised her bitterness with a smile in their presence. Nevertheless, after the customers left she revealed her deeply rooted frustration, which had been accumulating since her arrival in South Korea. She told me that repetitive experiences of social bias generated feelings of hopelessness because she felt devalued by South Koreans. Although she had acquired a university degree in South Korea and practiced her English through volunteer work abroad and living with foreign roommates, the way others perceived her remained the same because of her status as a North Korean migrant.

Participants experienced emotional tension when they noticed that their knowledge was ignored or received less respect as a consequence of structural discrimination. In the following field note, I described how Myung-hwa struggled with her boss throughout daily routines:

Myung-hwa always grumbles about the South Korean social worker who ordered her “do this and that.” Although she followed the orders silently, she disagreed with him many times and told me as much in the kitchen. I wondered why she did not talk to him directly. She said he did not accept what she said and considered her as an ignorant North Korean and when she said anything against his opinion, he thought she was being arrogant. This perception made her stop speaking out to avoid any penalty. According to her, her boss has little kitchen experience and professional knowledge. For example, he did not know how to prepare vegetables such as trimmed cabbages and cherry tomatoes to be served. She explained to me how to keep each ingredient fresh, giving a set of examples including boiling and cooking duration with dictionary definitions. I recognized she was very precise and meticulous and had extensive knowledge of cooking. Myung-hwa told me what she had memorized in her online university classes in South Korea to prove her knowledge and competency, which she did not voice before the South Korean social worker (FN, 3/27/18).

Myung-hwa felt suppressed when she could not express her disagreement with the boss who required silent obedience of her. In particular, she experienced emotional and cognitive conflicts when she had to defer to the less-experienced worker even though she was an educated and experienced *ajumma* (married woman) who “had a hundred times more work experience in the kitchen.” Although she endured such situations, she found the interactions more difficult than customer interactions and more likely to lead to burnout because her knowledge and experiences were distrusted in the kitchen. Similarly, other participants experienced tension from the patronizing approach of South Koreans who assumed that North Koreans are “ignorant,” “unknowledgeable,” and “unintelligent” people who are less responsible and therefore must require South Korean supervision.

The problem of lack of respect to North Koreans’ credentials and knowledge appears to be connected with structural issues such as limited job opportunities and low labor cost, which demand emotional labor in service jobs (Ju, 2016). Because North Korean migrants, as a group, possessed fewer credentials and received less recognition of their knowledge and experience, participants hid their origins by removing hometown information or giving a false address. Sun-hwa removed information about her birth place and high school (in North Korea) when she applied for another part-time job. Yeon-hwa started to hide her hometown information after receiving less payment than her South Korean co-workers in her previous workplace, where she assembled mobile phones and checked for defects. It appears that South Koreans’ low respect for and bias against North Korean migrants’ knowledge and education created situations for North Koreans in which they feel they must lie about their background to avoid an “unfair disadvantage.” This disadvantage seems perpetuate the idea that no matter which university degree or certificate migrants acquired in South Korea, being identified as North Korean was permanently associated with having less intellect or competence. Similarly, Ju (2016) introduced cases of migrants who could not get jobs until they erased evidence of

their North Korean origin. Books written by North Koreans also illustrate emotional burnout under similar circumstances in which they cannot claim their competency in knowledge and education because of South Korean educationism. This bias leads to the assumption that North Koreans do not possess equivalent credentials and skills which then oppresses North Koreans (Ju, 2016; Kim, 2007).

**“Flower.”** In an interactive service setting, female employees’ emotional labor can incorporate “selling a service and selling sexuality” (Hancock & Tyler, 2000; Warhurst & Nickson, 2009, p. 385). This is common to the experience of many female migrant workers, including North Korean migrants, whose role expectations and positions are culturally bound to their minority status (Dyer, McDowell & Batnitzky, 2010; Park, 2016).

Noting the methods that some North Korean women used to defect across borderlands, that is, forced marriage and human trafficking, some men customers chatted about sexualized labor in the presence of female research participants in the restaurant.<sup>72</sup> The following excerpts from my field notes begin with what I observed and heard during my participant observation at Pyongyang House:

When I worked together with my research participants at the restaurants, I could hear customers’ conversations (I assumed these customers thought that I was one of the North Korean employees). Some men said behind our backs, “North Korean food and women suit our tastes. They served us not only in the restaurant hall but also in bed.” Three male customers shared their experiences in North Korean restaurants in China as they glanced at the women servers, and I was shocked because this is not a typical conversation that I have *ever* heard in a restaurant during lunch. The North Korean lady who I worked with pretended she did not hear this conversation when she approached the customers with a gentle and kind smile and asked, “Did you like the food?” Later she told me that she cannot deal with such customers directly because she assumed that they wanted her to react to them, like a trap. Although she felt uncomfortable, she determined to show no reaction in responding to such nasty customers. Then, it will go away. (FN, 6/30/2018)

Although Sung-hee felt uncomfortable, showing me signs of irritation, she minimized her reaction to the customers to avoid unnecessary engagement. I assumed that she calculated the possible

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<sup>72</sup> Depending on workplace situations (e.g., partnering with a male employee), locations (city, suburb, rural), and customer traffic, this experience cannot be generalized to all service business where North Koreans are employed. Yet, this specific event happened when I worked with Sung-hee during the late lunch hours (1:30-2:00).



consequences of her reactions, which might impact the restaurant's sales and reputation. She was determined to ignore such disturbing speech and gazes because she was afraid of losing customers, so she acted as if nothing had happened and as if she had heard and seen nothing. This determination helped her to stop showing her emotional reactions and to make sure the business ran smoothly.

I also experienced this behavior. When I was mistaken as a migrant, I also felt the stares of customers, which was a rare experience for a South Korean. As one participant stated, "We (North Korean women) are not flowers." She indicated that being perceived as a flower was easier to handle symbolically. While feeling vulnerable, participants learned how to endure and how to disguise feelings of abuse and humiliation to protect themselves in front of customers.

Beyond staring and comments on their physical appearance, participants also encountered moments of sexual harassment and felt concern for their physical safety. Some customers made offensive jokes, and female participants perceived how male customers saw them as sexually promiscuous and controllable women. Such attitudes made some participants feel humiliation that caused them to comply. Hye-ok, who once managed a karaoke business along with other female migrants, narrated an experience that demonstrated active resistance against feeling rules designed to please customers:

Once I managed a karaoke business, and we dressed in traditional clothes (*han-bok*) to customize our business. Some nasty customers attempted to untie ribbons at the chest, and we avoided such treatment. I came up with an idea to fasten our people's [North Korean migrants'] ribbons firmly with a sharp pin. Nonetheless, customers enjoyed the push-and-pull dynamics to untie the ribbons, and I strongly urged and educated our people [North Korean migrants] not to allow them to untie the ribbons. We [female migrants] were irritated because it became their sport. Eventually, I taught my fellow migrant employees, "If customers try to open and untie, use the pin to pierce their finger. Do not show any mercy."

Hye-ok recognized that revealing their North Korean identity could evoke sexualized anticipation from male customers who had fantasies involving North Korean women in the service industry. Despite customers' rude behaviors, Hye-ok resisted such presumptions by preparing a

pseudo-weapon among their accessories to protect herself and fellow migrants. It was an intervention to manage the dilemma of business versus protection from harassment that they faced in their daily work lives. Because participants had to learn to carefully balance self-protection and customer satisfaction, they adopted coping strategies. These tensions also demonstrated that feeling rules and emotional management are related to participants' workplace and their social position (Warhurst & Nickson, 2009).

**“Bottom.”** Organizational structure and power hierarchies influence emotional labor in an interactive service business (Wharton, 2009). Research participants' experiences of feeling rules and emotional labor cannot be separated from the social stratification and bias that make them a “permanent underclass” (Lankov, 2006, p.129) and “third class citizens” (Ju, 2016, p. 36).

Participants perceived that customers who knew their national origins treated them as objects of pity who achieved upward national mobility through the move from North Korea to South Korea; such customers expressed beliefs that migrants must feel relief and satisfaction with their improved living conditions and material prosperity in South Korea. For instance, Yeon-hwa remembered how a particular female customer, who considered herself to be sympathetic toward North Koreans, caused Yeon-hwa to feel that her service role contributed to the customer's patronizing attitude:

Last year a customer came to me and said, “Once you were starved and nutrient deficient. Now you found food and clothes. Looking at you—good and pretty. How happy you must be!” I was deeply irritated by her satisfaction. Because my life in North Korea was not a totally miserable hell, nor is my life in South Korea heaven. My life should not be considered as a subject of conversation for this customer after purchasing a cup of coffee. This customer was rude as she wanted to feel she was superior to migrants. I did not know what kind of response she expected from me, yet I questioned back to her, saying, “Have you ever been to North Korea? You only know North Korea through the media. Not everybody is a beggar or poor. You [South Koreans] also have beggars in Seoul subway stations.” The customer was embarrassed because she expected me to agree with her with a sense of appreciation. Yet, my reaction was beyond her imagination. Since then, I did not smile nor greet with her because I did not consider her my customer who I needed to care for. I just exchanged money and product. In China and North Korea, I experienced the bottom of society and these experiences nurtured me to grow and stand up by myself. She (the customer), might not be able to survive if she was in my position.

Yeon-hwa was concerned when the customer assumed all migrants must feel redeemed or liberated based on an underlying belief in a natural hierarchy between the two Koreas, which Yeon-hwa disagreed with. The customer's sympathetic expression aroused anger, causing Yeon-hwa to violate the feeling rules demanded in the service business; her customer was embarrassed by Yeon-hwa's reaction. Instead of agreeing with the customer's assessment and maintaining an agreeable demeanor, Yeon-Hwa responded with critical questions for her customer.

Not every participant welcomed government social support, which could legitimize their perception of low social status and subordination under South Koreans. Four participants expressed how such support influenced their feeling rules and risked erasing their sense of independence through domestication. This particular emotional labor can occur while interacting closely with South Korean social workers, as Hwan-chul narrated:

One day, the leader of the social workers announced to all migrant employees: "We are helping you. So, listen to us [South Koreans] and support this business for yourselves." Not only him, but also all the other social workers frequently said this in their communications. Although I could not stop them from expressing their idea of "helping us," I personally felt terrible and even hated that statement. Even some social workers believed they were sacrificing their careers to assist poor migrants for the social good. Such people expected us to appreciate them. Yet, I cannot express my opinion to them because their statement is partly true and I am here to receive their support. However, if they [South Koreans] continue to display their message and gestures of helping us, they should know they can damage our [migrants'] sense of independence and self-esteem, because such gestures signal to us that migrants cannot find other jobs except for this social enterprise. Such actions made us believe that we are desperate for their help. This message can influence us to become passive recipients.

According to Hwan-chul, migrants were forced to express appreciation regardless of their disagreement with some institutional practices. "Helpful" gestures debilitated his sense of independence since he felt he should accept his status. Nonetheless, he could not speak his opinion about social workers if he wanted to continue to participate in the program. Because of the power hierarchy, he thought he must silently fight his internal battle against the sense of helplessness

enforced by the system, which denied dignity to participants through patronizing attitudes that were manifested by social workers' claims of help in daily interactions. Some participants were conscious of how stereotypes from South Koreans affected their social status and potentially stagnated their minds.

### **Interactive Coping Strategies**

Interactive coping strategies help participants overcome the emotional requirements of the workplace while interacting with South Korean co-workers, customers, and social workers. In this chapter, I describe how participants employed appraising, storytelling, and criticizing to identify and negotiate personal and communal struggles and how they developed a sense of inclusion and solidarity through critical reflection and changes in perspective. Findings suggest that participants developed their emotional reservoirs through developing interactive coping strategies and adjusting their expectations in society.

**Appraising.** Appraisal is a coping strategy used among minority populations to evaluate their social status and threats from perceived discrimination (Kramer, 1998, 2001). Appraisal helps the minority groups to forge emotional resources, such as collective self-esteem, through their assessment and evaluation of external challenges (Kong, 2016). During my participant observations, I found that participants actively negotiated information, creating and using tacit knowledge to build their stance and measure institutional trustworthiness. Participants benefited from this knowledge as a buffer against negative emotions and in making informed decisions. For instance, Myong-hwa identified how appraisal helped:

Myong-hwa: I had not known any North Korean migrants before coming here, so to acquire information, I needed to contact them. I do not ask directly, yet I first ask relevant questions to get what I want. For example, I was wondering about others'

working environments. So I asked, “What time do you take a break” and “What do you eat for lunch?” To get sensitive information in particular, I ask questions indirectly. Generally, we talk directly, yet for the sensitive information related to financial benefits, we do not. The first principle to get information is you have to give your information reciprocally. For example, I told to my friend, “I was hungry because I could not eat until 3 o’clock. How do you eat?” This is my way. I shared my information, late lunch, and waited for her to tell me her lunch schedule.

Jinhee: How often do you talk with them?

Myong-hwa: I call each migrant in social enterprises from different locations three to four times a day. Each conversation takes around thirty minutes to one hour. So I spent almost two to three hours to call and share ongoing situations. Yet, the friend who visited us yesterday, she visited all migrants face to face and collected information. So, I shared my information with her reciprocally. This conversation is very helpful for me to make a decision to stay here. When I tried to drop out of the program due to a troublesome social worker, I heard all migrants had a difficult time with the social worker. I was not an exception! I realized he acted mean to everybody. I felt relieved. So I decided to stay here to take advantage of this opportunity.

Myong-hwa was using her network to assess whether her work situation was normal or if she would be better off elsewhere. To the extent that it benefitted her, it allowed her to form realistic expectations and not move to another job that may have the same problems.

Not every appraisal benefited participants in terms of sense of security and inclusion within South Korean society. Participants commonly perceived ethnic discrimination and exclusion within their employer organizations, which communally expanded distrust and suspicion towards the organization by sharing every single discriminatory event. Having this knowledge, Kyung-ok took a stance against the social enterprise:

When people dropped out, South Korean social workers blamed us [migrants] for our avoidance of hard labor. No, that is not correct. Honestly, kitchen work is easier than any labor that we endured in China or North Korea. This is nothing. Yet, some of us gave up because we cannot trust this enterprise. It is not for us! I called more than ten people [North Koreans], and all agreed with me: “This social enterprise is not working for us.” In our heart, we concluded this: This social enterprise is not yet ready to accept and to work with us. They are not simply ready to accept North Korean migrants. We share our impressions almost every day, how they treat us and listen to difficulties they faced. Now we believe South Koreans run this organization to receive government subsidies and corporate donations by selling us for themselves.

After comparing her own experience with those of other migrants, Kyung-ok concluded that the social enterprise environment was “hypocritical.” She emphasized what was crucial for her, trust that she would not be misled or abused. Similarly, on the basis of shared stories, other participants agreed that artificiality in social enterprises diminished their trust. A South Korean social worker who worked with participants for two years noticed a negative cycle that appraisal created against the social enterprise.

Social Worker: North Korean migrants distrust us. For example, when we open a round table meeting, they continually ask about the hidden agenda of the workshop. They have second thoughts. They cannot trust the message we are bringing to the table although it is explicit and simple.

Jinhee: Can you give me an example?

Social Worker: They ask questions like, “Why do you hold a round table meeting? What’s it for?” I can observe, they chat among themselves to discuss the hidden agenda.

Jinhee: Have you ever asked them not to discuss behind your back but to bring it to you directly and do not to spread unverified information?

Social Worker: Do you think it will be effective? I am very skeptical. If I say that officially, the message itself can give them more disbelief. They can ask, “What are you really doing to keep us from free communication?” I think miscommunication occurs in the process of talking and sharing information among themselves secretly. Some bring issues from the past, so I can see they listen to the past participants and repeat the old stories among themselves.

Although appraisal allowed participants to communally understand the pros and cons of a given organization, they also reproduced patterns of alienation, which confirmed the group stance of distrust and skepticism. Participants changed their expectations and adjusted their emotional work based on the reality they faced. With this knowledge of communally collected reality, participants emphasized the social enterprise as a “transition to the next step,” which helped them to avoid undue burnout. One considered the social enterprise as a “school” for her career development. Sae-bom had a future plan to open a similar restaurant in China using the same model. In sum, participants developed internal knowledge through appraisal, which shaped their sense of belonging by avoiding unrealistic anticipations based on a communal understanding of the organization.

**Storytelling.** Stories are reconstructed units of experience that storytellers use to identify and create meanings in the social world (Bruner, 1991). Storytelling enables people to explore their emotions, meanings, and connections to self, society, and the world (McAdams, 2001; Soica, 2016). In the context of emotional labor, the literature suggests that telling personal experiences facilitates deep acting by helping storytellers experience a consonance between felt emotion and expressed emotion (Mathisen, 2019).

Storytelling among participants was a source of emotional support. Participants described how they expressed genuine feelings and thoughts among like-minded migrants, which helped them to alleviate suppressed feelings at work. They described storytelling among migrants as “real chatting,” “natural conversation,” “forgetting,” and a “cleaning mindset,” a tool that helped them to be themselves in a “mental sanctuary.” Participants’ narrations indicated that storytelling allowed them to explore concerns interwoven in their routines and to establish an emotional buffer by distancing themselves from emotional distractions. This experience was powerful for Myong-hwa, who did not work with other migrants in her previous workplaces. In the following excerpt from my field notes, Myong-hwa described how the benefits from storytelling helped resolve her distress:

When I wash dishes with Myong-hwa around 2 pm, she begins to talk about her chatting with other migrants, which helped her to reduce her sense of self-doubt. Particularly, she seems happy to conjure up her skeptical experience with one South Korean social worker. She mimics the tones of other migrants to realistically deliver the conversation. She says that when she shared challenging stories, all other migrants agreed with her, saying, ‘*Unni* [sister], *Unni*, he is a hopeless man. We thought you were okay with him because you did not mention anything about him. So, we did not share.’ Yet, her story invited more similar stories from others, which validated that her perceived discrimination from the meticulous social worker was real. She says to me, ‘I am correct. He is a troublemaker.’ Through sharing stories embedded with difficult feelings, she says to me, ‘people feel the same.’ [During the conversation, Myong-hwa used the North Korean dialect, which is faster. This demonstrates her emotional engagement.] With a sense of comfort and catharsis, she says she chatted with other migrants more frequently through the phone or face-to-face meetings after work, because this ‘real storytelling’ recharged her mind. She adds, ‘This is a rare opportunity for migrants because we were scattered after the re-education, and worked at part-time jobs individually.’ It seems like she takes great pleasure from “real” chatting as opposed to cautious talking with South Koreans. (FN 3/20/18)

By telling personal stories and sharing stories among other migrants, Myong-hwa was able to connect her personal feelings and experiences with the bigger picture shared by others. Listening to peer stories that reflected her own experience was comforting; by acknowledging that others shared her concerns, she recognized the cause of her emotional turmoil, which was interwoven with her relationship with social workers. She was able to validate her emotions and draw comfort from realizing that others have had similar experiences through envisioning the emotional terrain of other migrants.

Storytelling appeared to be a cathartic and satisfying approach in terms of tone and manner that allowed participants to naturally deliver their real concerns. During my participant observation, I could listen to participants' loud voices with their rapid North Korean dialect. Later in my conversation, I asked Sun-hwa about what allowed her to find relief:

- Jinhee: What makes you feel comfortable working at a social enterprise?  
 Sun-hwa: When I could meet fellow migrants and chat with them, that time becomes special for me.  
 Jinhee: Had you known them before coming here?  
 Sun-hwa: Of course not. It is my first time to meet them.  
 Jinhee: What can comfort you then?  
 Sun-hwa: One of the reasons why I pray by myself is privacy. I do not want to share my real stories and feelings with other people because they can spread my message and it could create trouble. I usually pray by myself at home. In my prayer, I say to God, "God, I am so tired and life here is so hard." Yet, many times, I do not have answers to my prayer and mumble by myself. On the other hand, when I chat with migrants, which I learned while working at the social enterprise, we can understand each other empathetically. Furthermore, a single word of agreement like, "You suffered a lot. I understand you," can relieve me. I could feel enormous comfort. Because, we share similar experiences of suffering in Northern dialect. This shared experience can help us read between lines and understand the deeper meaning from the pain. I personally do not receive any counselling nor share my stories with others, because telling my story can expose my thoughts to other people while I want to keep a distance from others. Yet, storytelling with other migrants is different.  
 Jinhee: What motivates you to keep a distance from others?  
 Sun-hwa: I do not trust anybody in North Korea, China, and even in South Korea.



- Jinhee: I see. I thought you like people. Yet, you do not trust people?  
 Sun-hwa: How can you trust people? You might have an easy life. Liking people and trusting people are different. If I trust anybody and share my stories with them without caution, I might not be able to survive.

Sun-hwa found that storytelling with other migrants was a rare opportunity that could give her a sense of comfort and being understood. Telling a story with people who shared similar experiences relieved her, in contrast with her migration journey where she could not trust anybody. It appears that participants restricted self-expression in the workplace so they would not draw attention to themselves and be exposed in the relationship with other co-workers, whether in China or South Korea.

Storytelling was also a helpful practice to mitigate intense feelings by “sharing pains,” and one that helped participants to lighten their weighty concerns, as Won-chul described:

Anywhere, it is hard to share pains, for example, intense emotional labor in South Korea. Yet, storytelling among the migrant community, we can share hardship freely and we can sympathize with others. Then, we can understand each other better because we share our secret and deeper pains during storytelling. Then we feel like the pain is gone. We feel relieved and lightened. I found a secret in a community.

Although storytelling could not remove his daily challenges, he felt his concern could be shifted by expressing himself genuinely without self-censorship and the fear of being punished. By hearing others’ struggles and sharing his in turn, Won-chul experienced a space for sharing mental and emotional challenges, which in turn released his turmoil. With this help, he could detach his emotional burden from the negative experience. Eun-shim said, “When we chat, we forget about the problem. It becomes less important.” For Myong-hwa, such chatting was a “real leisure” because they giggled and applauded each other and forgot about tensions and conflicts.

However, storytelling was not a panacea when it reproduced vicious cycles of cynicism among participants. One participant, Yeon-hwa alerted me to a self-protection mechanism used by migrants that transmitted cynicism and unhealthy attitudes like a “virus”:

I chatted with more than 20 North Korean friends almost every week. Because of perceived discrimination, they felt isolated and lonely. When I listened to their complaints and blame against South Koreans at work, however, I felt like they were dumping their mental trash on me. They thought they were all right while the society was wrong. So they blamed the society to justify their situation. They were mentally vulnerable from facing reality as it is [acknowledging insufficient skills and resources to achieve material prosperity in South Korea]. Thus, they built a thick wall between themselves and the society to protect themselves from the threat of being nothing. What a stupid reaction, full of loser mentality! Listening to their stories blaming society and excusing their own faults made me sick because they transmitted unhealthy perspectives. So, I tell them to stop talking to me if they do not listen to me.

When migrants repetitively expressed their sense of failure, these undesirable feelings reverberated throughout the community. For example, Yeon-hwa noticed that her colleagues “chewed bitterness from failures.” However, she felt sickness and discomfort from an underpinning self-defense mechanism, which she was concerned that her fellow North Koreans used to justify their failures by blaming others. She pointed out the dangers of developing a collective negativity toward South Korean society. As Sae-bom noted, “70 to 80% of North Korean migrants suffer from emotional illness” with a “handicapped mind,” in which traumatic life circumstances undesirably affected their unsettled emotions. Overall, participants used storytelling with other North Koreans to release stress by expressing feelings and shifting attention from their troubles.

**Criticizing.** Mutual criticism<sup>73</sup> is a method that the North Korean government uses to control its people, indoctrinating and producing loyal citizens through organizational control (Lankov, Kwak & Cho, 2012). This is a not an uncommon practice in communist countries such as Cuba, China, and

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<sup>73</sup> It has been used in communist governments, for instance by Mao in China. During the mutual criticism session that is held once a week, everyone has to confess shortcomings. After this, everyone criticizes individuals. In mutual criticism, people learned to criticize each other based on national principles such as Kim, Il-sung’ *Instruction* and his autobiography, *Ten Principles of the One-Ideology System*, and *With the Century* (Foundation myth).

Vietnam (Hu, 1962; Roucek, 1964; Rowley, Quang & Warner, 2007). In North Korea, the practice is called *Saenghwal ch'onghwa*, translated as a meeting for summing up one's life. The practice is divided into two parts: personal confession of wrongdoing and collective criticism to facilitate North Koreans' work attitude. For the participants in my study, the formal mutual criticism sessions instilled habits that lingered even after they left North Korea. During my participant observation, I observed the role of mutual criticism both to evoke and to mitigate emotional labor among participants.

Mutual criticism attacked the self-defense mechanism by criticizing egotism to promote a change in perspective, similar to deep acting. That is, by helping others to change their perspective with fault-finding, mutual criticism challenges emotional responses. For instance, Yeon-hwa criticized her co-workers to help them face the root cause of their emotional labor:

I worked with several novice migrants, and I criticized them and told them to manage their minds before they complain about nasty customers. I asked my co-workers, "Why do they [South Koreans] look down on you? What do you learn from it?" They said, "people look down on them because of their North Korean background. I said, "That thought is wrong." I said to them, "There must be a reason for their [South Koreans'] opinion. Try to find a hint from their message. If you can find one, you can grow up; otherwise, you have to be subordinate before them forever." My emphasis was, "You cannot change your customers but you can change yourself. Change your thinking and adjust your behavior by observing how others act toward you. Don't blame others and do not make an excuse for yourself because of this and that...blah blah blah. Stop it. That is a loser's perspective. I observe myself and others, so I can change myself quickly. Nobody taught me and spent time for my advancement. I had to learn from nothing, it helped me to read people's minds, not rely on their words but see the coherence of their message, staring, attitudes over time. You cannot get it [reading people's real message] without bumping into it. Reflect on yourself first and try to fix yourself. Do not let others control you with your mistakes." Not everybody received the essence of my criticism, yet some people who were shocked and awakened embraced it and changed themselves. *Unni* [Sister], I can make people change their perspective with my criticism because I do not say an empty word.

The point of Yeon-hwa's mutual criticism is to "change yourself," which is consistent with individualistic self-help discourse in Western countries. Over a decade of living in South Korea allowed Yeon-hwa to see how North Korean migrants are perceived and find practical ways to remove undue emotional labor by changing her own perspective, to try to control whatever she can control.

She criticized what she perceived as her co-workers' naïve and rigid egos, which contributed to their trouble fitting into the society.

Criticism was like a "short-cut" for some participants because it focused on problem-solving, giving each other different perspectives. I observed how criticism facilitated changes in how participants coped with emotional struggles among themselves. For instance, when Sun-hwa mistreated a new co-worker, Hye-ryong criticized Sun-hwa, rebuking her and directing her to work on her temper and change her attitudes. The next day, Sun-hwa confessed what she did was wrong and subdued her feelings so that her behavior would be socially appropriate within the North Korean community. Because criticism was embedded in their group dynamic, they naturally used it to correct each other.

Mutual criticism also addressed inner conflicts by helping participants to confront their reality, the root cause of struggles that they avoided. Some participants said that the authentic criticism helped reduce the severity or duration of their emotional struggles. For instance, Young-su reported a time when the source of criticism was his avoidance of real challenges:

Before working at the restaurant, I did not listen to my friends' advice. I thought they did not understand me. When I had financial difficulty and futilely attempted to avoid it, they criticized me, saying, "Your thinking is too low, lesser than an elementary school student. Then, how can you get married someday if you cannot manage yourself? Do not run away." I was shocked by their criticism because it revealed my hidden intention with precision. I planned to become a millionaire and return to my hometown in the unified Korea. Yet, they criticized my core fantasy by commenting on my irresponsible attitudes. Shame on me! Their comment shocked me and helped me to change my thinking, and it helped me to reduce inner struggle because of my resolution to encounter challenges. I found their authentic criticism was for my good. I realized real friends can make me uncomfortable because they know me and criticize me. South Koreans do not criticize or bring uncomfortable issues before me. They do not touch my concern, and relationships become superficial. Yet, I found the value of North Korean migrants' direct criticism to change my perspective.

He described how that criticism inspired changes by enabling him to see himself more clearly and thereby reduced his emotional struggles. In fact, mutual criticism allowed him to view his anxious avoidance tendency from a third-person perspective and to change his mental habits by confronting

reality. Although the process was painful, he acknowledged that the criticism was accurate. In this sense, mutual criticism allowed participants to confront their hidden inner conflicts and alter their perspectives to face the issues differently. The criticism helped participants to adjust their feelings, attitudes, and perspectives by moving beyond their comfort zone. Some participants described an increased sense of appreciation toward mutual criticism, which they could not find in South Korean culture, where, as Young-su commented, “sugar coat[ing] and indirect communication” are pervasive.

Not every mutual criticism was accepted or effective, largely because the practice can create uncomfortable moments of confrontations and tension at work, including violent language and actions (Cho, 2004; Jung, 2005). Direct expression has the potential to cause emotional harm by exposing people’s shame and insecurities. Participants, therefore, emphasized the importance of the quality of the relationship, the recipient’s preparedness, and the criticizer’s attitude. Some participants highlighted the importance of trust in relationship for the mutual criticism to be effective. Others reported that using criticism with someone who is not prepared can increase misunderstanding, hatred, anger, and even physical violence. As Won-chul said, “People generally hate confrontation and exposure of shame.” Others like Yeon-hwa underscored the preparedness of recipients: “People who have an arrogant mind or low self-esteem resist listening because they are not ready.” For this reason, she now criticizes only those who have “ears to hear.”

To avoid uncomfortable moments while criticizing, Young-su used humor:

I experimented and developed humor with the criticism. I read books, listen to lectures, and applied it to many people. People wanted to be accepted, so I listened to them first, and deliver[ed] criticism humorously, not to attack their mindset. It worked well with both North and South Koreans because it was a curveball. People saw me differently, well ... in a way more valuable than before.

Young-su refined ways of indirectly and humorously criticizing co-workers and social workers; as a result, he was more successful. He used the curveball as a metaphor for achieving the goal of the criticism by catching the other person off-guard. To summarize, mutual criticism is a cultural practice

that is applied among participants within their community to sharpen each other, to reduce emotional labor, and to change their perspectives and attitudes at work.

### **Summary**

To investigate how participants learned to manage their feelings to fulfill the emotional requirements of their jobs, I have analyzed data regarding participants' past and current workplace experiences interacting with co-workers, customers, and employers in South Korea. The analysis of transcripts and field notes allowed me to explore participants' experiences of discriminatory statements and behaviors, feeling rules, and emotional labor, including ways to enhance their sense of control within vulnerable situations. Participants' narrated stories and conversations revealed how they developed and applied interactive coping strategies such as appraising, storytelling, and criticizing to identify, share, release, and transform personal and communal struggles. The data I analyzed also indicated that participants developed a sense of inclusion and solidarity through exchange of their thoughts and emotions, critical reflections, and information, while at times enhancing negative feelings, such as distrust of South Koreans. Findings suggest that participants developed their emotional reservoirs through developing interactive coping strategies and adjusting their sense of belonging in the society.

## Chapter 7

### Learning to Cope in Social Enterprise

This chapter describes how social enterprise settings shaped workplace dynamics and the ways participants individually coped with customers. First, I examine social enterprises' hybrid identity manifested in mission statements and in physical and cultural artifacts. I then explore how social interactions took place through labeling symbolic artifacts. Last, I survey individual participants about how they cope in response to labeling. I found that the ways social enterprises exposed participants' status sharply contrasted with their proclaimed mission of aiding migrants' employment and learning.

#### **The Process of Labelling: Hybrid Identity and Organizational Artifacts**

Social enterprises are for-profit ventures that seek to solve social problems through business engagements (Dart, 2005; Zietlow, 2001). Establishing dual goals, social enterprises integrate multiple identities into a hybrid identity and express organizational character through physical artifacts (Moss, Short, Payne & Lumpkin, 2011; Whetten, 2006). Artifacts, such as wall plaques and T-shirts along with media stories, communicate enterprises' legitimacy by providing details about their socially desirable actions and contributions (Sarpong & Davies, 2014). However, these artifacts may also apply labels that reproduce stereotypes and stigma of beneficiary groups (Zetter, 1985). In this section, I investigate social enterprises' hybrid identity as described in their mission statements and communicated through organizational artifacts, which together establish legitimacy for the organization, while simultaneously branding participants along stereotypical lines.

**Hybrid identity in mission statements.** The social enterprises observed in this research study had established strong mission statements blending their dual identities: both “utilitarian” (i.e., business, product-oriented) and “normative” (i.e., social, people-oriented; Moss, Short, Payne & Lumpkin, 2011, p. 806), and articulated them in their symbolic and cultural artifacts (e.g., logos, certificates, flyers, and internet website) to establish legitimacy as a business. The following excerpts are from their mission statements included in the “who we are” sections of their pamphlets and websites, which focused on their core identity as actively engaging with migrants:

Pyongyang House: North Korean migrants suffer from the lowest income, unstable and temporal employment, and unemployment. We run restaurants and catering systems; we hire those migrants to train their workplace competencies through on-the-job training. By doing so, we manage sustainable businesses and help migrants to grow in entrepreneurship for tomorrow and future unification.

Jamboree Café: North Korean migrants’ maladjustment involves complex social problems. The primary issue originates from South Koreans’ ignorance and social bias; without changing this cultural problem, we should not expect to achieve unification. Secondly, migrants are part of this problem with their financial, mental, and family concerns. Many migrants depend on government basic livelihood security support and welfare aid. Meanwhile, they have less opportunity to develop workplace competency while suffering from PTSD and loneliness. Overarching issues with financial and family problems involve sending money for family support and bringing family in North Korea to the South. All these circumstances make migrants’ financial independence challenging. Acknowledging the current issue, we hire migrants to teach them how to fish rather than giving them fish. We provide on-the-job training to raise fishermen to boost migrants’ self-reliance in preparation for unification.

The mission statements incorporate both business and social orientations, a hybrid identity that distinguishes social enterprises from traditional ones. To advocate their utilitarian identity, the enterprises indicated “on-the-job training” and “running a business” to generate revenue. To promote their “normative” identity for positive social change, enterprises emphasized the altruistic aspects of hiring migrants (Moss, Short, Payne & Lumpkin, 2011). For these organizations, providing both economic and social values lead to their hybrid identity and defined their organizational legitimacy (Sarpong & Davies, 2014).



These mission statements label North Korean migrant populations as a marginalized group of beneficiaries. An analysis of hybrid identity reveals that instrumental rationales began with describing them as facing desperate circumstances such as “unemployment” and “maladjustment.” Articulating the importance of migrant workforce integration for the national agenda of “unification,” the social enterprises propose that the needs of migrants fall along predictable lines: jobs, training, and money, and identify the solutions: “training” and “workplace competency.” By decontextualizing migrant individuals, these statements categorize all migrant populations according to assumptions about their economic adjustment and through providing solutions that align with the national agenda (Zetter, 1985).

**Symbolic artifacts.** Social enterprises’ hybrid identity is demonstrated through symbolic and cultural artifacts to communicate organizational legitimacy in everyday workplaces (Pratt & Rafaeli, 2001, 2013; Zott & Huy, 2007). Organizational artifacts are designed products, such as decorations, booklets, flyers, and websites, that convey a specific organizational image to their stakeholders and customers (Gagliardi, 1990). The following excerpts from my field notes begin with my first impression at Pyongyang House and a description of the physical artifacts I noticed:

When I visited Pyongyang House, I found official certificates and sign boards that specified the place’s social purpose: ‘Social enterprise for North Korean migrants.’ I saw certificates issued by the Ministry of Unification and signboards with business logos and names of personal and institutional donors on the walls. These artifacts communicated the organizational social mission as one promoted by a collaboration across multiple sectors—government, corporations, and social enterprise. I was impressed seeing the proof of inter-sectoral collaboration which provided administrative and financial supports to run the business. (February, 21, 2018)

Pyongyang House Restaurant

- Shirts with enterprise logo
- Multiple pamphlets were displayed on the book shelves. Inside of a pamphlet, migrants’ interviews were printed with individual and group pictures.
- A signboard displayed several donors’ names.
- A certificate stamped by the Ministry of Unification proved this social enterprise has been authorized by the government since its founding year.
- Websites and Social Network Services

### Jamboree Cafés

- Apron with enterprise logo
- Cups and products with enterprise logo
- A poster promoting a unification concert was attached to the wall.
- A handwritten menu board displayed non-traditional Korean writings.
- A certificate stamped by the Ministry of Unification was displayed on the counter.
- Books and flyers about North Korean migrants on the bookshelves
- Websites and Social Network Services

The physical artifacts inscribed by the Ministry of Unification and the corporate logos promoted the social enterprises' legitimacy by indicating their administrative and financial associations with the government and corporations (Sarpong & Davies, 2014). For example, the government-issued certificates suggested that the current enterprises fulfilled official administrative requirements and that they had been approved to run a social business for the North Korean migrants. The logos from the major corporations and government administrations in Korea suggested for-profits' financial investment and administrative support to the social enterprise. These artifacts, which symbolically expressed cross-sector partnership, indicate that the social enterprises had reliable partners with financial and administrative supports. Indeed, certificates and logos physically manifest "legitimacy gained through ... the interplay of symbolic affiliation and ties" (Sarpong & Davies, 2014, p. 26).

Physical artifacts signaled evidence of participants' employment by a reliable organization. For instance, an ICBR pamphlet provided information about services and educational training the social enterprises had provided for migrant populations, conveyed with pictures and interview stories of migrant employees. In particular, pictures of smiling participants indicated an inclusive and dedicated organizational culture. In Jamboree, North Korea-themed posters and books on the shelves also signaled migrants' involvement. A hand-written menu board with informal Konglish writing contributed to a less commercial atmosphere and pointed to the participants' handiwork. These artifacts signaling the employment of migrants were located in places customers could readily access.

**Online technological environments.** Social enterprise marketing can generate business and social value (Srivetbodee, Igel & Kraisornsuthasinee, 2017). Although marketing is a business tool to maximize profit, social enterprise marketing can be used to educate customers by reminding them of social problems and call for action through purchasing their products. Published literature and government reports demonstrate that social enterprise marketing activities can produce multiple positive effects; therefore, social enterprises are encouraged to present their messages and unique value propositions to appeal to customers' desire to improve society (Dufays & Huybrechts, 2014; Mohammad, 2019; Shaw, 2004).

Social enterprises' hybrid identities also appeared in the online environment. Multiple actors (such as cross-sector partners, including government and corporations) independently published newspaper articles or reports about North Korean employment in social enterprises to advertise the businesses' social contributions. For example, when a customer typed a key term related to the social enterprises, it returned diverse online content (websites, newsletters, media releases, pictures, Social Network Service (SNS), and interviews) produced by stakeholders and third parties (such as broadcasting systems). The image below (Figure 6) is a simulated screen shot that I recreated to show the online environment displayed on the screen when I typed, "Pyongyang House" in a search bar:

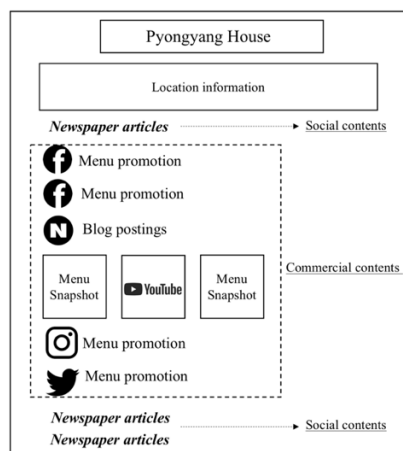


Figure 6. A simplified image of Google search for social enterprises employing North Korean migrants.

In an online environment, social enterprises presented their hybrid identities, their social mission and business purposes, through representations of multiple stakeholders; various people presented their connection to the social enterprises and indicated their cooperation in creating positive social change (Doherty, Haugh & Lyon, 2014; Dufays & Huybrechts, 2014). Social enterprises focused on commercial marketing and periodically updated their marketing flyers to blog postings, photographs, and video clips, with pictures of seasonal beverages and food for sale. Cross-sector partners, such as corporations and government administrations, advertised their involvement with socially responsible activities that promise to solve migrants' adjustment problems and advertised their business at the same time. These multiple types of online content seemed to affect customers' understanding of the social enterprises, including their opinions of North Korean employees. I will explore this impact further in a later section on customers' reactions.

**Cultural artifacts and themed storytelling.** Storytelling is one way to deliver entrepreneurial messages encapsulating the organizational mission and goals, as they align with cultural assumptions of their target audiences (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). In particular, using “stories about social problems ... featuring [a] social venture’s beneficiaries” (Roundy, 2014, p. 59) is considered a powerful method to influence audiences to make donations and confer legitimacy upon the social venture.

Storytelling in social enterprise, however, can produce and reproduce stereotyped images. Cultural artifacts, such as blog and newspaper postings about the North Korean employees, depicted personal stories and social circumstances reported to inspire the emergence of social enterprises; however, these narratives were grounded in stereotyping migrant populations. One of the newspaper excerpts about migrants and their stories in social enterprises gives this account:

Pyongyang House: Coming to South Korea, we live an isolated life. Receiving government welfare support causes us to be dependent on aid. Yet, working in Pyongyang House, we

found a fountain in the desert because we can learn how to support each other through work and become independent.

Jamboree cafés: North Koreans flee to the South alone and need a stable workplace to adjust their lives. Yet, it is hard for them to find a good place in South Korea, where your networks, credentials, and money matter. So Jamboree stretches wide, embracing arms to help us overcome social hurdles together.

The narratives featured in these venues underscore migrants' social and economic needs while highlighting the enterprises' heroic images.<sup>74</sup> For instance, North Koreans' lives in South Korea were depicted as a "desert" or filled with "hurdles," in contrast to enterprises that provided "fountains" and "embracing arms." These metaphors communicate the role of the social enterprises as a hero or savior to the migrants (Nicholson & Anderson, 2005). Such metaphors capitalize on emotional and cultural narratives and present the players, North Korean migrants and social enterprises, in stock roles (Nicholson & Anderson, 2005; Roundy, 2014). Online narrative messages in these examples reproduced dominant cultural narratives<sup>75</sup> to assert organizational legitimacy while reinforcing the marginalized position of migrants.

#### **Reactions to artifacts: Issues of hybrid identity, legitimacy, and stigmatization.**

Organizational artifacts are social and symbolic products that can stimulate multiple thoughts and behaviors of a social group in the workplace (Pratt & Rafael, 2001, 2013). Because they signal a type of association, artifacts function like a language for the group of people who share a similar cultural understanding. Consequently, artifacts can provoke conversations centering on organizational identity, legitimacy, and culture (Becky, 2008; Cappetta & Gioia, 2006; Fiol & O'Conner, 2006). The

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<sup>74</sup> Externally, online newspaper articles and blog postings created a snowball effect. That is, more informed domestic and international broadcasters visited the social enterprise restaurants to highlight refugees' adjustment. From the restaurant where I worked, I watched broadcasters and journalists visit more than six times during my fieldwork in 2018. I also identified 72 news releases between 2016 and 2018 that reported on the social enterprise. These journalists introduced stories such as host organizations' support for maladjusted migrants, overcoming prejudice, supporting migrants' self-reliance, and refugee entrepreneurship. This media coverage shows South Koreans' interest in hearing about North Koreans who receive aid and support from South Koreans.

<sup>75</sup> Chapter Five includes further descriptions of the cultural narratives and stereotypical images of North Koreans.

conversations, however, can diverge from the intended organizational messaging, because symbols are open to multiple interpretations and applications (Pratt & Rafael, 2013).

My data indicates that various artifacts, such as a certificate and a signboard, often initiated conversations about the organization's legitimacy and the status of its North Korean employees. The following excerpt, where I interviewed a regular café customer, illustrates how physical and symbolic artifacts (i.e., certificates issued by The Ministry of Unification, employees' pronunciation) evoked the customer's curiosity toward the participants after she learned about the social enterprise.

- Jinhee: How did you get to know about this enterprise?  
 Customer: I just got to know when I came to visit last year. I observed an atypical certificate and started to have curiosity. Listening to employees' pronunciation, I could guess what's going on here.
- Jinhee: Do you think other customers also know this information?  
 Customer: Of course, everybody knows. People around me found specific information about Jamboree through the internet search. This social enterprise hired North Koreans. I have tried to patronize this café because I have special curiosity and sympathy for their stories and want to help them. This is my first ever time to meet them beyond the television screen. I often watch television programs about North Koreans and think about their life in South Korea—how they live a lonely and isolated life in a foreign society, without having a family. I have a hope to see unification someday and hope to know more about them to support them better.
- Jinhee: Do you think you have a better understanding about them after coming to this café?  
 Customer: I don't think I had enough time to listen to their stories in China or North Korea. Yet, sometimes, I can feel they might get hurt from my questions when I asked them about their past experience. Well, I can assume that they may hurt a lot because of such questions. We South Koreans have prejudice against them and ask questions without checking our prejudice. One prejudice is that 'North Koreans have been indoctrinated by their regime and they are still under the influence.' Don't you know that?
- Jinhee: Do you mean they might have been indoctrinated by the communist ideology?  
 Customer: In general, South Koreans have concerns about dealing with North Koreans. Still, they might be indoctrinated one way or the other. We do not know how much communist ideology has been instilled on their mind. When I had a conversation with North Korean employees, other people around me asked me about them. 'How was your conversation?' 'Were you okay?' Because they were afraid to talk, they always asked about my dynamics with Northern employees. I think this business is important for them to have more opportunities in the South.

This interview excerpt indicated how a customer responded to the organizational social mission signaled by artifacts and sociocultural and historical contexts. Organizational meaning-making was perceived through cues from the environment. Beginning with an uncommon certificate stamped by the Ministry of Unification and employees' unfamiliar pronunciation, the customer fed her curiosity through an internet search. Being informed by and connected to the organizational narrative of "unification someday," she accepted the enterprise's legitimacy and became a regular customer as a way to participate in its stated mission. For this customer, organizational narratives informed by artifacts allowed her to "buy-in" to the organization's social goal. In this case, the symbolic artifact inspired the customer positively, as intended by the social enterprise to promote its business goal (Pratt & Rafaeli, 2001; Zott & Huy, 2007).

However, organizational artifacts do not always deliver what the enterprise intends to communicate to its customers. In particular, these artifacts aroused or reinforced prejudicial attitudes against participants. The customer described the North Korean populations as "isolated" and "lonely" people who might be still be "indoctrinated," indicating a social bias that affected her interactions with employees. The customer connected participants with biased views, both sympathetic and stigmatizing, that stemmed from her media consumption, and she applied her preconceptions to her interactions with North Korean employees (Choi, 2016; Green & Epstein, 2013). Indeed, symbolic artifacts reflected and manifested social meanings to Northern employees as "taken for granted as social facts"<sup>76</sup> (Fiol & O'Conner, 2006, p. 256).

Notably, not every customer reacted to North Korean employees with the special attention shown by the customer above. When I interviewed ten customers from both social enterprises (Jamboree Café and Pyongyang House), all customers acknowledged the social function of a business

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<sup>76</sup> Chapter Five includes further descriptions of the emotional requirements in customer service businesses.

that exclusively hired Northern migrant employees, yet half of them showed minimal or disinterested reactions to them. These customers paid attention to practical concerns such as low prices and accessibility. For these customers, neither social legitimacy nor North Korean employment were priorities.

**Participants' perceptions and reactions to artifacts.** Participants felt they were stigmatized with artifacts in on- and offline environments, which colored interpersonal dynamics. They were particularly sensitive to the fact that the promotion of organizational legitimacy focused on their status and attached this label to them. During my second participant observation at a restaurant in 2018, for instance, I had an opportunity to listen to Gwang-chul's hatred of the symbolic artifacts on the wall:

- Gwang-chul: Can you see the signboards [imprinted with logos from the Ministry of Unification and corporations]?
- Jinhee: It looks official and makes the place special!
- Gwang-chul: In the beginning for about six months, I hated to have these signboards on the wall because they evoked customers' curiosity and many asked me about the 'social mission' for us [North Koreans]. These artifacts are not a part of the interior décor. These are like a scarlet letter for us. Because I was stressed out, I imagined to detach, hide, or smash these on the wall.

The "scarlet letter" is a powerful metaphor to express Gwang-chul's sense of social stigmatization triggered by the artifact. The organizational signboard, which certified and showed the sponsors, made the participant feel exposed. Frequently, the artifacts placed him in situations where he had to explain what it meant to have the board with names and corporate logos on the wall and be included in their "social mission" with his marginalized status. He was saying that the signboard was like an identifying mark imprinted on him.

Similarly, Sung-ok compared these artifacts to a "coming-out" for the North Korean employees. She had often narrated her personal story to interested customers, who watched television programs and websites, visited the restaurant, and treated her with a shallow sympathy:

In the beginning, several broadcasting systems visited and shot [filmed] us multiple times as the symbol of unification. Customers and visitors who watched television came to the



restaurant and said the social enterprise members and donors were good and ethical groups because they helped us practically. Then, in the media we were portrayed as desperate people who should appreciate South Koreans. This gave me the idea that they [social enterprise] are creating a show to glorify their own names using us (North Koreans). I felt like I am a monkey in a zoo because customers treated as different people (outsiders).

The social enterprise's publicity in online media environments created a situation that made her feeling like a "monkey in a zoo" before strangers. She felt like she was displayed for the organization's marketing and sales because "anybody with a mobile phone can search the Internet, find her picture, and be informed by media releases." Once news postings were released, the impact went beyond the organizational control because "information was always tagged together."

The real problem of the publicity was the use of such articles to reinforce organizational "legitimacy consuming North Korean stigma," according to Sung-ok. Online newspaper articles released by broadcasting systems often embedded dramatic organizational narratives as "the symbol of unification" and showed "desolate migrants' stories and striking facts (e.g., North Korean migrants suicide rates and maladjusted cases)," intended to evoke emotional reactions. She was aware of the mechanism, how the social enterprise stigmatized North Koreans for the enterprises' own fame and reputation, which appealed to sponsors, donors, and customers. Consequently, she distrusted the organization and doubted the social enterprise's merit. The organizational image, affected by the on- and offline situations, changed participant-to-customers interactions, including their perception of the social enterprise.

Some participants perceived social enterprises as transactional organizations that traded on South Koreans' status to benefit South Koreans, not the ostensible beneficiaries, North Koreans. Participants expressed, implicitly and explicitly, that promoting the social image of the enterprise, either by artifacts or media postings, was equal to "selling their North Korean status." For this reason, En-shim considered, "Nothing is for free. A good-sounding enterprise can be even worse. They sell us to run a business." She noted that the cost for joining the social enterprise was having her stigmatized

status disclosed through her work environment. Some participants even questioned the enterprises' social mission: "South Koreans use us to make their own jobs and earn money. They sell us to get donations from the government and corporations. That is why showing such artifacts is important for them." This excerpt shows how participants could perceive the display of famous organizational logos.

With this background, the increase of social enterprises may indicate further vilifying North Koreans' image. Participants reported, "When social enterprises were celebrated, South Koreans (sponsors, donors, and social workers) received acclamation while we were stigmatized," because South Koreans performed a "social mission" targeting their "project." This notion was also present in an interview with one of the social workers. He felt that working at the social enterprise was like "eating opium everyday" because South Koreans, both in person and through the media, praised him for his participation in socially important work. These findings revealed a mismatch between the social mission to assist North Korean populations and the stigmatized experiences of participants because of the ways they were represented by the organizations through physical and online environments.

### **Labeled Identity and Individual Coping Strategies**

Workplace identity is a constant process of searching and answering for the connections between "who I am" and "how I am experienced by others" (Illeris, 2003; 2007; 2016). This identity can be susceptible to how outsiders perceive and respond to the organization (Gioia, Schultz & Corley, 2000). Because social enterprises reminded people of social problems caused by or connected with the beneficiary group, the promotion of normative identity (e.g., helping the marginalized) in social enterprises could reproduce dominant norms, thus perpetuating stereotypical images of

beneficiaries. For example, social justice programs for curing social problems could “compound the historic wrongs by rendering the targeted demographic categories more salient to all concerned” (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001, p. 43). Refugee populations, whose demographic label carries powerful political meanings, encounter filtered interactions grounded in norms and beliefs about refugees (Goffman, 1963; Zetter, 1991).

Research participants coped with stereotyped remarks in multiple ways: by embracing, avoiding, and resisting the suspicions and flawed beliefs they encounter (Goffman, 1963). Some participants accepted demographic labels following societal and organizational norms (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989). These participants aligned their workplace identity with the social status assigned by the social enterprise. Others decided to avoid the stereotypes and attempted to conceal their status through evasive remarks (DeJordy, 2008); some participants resisted the stigmatized notions by questioning and contesting unexamined thoughts and beliefs (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). Depending on individual attributes, such as characteristics and education or work backgrounds, reactions were varied. Each coping method demonstrated individual values and priorities, reflecting that person’s social and cultural environment.

**Embracing: “I am a North Korean.”** Participants who decided to embrace the label accepted dominant narratives and stereotyped images. In the following excerpt, when a customer asked about the government logo on the wall, Hwan-chul responded that he was from North Korea. Based on his past work experiences, Hwan-chul noticed that providing honest reactions, aligned with the organizational mission, would emotionally benefit him. One day, I observed Hwan-chul’s coping strategy in his interactions with a customer:

Customer:	<i>[Indicated a signboard on the wall]</i> Why do you have the Ministry of Unification here? I do not understand.
Hwan-chul:	<i>[Hesitant look]</i> Because we are from North Korea. This is a social enterprise to support our adjustment with the help of government and corporations.

- Customer: [Furious look] Why should we support you? We have to support poor South Koreans first. I cannot understand this [annoyed look].
- Hwan-chul: Oh, please. [Pleading facial expression] We came here to avoid famine and poverty in North Korea. My parents passed away because of starvation. Although we [North Koreans] came here to make a living, we do not have any money, networks, and skill to survive in South Korea. Please, be our regular customers and help our financial independence.

When the Ministry of Unification logo inspired customers to ask a question, Hwan-chul echoed the narratives that the social enterprise promoted to establish its legitimacy and encourage sponsors. As “please” and “help” signaled his coping, he played the role of a North Korean deserving pity, narrating challenges like famine, poverty, and survival on behalf of fellow North Koreans, a role that was also written in the pamphlets and websites. Later in his interview, he told me such interactions occurred “more than ten times per week for about six months in the beginning” and expressed some internal conflict with this cumbersome role; however, now he felt “okay” because he accepted the role and shared from a place of authenticity. Not only did Hwan-chul embrace the dominant organizational narrative but he also ended up reproducing the given message.

Eight participants answered that “naked-status” (enforced coming out as North Koreans) in social enterprises allowed them to feel “relieved” and “comforted” because they could align their workplace identity to the social status which they reported hiding in the previous workplaces. In other circumstances, North Korean migrants often disguised their status and suffered from a dissonance between their fake identity (e.g., *Gangwon-do* person) and their identities. For instance, Won-chul found that remaining “authentic” about himself and others helped him to avoid concerns arising from a fake identity:

Many, many migrants attempt to hide their status. I fully understand that because that was my reaction and how I felt. How South Koreans look at us, treat us, and talk to us makes us hide our status. Yet, it is hard to lie every time at work. This is particularly true when we have conversations. We do not have shared common reference points and shared cultural experience about the society so it is hard for us to maintain typical conversations. For example, when people talk about their hometown like Pusan, they share stories about Pusan. Then, I have to talk about my fake hometown, which I never visited. This makes me afraid to

be uncovered. I found there is no common ground for us to talk together in typical situations. For me, it is apparent that I cannot perfectly hide my status; staying authentic made me feel better. This social enterprise is a place to practice to be myself in South Korea.

Won-chul determined to accept his North Korean status in South Korea after confronting numerous conflicting situations; he realized that hiding his background is not only challenging due to insufficient social knowledge but also creates the emotional labor of having a “fake” identity. After assessing the emotional cost of hiding his status and his past efforts to pretend to be South Korean, he accepted who he was. In this regard, social enterprise settings helped him to be a North Korean with less internal dissonance. This is particularly true for Kyung-ok, who had been in South Korea for two months and had joined the social enterprise as her first workplace. She reported feeling “comfortable” because she could stay honest about her cultural ignorance and receive support from co-workers who understood her situation. Without feeling oppressed or treated like a primitive person, she naturally acquired linguistic and workplace literacy.

Unlike Hwan-chul, some participants developed their own meanings of living as “real” North Koreans. Being a migrant at work helped Yeon-hwa to develop her original North Korean identity as distinct from the socially defined image. The following excerpt presents the thought process Yeon-hwa had at the social enterprise. Here, Yeon-hwa drew on her past experiences to develop her own meanings while confronting customers each day:

One day after work, I realized we were suppressed in the workplace not only because of others but also because of my own perspective as a North Korean based on other’s opinions. Then, I lost my confidence as if I was nobody. Then, I reflected about my past situations, who I am and how I survived in North Korea and China in the midst of wilderness and political hostility. I should not forget what I went through and not lose heart. Otherwise, I would consider myself too small and fragile in South Korea society. This place helped me to practice my Northern identity by distancing myself from deceiving myself and others. I do not need to worry about escaping from myself.

In a social enterprise where Northern status was not hidden, Yeon-hwa felt she could be authentic with her North Korean identity. By pondering her past traumatic circumstances as a real

North Korean migrant, she could construct deeper and richer meanings about who she was. Constructing her own meaning of her North Korean identity, helped her to overcome many emotional requirements of customer service work (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Similarly, three men participants, who had spent about a decade in South Korea before coming to the social enterprise, felt relieved because at the social enterprise they could stop lying about their status and learn to be themselves.

**Passing: “Please change how you call me.”** To avoid problematic labeling, some participants attempted to resist remarks focused on their North Korean identity when they could neither change external conditions nor remove organizational artifacts. These participants rejected publicizing their label, while developing anxieties as a consequence of internally accepted labels (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). Eight participants told or showed these conflicting behaviors by acting like “South Koreans.” For instance, Sung-hee recommended me to change how I called her in public spaces so that she would not appear to be a beneficiary:

- Sung-hee: Do not call me a manager. Call me *i-mo* (aunt).  
 Jinhee: What do you mean?  
 Sung-hee: People get to know about this place when they search the internet. Then, they might consider me a North Korean migrant. If you call me as a manager here in this restaurant, people must think I am a North Korean, which I really hate to reveal. Call me aunt; then customers see me as kitchen *assuma* (a middle-aged married woman), a part-time worker. Jinhee, you just call me *i-mo*.  
 Jinhee: Okay.  
 Sung-hee: I do not want to reveal I am a North Korean. That does not help me to adapt in this place. Everybody can get to know who I am because of these artifacts or with a simple internet search. I hate it.  
 Jinhee: Were you aware of this before coming to social enterprise?  
 Sung-hee: Yes. It was already known to all migrants’ community. So, I through a lot before coming here, whether to join this social enterprise or not. I hate to be known as a migrant. Even my neighborhood considers me as South Korean.

According to Sung-hee, the social enterprise was already notorious among migrants for exposing their migrant status. To avoid negativity in interpersonal encounters from labeling, Sung-hee wanted to change her public designation to “*I-mo*” (aunt). She believed that as long as she

successfully concealed her North Korean pronunciation and attitudes, she could avoid suspicious looks and unwanted attention because North Koreans and South Koreans “looked alike.”

Hye-ja and two other participants, however, demonstrated different motivations for disguising their identity, centered on a pragmatic purpose: business training. They wanted to receive training and treatment equal to typical South Koreans in order to compete in the job market. For these participants, marketing focused on social missions was less realistic.

I don't agree with social branding. That cannot attract customers. If we can operate a real restaurant, then people would come and visit. I am here to learn about real business in daily routines. I want to open such a competitive restaurant. So I should learn as a typical employee, not as a North Korean migrant. I am developing my skills and learning to provide service to South Koreans. This is my practice. This daily routine is a process to achieve my goal of opening a shop one day.

Hye-ja joined the social enterprise to manage her own business. For her, learning as a “typical employee” was important to achieve her goal to open a “competitive restaurant” one day. In this regard, she valued places where she could learn about “routines” to practice and train her professional skills. “Promoting [the business's] social mission,” however, sometimes prevented her from exploring the job as an ordinary employee; for her, the label attracted inappropriate attention and deprived her of the opportunity to experience a “typical” work environment. These participants criticized the structure of social enterprises, which “destroy[s] much of what they wish to support and undermine[s] the identities they wish to sustain” (Zetter, 1988, p. 106) as a consequence of institutionalized labels.

**Resisting: “I am here to teach ignorant South Koreans.”** Six participants attempted to correct misinformed South Koreans, directly confronting their ignorance and superficial, biased knowledge with the goal of resisting and changing South Koreans' perspectives. These participants not only resisted inappropriate images created by labeling but also fought stigmas by denying bigoted expectations and challenging false generalizations. Sun-wha was one of six participants who considered herself a converter:

- Jin-hee: You are saying that you are confident to reveal your background, right?
- Sun-hwa: I am confident about myself. If somebody asks me about my nationality, I say I am from North Korea. Why not? What is my fault? My parents are North Koreans and that is why I am North Korean. What is wrong with me? That is who I am and my identity. I do not want to hide it. You know why I try to serve people well? I want to tell them that I am different from what you think about migrants. So, I intentionally express and expose my North Korean identity. I want to break people's bias. I have a different accent and hometown, but that does not mean I am nobody in South Korea. I may not be able to break all South Koreans' social bias against North Koreans, yet I want to convert people to think that some migrants are good people who are different from what they thought. In the social enterprise, which displays my identity, I want to earn both money and people. I want to create an atmosphere of reconciliation in my workplace.

In this interview excerpt, Sun-hwa used the verb “convert” to indicate her intention to influence her customers as an example of a “good” North Korean. Claiming that her demographic identity is a given one because her birth in North Korea was neither her choice nor her fault, Sun-hwa contested existing norms about migrants and specified her goals to create a counter-image to persuade her customers.

One label that some participants attempted to break was a generalized bias against them as government-dependent “tax consumers.” Participants like Sae-bom endeavored to change customers' thinking by contesting their assumptions:

- Customer: You are a North Korean migrant. Return home. If we help you, we will be poor.
- Sae-bom: Why do you think in that way? We do not receive your money. The world runs with its own principle. You earn money and use it for yourself. Each individual makes and spends money for oneself. South Korea may want something from North Korea and invest money to earn something. Do you believe South Korea government helps North Korea with a pure heart?
- Customer: Because of YOU (North Koreans), we must pay more taxes!
- Sae-bom: We pay taxes too! Why do you think we consume your tax? Three hundred million won for the initial adjustment? We have paid more taxes than that since we have arrived in South Korea. We earn money and pay taxes, just like you do. We did not receive your money. We received government money. Also, why do you think we use your taxes? Tax is used for citizens. We only received a tiny little portion in the beginning. Don't be mistaken!
- Customer: Because of YOU are coming and increasing in number, we have more tax burden.



Sae-bom: I never received your support. You paid for your food and that is it. You make money for yourself and I do the same thing here. I came here as a grown up and make my living by my hands.

This excerpt from Sae-bom and her customer's debates shows how some customers treated her with bias (see Chapter Five); in this example, a customer categorized Sae-bom as a tax consumer and poured out her discontent with North Korean migrants for their government welfare support. Since Sae-bom frequently found herself as the target of customers' opinions about migrants as a group, she attempted to correct the customer's bias and misinformation by using the same economic logic and sharing her own experience of diligent labor and tax contributions. Categorizing herself as a fellow citizen, she countered the customer's rationales straightforwardly.

Sae-bom further criticized the customer in her semi-structured interview:

Such jerks believe we spent their money. What a fabulous idea! Did they feed us? It is not that I am good at arguments. What I am saying is right. Did I receive their money? When they give to us? Directly? Whatever happens, here in South Korea, they all blame on us. This is a capitalist society and nothing is for free. Nobody is free from the web of interests and South Korea gives us to receive something from us. Honestly, I appreciate that South Korea accepted me, yet I am not apologetic for anything. I make money and pay tax. I participate in fair business play and I have dignity.

Sae-bom and the other participants were aware of the label that categorized all North Korean migrants as "recipients," "beneficiaries," "free-riders," and "beggars." In the excerpt from the interview, Sae-bom created a counter-argument grounded in her intention to "convert" her customers and influence their opinions as a good representative. Claiming her birth in North Korea was neither her choice nor her fault, Sae-bom contested existing ideas about North Korean migrants and specified her goals to affect customers from the social enterprise where she could openly interact with customers.

**Summary**

I have examined organizational artifacts, mission statements, and physical and cultural artifacts to determine how social enterprises' work environments affected participants' social interactions. I have underscored how a hybrid identity, which enabled social enterprises to establish organizational legitimacy, caused participants to be categorized with their stigmatized social status. The observational data at social enterprises and participants' interviews showed how participants perceived the symbolic artifacts. The findings also revealed how each participant established their own coping strategy by embracing, passing, or resisting North Korean stereotypes. Furthermore, the data I collected demonstrates how participants developed their knowledge of self by confronting social labeling and stigma.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

In this study, I addressed how and what North Korean migrants learn in their service work at the social enterprise cafés and restaurants of South Korea. Specifically, I examined participants' workplace experiences where they applied their cultural practices for learning, memorization and *nunchi*, and developed multiple coping strategies to overcome workplace challenges. This chapter consists of (1) summary, (2) implications, (3) limitations and recommendations for future research, and (4) significance. I have provided suggestions for applications for research and practice.

### Summary

The findings in Chapter Five revealed how participants learned to work and collaborate with South Koreans in social enterprise workplaces. Social interactions exposed participants' non-native status and induced shame and humiliation because they were considered incompetent. In such circumstances where their differences were stigmatized, participants learned to imitate South Koreans in their communication and public behaviors. As such, migrant workforce learning in social spaces must consider contextual dimensions of learning beyond skill acquisition. As migrants construct and reconstruct their social positions, discussion of their learning must involve emerging coping strategies and identity formation as part of their invisible labor in a new market economy.

Unlike other workplaces where participants felt pressure to perform like South Koreans, the social enterprises featured in this study provided unique opportunities for them to hold and express their North Korean identity and to do so in the company of other North Korean migrants. The findings in Chapters Six and Seven attend to the sociocultural working environment where participants' status

was overtly on display. Data from participants' stories and my fieldnotes described South Koreans' discriminatory statements and behaviors toward participants because of their North Korean nationality. Despite the ways that they experienced social engagement in frontline service workplaces as oppressive, some participants developed ways to manage feeling rules through interactive coping strategies either among fellow migrants or with customers. North Korean participants managed the emotional requirements of the workplace by either confirming or resisting deficit views of North Koreans. This study provides North Korean participants' perspectives about the social dynamics of workplaces where being a North Korean migrant, with its attendant sociocultural and political meanings, was part of the business model. Although emotional labor is a salient part of work, involving identity and coping strategies, the challenges of emotionally laden employment are not acknowledged in the job descriptions.

## **Implications**

**Social interactions of migrant workforce in South Korea workplaces.** Transnational migrants encounter linguistic and cultural challenges in their social adjustment in a host society (OECD, 2019a). Language proficiency is a prerequisite for migrant workforce integration (Brell, Dustmann & Preston, 2020; Szkudlarek, 2019). Migrants frequently encounter challenges and obstacles in their workplace communication (De Fina & King, 2011; Warriner, 2016). Their foreign accents and intonations (de Souza, Pereira, Camino, de Lima & Torres, 2016) also can create misunderstandings and difficulties with customers. Research participants encountered communication difficulties with their dialectal usage, including foreign loan-words and insufficient common knowledge in pragmatic, semantic and subject matter discussions. For instance, participants reported that their use of the same words with different connotations and meanings (e.g., "bomb" as weapon or

clearance sale) confused them, as did terms with opposing interpretations. Participants used pronunciation with a strong and high pitch sounds that were interpreted as aggression, creating tensions and affecting interpersonal relationships. The lack of language proficiency introduced miscommunication and functional problems in their jobs. Indeed, participants' communication was a challenge in everyday workplace interactions (Jung, 2017; Cho & Jung, 2006). This study confirms previous findings on North Korean migrants' language difficulties and communication barriers (Ahn & Kim, 2015; Bea, 2013; Chung & Cho, 2008; Kown, 2014) and supports the body of literature on migrant workforce integration and adjustment challenges (Szkudlarek, Nardon, Osland, Adler & Lee, 2019), particularly with respect to North Korean migrants' interactions with South Korean supervisors, co-workers, and customers.

Participants' challenges and opportunities are unique and different than those of most other ethnic migrants. They had to overcome the linguistic and cultural gaps developed over 70 years in two opposing ideological systems. Although language variation is common when two speech communities have minimal contact over a period of time (Kerswill & Williams, 2002), the case of the Korean peninsula is exceptional because the two nations follow contesting political and cultural systems (Lee, 1990; Song, 2001) that defined each other as the enemy, as subjects to conquer and reclaim. Adaptability, personality and mental acuity, ignorance and social bias, all are involved in solving the issues of North Korean migrants' acclimation to South Korean life (Cho, Son & Choi, 2020; Cho, 2004; Lee, 2013).

Social discourse, principally media and newspaper reports, shaped participants' social interactions in their customer service roles. Participants believed that some South Koreans treated them as representatives of North Korea, their opinions informed by media outlets and projecting their own political agendas and bias that led to discriminatory behaviors. Although sociopolitical and cultural climates have great impact on migrant workforce adjustment (Mai, 2005; Szkudlarek, Nardon,

Osland, Adler & Lee, 2019), particularly in service-based vocations (Baranik, Hurst & Eby, 2018), and numerous studies address institutionalized social bias and issues of systematic discrimination on North Korean migrants (Choo, 2006; Chung, 2008; Hough & Bell, 2020; Kim & Hocking, 2018), few scholars have examined face-to-face interactions at work. My work extends knowledge concerning North Korean migrant workforce integration.

Participants developed practical skills for everyday work requirements. Tensions and conflicts became a source of learning, as they used workday interactions to memorize, understand, and negotiate linguistic gaps. Research participants learned to distinguish differences in dialectic meanings, pronunciations, and interpretations by mimicking South Korean speech and applying their new skills in their conversations. As a result, participants benefited from co-ethnicity and common language use by increasing their communication proficiency, an advantage that distinguishes them from non-Korean ethnic populations in South Korea. Despite dissimilar physical conditions (e.g., lower height and weight) between South and North Koreans due to different lifestyles and nutritional factors (e.g., Schwekendiek, 2009), ethnic Koreans look relatively alike in their skin and hair color. Those similarities enhanced participants' potential to avoid social stigma once they adapted South Korean behavior and increased social belonging and mobility (Kim & Hocking, 2018; Lee, 2013).

**Cultural learning through memorization and *nunchi*.** I introduced the concept of cultural repertoires of practice (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Swidler, 2001) to explain how participants increased their learning by drawing upon their cultural heritage. Cultural repertoires are used to explain the practices of memorization and *nunchi* to enhance learning to avoid prejudice and stigma.

Memorization (Tan, 2015) was an effective learning method used by participants to fill gaps in knowledge. Scholarly literature and autobiographies and testimonies of North Korean migrants (Jenkins & Frederick, 2009; Jung, 2020; Kim, 2006; Lee, 1999; Lee, 2019; Shin, 2015; Lee, 2014; Shin, 2015) address memorization as North Korean pedagogical practice intended to shape citizens'

minds according to the monolithic political and philosophical ideology. Although it is known that North Korean students use memorization in higher education contexts (Lee, 2014; Shin, 2015), few empirical studies have been conducted to examine how those migrants apply memorization to workplace learning. Kim's and Rousseau's (2019) research has shown that memorization at work can be helpful, but no one has yet linked such actions to broader cultural repertoires of practices that distinguish these migrants from others.

Participants used their memorization skills to acquire unfamiliar technical terms and vocabulary to fulfill job requirements. They took notes and orally repeated new vocabulary, foreign loan words, and technical terms for everyday applications. As a result, some participants gave exceptional customer service. These participants remembered customers' characteristics and business-related information, such as customer tastes and previous conversations, to serve with a friendly disposition. They reported that memorization was a natural and integral part of their learning practice in North Korea and China, which naturally emerged in South Korea.

Participants also used *nunchi* to expedite their learning of socially appropriate behaviors. *Nunchi* literally means eye-measure or "reading the eyes" in South Korean contexts (Kalton 1979). An indigenous cultural concept in East Asian Confucian countries (Robertson, 2019) where collectivistic cultures and high-context communication are pervasive (Heo, Park & Kim, 2012; Yim, 2017), *nunchi* is employed to perceptively interpret other people's minds and use the information to manage situations (Robertson, 2019). For example, in a study of nursing students in South Korea, students were expected to learn and use *nunchi* in their hidden curriculum to confirm institutional hierarchies for professional socialization (Sim & Bang, 2019). Those with high *nunchi* are quick at fitting in by observing implicit and situational cues and instructed to use *nunchi* in emergent situations (Heo & Park, 2013). Although the notion of *nunchi* has appeared in South Korean scholarship related to nursing education, psychology, communication, and international business (Lee & Yang, 2019;

Robertson, 2019; Sim & Bang, 2019), there is no literature addressing *nunchi* in migrants' learning at work, where it plays a particularly important role given their marginalized social position.

Participants considered *nunchi* to be their survival tool, and they previously employed it as a culturally embodied learning strategy (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Swidler, 2001) during their survival journeys in North Korea and China. Participants described their struggle for survival as “consuming *nunchi* like daily meals,” indicating their unique learning pattern in China when they had illegal status. Similar to how they used memorization to expedite their learning, participants employed *nunchi* to accelerate their language acquisition and deliver service to satisfy South Koreans. These participants often shared stories of how they used *nunchi* to maximize their tip opportunities and “read the customer’s mind” in table-serving situations.

Some participants described *nunchi* as a barrier to learning because of the different ways of engaging business in South Korea, which conflicted with their prior cultural frames of reference in North Korea and China (Jeon, 2000). For instance, one participant gave an example of bribing as a way to do business in North Korea, which was illegal in South Korea. Instead of using *nunchi*, those participants attempted to directly approach people and embraced the experiences of tensions and mistakes as ways to improve their learning of social norms and culture.

I argue that participants developed unique learning patterns that facilitated and catalyzed their workforce integration through a self-directed approach. North Korean migrants learned culturally specific strategies (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Swidler, 2001), giving empirical evidence about participants' use of memorization and *nunchi* to accelerate their workforce integration and service provision. Some scholars (Ryoo, 2006; Yoo, 2012) claim that migrants learning in South Korea are severely oppressed because their social locations are shaped by peripheral trajectories (Lave & Wenger, 1991) at the margins of society and denial experiences, also conditioned by prejudices and stereotypes in institutional and social spaces. Others (Cho, 2004; Jeon, 2000; Kim & Rousseau, 2019;



Lee, 2013; Yoo, 2012) identified North Korean migrants' cultural frames of reference as barriers to new learning due to prior negative political and psychological effects that cause conflict with their new environment. Acknowledging North Korean migrants' unique forms of participation and their past social and educational journey across borders, the analysis revealed participants' active use of agency and prior survival skills (Kim, 2014) to adapt and overcome challenges under oppressive circumstances.

North Korean migrants' cultural repertoire is an integral part of catalyzing their learning. This observation challenges Lankov's (2006) claim that the skills migrants use to cross borders are useless in the South Korean market economy. Additionally, this research calls Bidget's (2009) descriptions of North Koreans' "low social capital and their poor work integration" (p. 175) into question. North Korean migrants developed learning strategies to maximize their survival in a new society, particularly in the workplaces. Participants' narratives and demonstrations of their learning skills indicate that North Korean migrants' learning has been under-investigated in the context of workforce integration.

The body of literature on migration studies (Gordon, 1995; Shepherd, Saade & Wincent, 2020; Siriwardhana, Ali, Roberts & Stewart, 2014; Vue, 2019) and studies on North Korean migrants (Kim, Cho & Kim, 2015; Lim & Han, 2016) indicates migrants' resilience as a way to overcome substantial and persistent adversity. Resilience is the ability to enhance one's competences and mastery of skills in adverse situations in many cultural backgrounds (Gordon, 1995; Alessi, 2016; Lusk, Terrazas, Caro, Chaparro & Puga Antúnez, 2019; Sossou, Craig, Ogren & Schnak, 2008). North Korean participants often demonstrated how they drew upon all available resources (e.g., cognitive, cultural, and environmental) and applied memorization and *nunchi* in their social interactions for successful workforce integration.

**Workplace learning in the context of emotional labor and coping strategies.** Workplace learning occurs in a social space and involves complex inner processes characterized by a sense of vulnerability, inclusion and exclusion, and identity work. Because knowledge and practice are socially constructed, newcomers undergo continuous changes in their interactions as a consequence of adjusting to a new social environment. As such, participants encountered emotional and cognitive challenges in a new sociocultural environment, and these encounters induced “capacity change” (Illeris, 2007, p. 3), which is another way of saying learning.

The findings of the current study further explain how those capacity changes occur through the experience of negative emotions. Encountering workplace tensions that induced anxiety, confusion, struggles, and humiliation related to feelings of exclusion and otherness, participants perceived that they were disconnected from the social world (Chodorow, 1999; Dirkx, 2001). Emotion, then as a kind of intelligence which allowed participants to discern (Nusbaum, 2001) and inspired them to make judgments (Solomon, 2007), helped them to access their relationship with society, deconstruct existing meanings and beliefs from their prior social contexts, and create new meanings in a new social context by engaging with learning and development (Dirkx, 2001). For instance, participants broke their sense of One-Korea ethnic-nationalism (Shin, 2006; Shin, Freda & Yi, 1999) as they encountered tensions and troubles in their new world and adjusted their understanding based on their sociocultural environment. As such, the negative emotion inspired and allowed participants to start questioning and confronting their previous beliefs, leading to new learning.

In this sense, migrants’ ways of coping with emotional labor showed how they learned to manage negative emotional experiences by renegotiating their sense of identity and belonging (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993, 1995). When participants encountered prejudice depicting them as enemies, uneducated, sexual objects, and lower-class people, for instance, they were embarrassed,

humiliated, and furious. Such negative emotional experiences related to their outsider status led participants to develop individual and interactive coping strategies to control and manage situations. These personal and collective coping strategies can be consistently found among migrated populations, immigrants, and displaced refugees, and help them to foster sources of instrumental and emotional support (Alemi & Stempel, 2018; Cole, Bruschi & Tamang, 2002). Embracing, passing, and resisting were individual coping strategies that they used in relationships with their customers. Interactive coping strategies, namely appraising, storytelling, and criticizing, helped participants to identify and negotiate their personal and communal struggles and to develop a sense of inclusion and solidarity through critical reflection and changes in perspective.

One distinct coping strategy found among participants was mutual criticism, in which they corrected each other by intentionally provoking negative emotions. Participants applied mutual criticism in their interactive learning and coping practices to facilitate changes in their perspectives and behaviors that would help them to fit in and understand their new social context. Scholars who interpret North Korean migrants' criticism practice and direct communication as a deficit, for example, by focusing on how these communicative practices can lead to miscommunication and interpersonal problems (Bea, 2013; Chung & Cho, 2008; Kown, 2012, 2014), fail to recognize how those migrants use criticism as a learning approach rooted in a common cultural repertoire (Swidler, 2001). Based on the data, I argue that the criticism does not uniformly disadvantage North Korean migrants, but instead serves as a cultural, interactive, and distinctive way of learning to enhance reflective thinking, new insights, and interpretations which would not be identifiable without their community.

Participants developed knowledge about South Korean society and about themselves. Through the complex process of negotiating conflict, failure, frustrations, and experiences of prejudice and social exclusion, participants individually and interactively constructed, deconstructed,

and reconstructed knowledge of self and society. Although experiencing negative emotions is a natural and integral part of learning, and developing coping strategies pertains to meaning making (Bierema, 2008; Clark & Dirkx, 2008), adult education lacks attention to negative emotions in the context of learning (Dirkx, 2001, 2006, 2008).

**Implication for policies concerning social enterprises.** My research found a conundrum: social enterprises that intended to support participants also produced and reproduced social bias and stigma. Social enterprises in physical and online environments, including their symbolic and cultural artifacts, can attach labels to a beneficiary group that influences their social interactions. This is particularly problematic in social enterprise workplaces where beneficiaries and customers interact face to face; consequently, social enterprises must carefully scrutinize how their promotion of organizational identity may contribute to labeling and stigmatizing intended beneficiaries. By promoting organizational identity, social enterprises in this study contributed to reproducing bias against North Korean migrants and their social exclusion. Exposure of their migrant status, by either themselves or social enterprises, was found to provoke social bias (e.g., hostility, exclusion, sexualizing comments and actions, and patronizing attitudes) and shape participants' feeling rules and coping strategies.

Social entrepreneurs and social workers must consider the workplace conditions that trigger customer's reactions and recognize the consequences for the populations they claim to benefit. Social enterprises need to hire knowledgeable and empathetic staff who understand beneficiaries' situations and are willing to make an effort to build mutual trust before prioritizing short-term business benefits. Cunningham's (1993) questions about who benefits from and shapes adult education are also relevant to social enterprises. Who profits (financially and socially) from social enterprises' endeavors? Who profits from what North Korean migrants do? Who loses? Who makes decision in these processes?

The social enterprise literature is inadequate in exploring how beneficiaries perceive their workplace environments and social interactions that potentially marginalize them. North Korean migrants are a stigmatized population in South Korea in sociocultural and political contexts (Um, Chi, Kim, Palinkas & Kim, 2015), suffer from post-traumatic symptoms and depression and suicidal attempts (Han, Chung, Kim, Lee & Kim, 2020), and experience integration challenges at work (Cho, Son & Choi, 2020). Paradoxically, social enterprises show little sign of concerning themselves with beneficiaries' characteristics and challenges, even though they are situated within a historical context and hierarchical attitudes in South Korea that can affect the groups' social interactions in service work. The relevance of labeling and victimizing beneficiaries through media exposure and narrative storytelling has not been clearly elucidated (Mohammad, 2019). Policy makers, practitioners, and other stakeholders who make decisions that affect North Korean migrants should ensure that their perspectives are included.

### **Implications for Future Research.**

In this study, I employed Illeris's (2004) learning theory and Hochschild's (1979, 2012) notion of emotional labor to analyze emotional labor as an integral part of learning and identity work (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). The findings contribute to these theories by showing how participants used diverse and embodied coping strategies, which takes the theory beyond the psychological approach of deep acting and shallow acting. Both Illeris's and Hochschild's models, however, are grounded in a Western tradition of seeing learning and emotion, respectively, as individualistic phenomena, and explain how individuals autonomously learn to cope with structural challenges. Grandey's (2000) model includes organizational factors that account for co-workers' and supervisors' actions to alleviate emotional labor, but lacks connections with individual coping.

The North Korean participants in my study, however, developed interactive and communal ways of coping with their emotional challenges and identity construction, showing evidence of deep acting, for instance through storytelling (Bruner, 1991) or mutual criticism. This learning may reflect the collectivistic learning approach in North Korea (Choi, 2019) as well as their minority background in South Korea (Kramer, 1998, 2001). Neither adult learning theory nor emotional labor as theoretical frameworks can account for how groups of individuals and their group solidarity might foster or hinder each other's learning. Future research should explore further non-Western perspectives on adult knowing and learning (Merriam, 2007; Preece, 2011) and forge theories of interdependence and communal ways of learning within communities rather than continuing to focus on autonomous, independent, individual learners.

I explored mis-learning, non-learning, and unlearning to explain North Korean migrants' workplace learning. Unlike Illeris' (2004) conception of unlearning as subconscious realm of avoiding painful and traumatic experiences, many participants considered their integration to be connected to learning strategies acquired through past survival circumstances, such as *nunchi* and memorization. The current study engages this idea in relation to resilience (Gordon, 1995; Alessi, 2016) and cultural repertoires (Swidler, 2001). The notion of unlearning among adults can be further deepened through research with people who have experienced multiple traumatic and high-risk situations, such as migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, and how they use their skills for survival. Future research can explore the relationship among mis-learning, non-learning, and unlearning in relation to workplace learning on adult at-risk learners

Two aspects of this study have implications for scholars conducting research with vulnerable populations, such as migrants and refugees. First, research with vulnerable populations (Campbell, Adams, Wasco, Ahrens & Sefl, 2009; Halabi, 2005) has parallels with this study of North Korean migrants. Participants in this research project had their unique assumptions, doubts, and suspicions

grounded on their own experiences of research (Jeon, 2000). This resulted in challenges in data collection as well as gaining a better understanding of researching participants. Additionally, I had to adjust my study methodology after the initial pilot study during the last two years of study. Before conducting research, it is important to understand the existing geopolitical situation and research ecosystem that affected North Korean migrants' research experiences and perceptions about researchers.

Second, researchers' self-care is crucial. A researcher taking an ethnographic approach must consider their own human needs during the research process and consider the emotional consequences of working with vulnerable populations (Rager, 2005; Watts, 2008). Listening to participants describe their challenges and experiences of hatred and mistreatment by South Koreans allowed me to understand their perceptions; however, my emotional involvement led me to experience secondary trauma. My fieldwork experience raises important questions for future researchers: How can researchers prepare and protect themselves from emotional burnout throughout the research process? What kinds of anticipatory emotional support and psychological training do researchers need in working with marginalized groups?

Historically, critical adult education scholars have examined how marginalized groups experience and learn to resist systematic oppression and deficit discourses that undermine their well-being. However, adult education scholarship has paid less attention to the role of emotions in adult learning in everyday lives (Dirkx, 2001, 2006). This Cartesian dualism undermines a fuller understanding of adult learning. Adults learners and their stories in this research, however, vividly demonstrate active and constant emotional engagement in adult learning, emotional struggles, and challenges interwoven with their identity construction and coping strategy development. North Koreans desired to be treated with respect and dignity, as human beings, and viewed as more than beneficiaries of instrumental, material, and financial supports. This study calls for further engagement

of adult education scholars and educators to understand the function of emotion in shaping adult learning, particularly marginalized populations, and increases conscious awareness of emotional sensitivity as a way of knowing, learning, and realizing moral vision (Forester, 2017).

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this study include a small number of participants, although the number is within the norm of ethnographic studies. In addition, North Korean migrants' social position in South Korean society is embedded in cultural, political, and historical contexts that may not be applicable to other refugee and migrant populations. As noted in methodology section, this study is not seeking generalizability or an objective truth that applies to all North Korean refugees. Rather, I attempt to provide insights and deeper meanings that can allow us to interpret and understand particular refugees' realities at these specific social enterprises with context-rich data (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

### **Significance**

This investigation is one of few studies (Park, 2016; Yoo, 2012) that examines North Korean migrants' learning in their service workplace from an adult learning perspective. Participants demonstrated culturally specific learning strategies (Swidler, 2001) such as memorization and *nunchi* rooted in their cultural heritage. The comprehensive learning framework (Illeris, 2004) was a helpful theoretical basis for exploring what and how participants learn in their sociocultural environments and in emotional and cognitive realms. Based on the findings, I argue that North Korean migrants' learning is closely connected to survival strategies that they developed to maximize self-directed



learning. This study contributes to adult learning focused on migrants' workplace learning, particularly in vulnerable and uncertain situations.

Findings on participants' emotional labor contributes to conceptual development of coping strategies as a learning outcome to release, avoid, and confront emotional consequences. Aligning with existing research on emotional labor (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 1979; Wharton, 2009), the current findings affirm that emotional labor and coping strategies constitute identity work and intersect with social norms and structures. This demonstrates that North Korean migrants develop interactive and personal strategies to verify, resist, and contest conflicting social norms. By demonstrating how participants learned to develop interactive coping strategies among themselves (e.g., storytelling, criticizing, and appraising) and with customers (e.g., embracing, passing, and resisting), this study extends the discussion of multiple forms of coping strategies. As such, the findings build a diversified conceptualization of coping strategies as learning outcomes.

Through a narrative analysis and critical discourse analysis of 25 participants, I found that migrants were discriminated against by South Koreans, who themselves were influenced by a context of sociocultural, ideological, and military confrontations between North and South Korea. The ethnographic research approach, which involved working as a part-time employee alongside research participants, allowed me to elucidate how they interpreted and responded to these stigmatizing forces. This study supports the work of Guo (2009) and others who have challenged research that interprets cultural differences as solely as deficits rather than as a potential source of strength.

## Appendix

### Interview protocol

How and what do North Korean employees at service industry (e.g., cafés, restaurant, and etc.) learn about working in South Korea?

RQ1. How do they learn to interact with co-workers, customers, and supervisors?

RQ2. How do they learn to manage their feelings to fulfill the emotional requirements of their jobs?

RQ3. How do participants adjust to South Korean cultural context?

Categories	Themes	No.	RQ
1. Past experience	1.1. North Korea	1-15	RQ1,2
	1.2. North Korea or China at work	1-8	RQ1,2
2. Current experiences	2.1. General	1-4	RQ3
	2.2. Work experiences	1-12	RQ1,2,3
	2.3. Emotional events	1-4	RQ1,2
	2.4. Emotional labor	1-6	RQ 2
3. Social environment	3.1. Social Enterprise	1-3	RQ3
	3.2. Political Situation	1-2	RQ3

Please provide the following information about yourself and your past experience.

#### 1. Past experiences

##### 1.1. North Korea

I'd like to ask you about your past experiences at school. This will help me better understand your past education.

- 1) Where is your hometown?
- 2) How many years of formal education you have?
- 3) What attending school was like in North Korea? What a typical day was like?
- 4) What did you study?
- 5) How did you interact with classmates and teachers to learn about the subject?
- 6) How did you learn to share your opinion with classmates and teachers at school?
- 7) What was your public criticism experience like (either school or workplace)?
- 8) What did you do during the public criticism?
- 9) What was so helpful about the public criticism?
- 10) What was so disturbing about the public criticism?
- 11) What did you feel after the public criticism?
- 12) How did you learn to manage your emotion after the public criticism?
- 13) What was the official principle of participating the public criticism?
- 14) What was your personal principle of participating the public criticism?
- 15) Was there any change in your identity? If so, describe – what led to this – what happened, etc.

##### 1.2. North Korea or China at work

I'd like to ask you about your past experiences at work. This will help me better understand your perception about work.

- (1) What was your work experiences like in China (or other countries) before coming to South Korea?

- (2) Tell me about how you learned Chinese?  
How did you learn it? Who or what helped you learn it? Was this something you had to learn or chose to learn?
- (3) Tell me about something you learned at work.  
How did you learn it? Who or what helped you learn it? Was this something you had to learn or chose to learn?
- (4) Tell me how you learned to interact with Chinese employees at work.  
How did you learn it? Who or what helped you learn it? Was this something you had to learn or chose to learn?
- (5) Tell me how you learned to manage your emotion in China.  
How did you learn it? Who or what helped you learn it? Was this something you had to learn or chose to learn?
- (6) What surprised you most about working in China and other countries?
- (7) Was there any change in your socialization in other countries? If so, describe – what led to this – what happened, etc.
- (8) Was there any change in your way of perceiving yourself? describe – what led to this – what happened, etc.

## **2. Current experiences**

### **2.1. General**

I would like to hear about your experience as a North Korean employee (e.g., barista, chef, etc.) in South Korea.

- (1) How long have you been in South Korea?
- (2) Tell me about your communication experience. Did you find difference between N. Korean and S. Korean? What was difficult for you to understand? Did you find you need to re-learn South Korean? If so, describe – how did you learn it? Who or what helped you learn it?
- (3) Did you get job trainings at Hana foundation (resettlement education center)? If so, describe – what was it, where did you get it, how long was it, and do you have certificates/licenses? Was it helpful to get a job and work?
- (4) What kind of work did you do after coming to South Korea?

### **2.2. Work Experiences**

- (1) How did you find out about this workplace?
- (2) What factors were effective in your decision of choosing the current profession?
- (3) What changed in your personality after starting to work as an employee at this work?
- (4) Think back on your first few weeks at work. Can you describe how you figured out what to do? who showed you the machines? Who or what helped you learn what to do? Did you receive any kind of formal training?
- (5) How would you describe your communication with customers?
- (6) Tell me how you learned to interact with customers.  
What was your first interaction? How did you learn how to interact with customers? Who or what helped you learn it? Was this something you had to learn or chose to learn?
- (7) How do you define a professional employee like (e.g., barista, chef)? What do you need to learn more to better perform in the current workplace? What motivates you to do so?
- (8) Did you find any difference being a North Korean at work in South Korea? If so, describe – what was it?
- (9) Think about when you felt like you achieved success at your work. What it means success? what did you do? How other people (co-worker, CEO, or customers) made you feel like you that way?

- (10) Think about when you felt you failed at work. What it means failure? How other people (co-worker, CEO, or customers) made you feel like you that way?
- (11) Who (what) did you seek for help to improve your mistakes/failure? What did you do to apply that advice/technique?
- (12) What do you think about being a professional employee (barista) is related to how you perceived yourself?

### **2.3. Emotional events**

- (1) Was there any influence on your emotional labor because of your past experience? If so, describe – what led to this – what happened, etc. how did you react? To what extent and if any, in what ways did your engaging experience have to do with your prior experience?
- (2) Look back and think about an event/work/day that you feel most overwhelmed from – what was happening? When did it happen? Who was involved? How did it happen? What was it about?
- (3) What action that anyone (co-workers, customers, and supervisors) took at work or outside work but as part of cafe experiences did you find most helpful that makes your learning experience at your work a better one? When did it happen? How did it happen? What was it about the person's action that was very helpful to you?
- (4) What action that anyone (co-workers, customers, and CEO) took at work or outside work but as part of cafe experiences did you find most frustrating? When did it happen? How did it happen? What was it about the person's action that was very frustrating to you?

### **2.4. Emotional labor**

- (1) What does emotional labor mean for you?
- (2) Was there any personal effort to provide emotional labor to customers (such as facial expressions and attitudes)? If so, describe. How do you think others take that effort and what you learn and adopt from them?
- (3) Has there ever been a time in the shop (café or restaurant) when you had to hide what you were feeling in order to do your job? How do you learn about it and how did it affect you?
- (4) Did you talk about it with other co-worker, CEO, or friend out of café who can talk about this topic? Did you find conversation is helpful? If so- what suggestions?
- (5) Look back and think about an event, what kind of interactions with customers, co-worker, or CEO make you feel like you are really yourself? What it means real yourself to you? How often do you feel in that way? If not, what kind of interactions with customers make you feel like you are distanced from yourself? How often you feel like that way? What kind of efforts you put intentionally to become yourself/distance yourself from barista's role?
- (6) When you are emotionally and physically burned out, what do you do to recover from it?

## **3. Social environment**

### **3.1. Social Enterprise**

- (1) What is a social enterprise? Did you find any difference compare to other workplace? If so, describe – what was it, what are the advantages/disadvantages working in a social enterprise workplace?
- (2) How do others (CEO) try to incorporate workplace's unique identity in its service and environment? How do you make an effort? (e.g., language, interaction, and promotion, etc.) how do customers perceive it?
- (3) Can you identify a few things that you consider as the most significant learning that you would take away from social enterprise? - Why does learning that you identified matter to you most? - In what ways has the learning had impact on you? - What difference has the learning made in you or in what you do?

**3.2. Political Situation**

- (1) Was there any influence at your business because of North and South Korea relationship? If so, describe – what led to this – what happened, etc. how did you react?
- (2) Think about the upcoming Winter Olympics and North and South Korean team, do you happen to have conversation about that with customers, co-workers, or friends out of work related to work, and what do you think the consequence of the Olympics to your business including interactions with customers?

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## VITA

### Jinhee Choi

#### EDUCATION

- 2020 Ph.D., Lifelong Learning and Adult Education (LLAED), Pennsylvania State University. University Park, Pennsylvania.
- 2009 M.S., Culture Technology, Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, Dejeon, Korea.
- 2006 B.F.A., Industrial Design, Korea University, Seoul, Korea.

#### HONORS, FELLOWSHIPS, & AWARDS

- 2020 Sung and Fumi Lee Scholarship, Pennsylvania State University (\$1,000)  
Outstanding Graduate Research Award, the Korean American Academy of Lifelong Education
- 2019-2020 Korea PSU Alumni Association Scholarship (\$2,100)
- 2019 Special International Grant, Pennsylvania State University (\$1,800)
- 2017-2018 Sung and Fumi Lee Scholarship, Pennsylvania State University (\$7,497)
- 2017 Student Dissertation Research Initiation Grant, Pennsylvania State University (\$600)
- 2014-2015 Graham Endowed Fellowship Award, Pennsylvania State University (\$2,333)

#### ACADEMIC & PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

- Fall 2020 Graduate Teaching Assistant in Lifelong Learning and Adult Education and Workforce Education Programs in Department of Learning and Performance Systems, and Instructor of Asian Studies– Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania.
- 2012-2013 Consultant – Merry Year Social Company, Seoul, Korea.
- 2009-2012 Human Resource Manager – SK Engineering & Construction, Seoul, Korea.
- Fall 2007 Research Intern –EPFL, Lausanne, Switzerland

#### PUBLICATIONS

- Choi, J.** (in press). North Korean human rights issues and popular culture. In M. V. Alfred, P. A. Robinson and E. A. Roumell (Eds.), *Advancing the global agenda for human rights, vulnerable populations and environmental sustainability: Adult education as strategic partner*. Routledge.
- Choi, J.** (in press). “Stories of socialism from a Capitalist perspective”: North Korean refugee’s online graphic novel for promoting social justice. In A.P. Robinson, K.V. Williams, and M. Stojanovic, (Eds.), *Global citizenship for adult education: Advancing critical literacies for equity and social justice*. Routledge.
- Kim, J., You, J., **Choi, J.**, & Park, H. (in press). North Korean defectors and human resource development in South Korea. In D.H. Lim, S.W. Yoon, and D.Y. Cho, (Eds.), *Human resource development in South Korea: Theory, research, and practice*. Wiley-Blackwell.
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- Choi, J.** (2019). Time conception of North Korean women defectors living and working in South Korea. *Proceedings of the Adult Education Research Conference (AERC)*. Buffalo, NY: Buffalo State College.
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