

# **A Land of Canaan or Another Inferno?: Experiences of Migrants from North Korea in South Korea<sup>1</sup>**

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Can a capitalist economic system be a viable solution for North Korea? Would North Koreans be satisfied if the DPRK adopts to an economic system that is similar to the one that operates in South Korea, which many people consider as the precondition for a unified Korea? This paper utilizes surveys and narratives on migration motivation and life satisfaction to explore the experiences of people from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the Republic of Korea (ROK). The number of people from the DPRK living in the South reached 30,000 as of 2016, the second largest concentration of North Korean people outside of DPRK after China. While these people have connections with their families left behind, their experiences in the ROK are essential not only for the topic of marginalized others but also because these people are the primary channel of information on capitalistic society to people back in the DPRK. While many North Koreans testify that their experiences in China were similar to the DPRK compared to that of ROK, the value of people's experiences in the ROK can be valuable regarding the evaluation of the capitalist economic system. In order to assess the satisfaction of North Korean people in the ROK, this paper examines the social integration system of the South Korean government for newcomers from North Korea, surveys of around 2,000 people conducted by the Korea Hana Foundation, as well as 50 in-depth interviews and participant observation studies conducted by the author in Seoul over the last five years. This study illustrates various emotional difficulties experienced by newcomers from North Korea which match economic and physical difficulties. It raises questions about the current socioeconomic system in South Korea, especially extreme competition in many areas of society, and suggests a change of direction is needed.

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<sup>1</sup> Some parts of this paper is taken from the author's Ph.D. dissertation *Within the Boundaries: Migration Choices of Women from North Korea*, Korea University, 2018. This is the working paper version. It will be further updated.

## 1. Introduction

Can a capitalist economic system be a viable solution for North Korea? Would North Koreans be satisfied if the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), as known as North Korea, adopts an economic system that is similar to the one that operates in South Korea, which many people consider the precondition for a unified Korea? While these questions remain, one way to find the answers to these questions may be by examining the experiences of North Korean newcomers in South Korean society.

The number of new settlers from North Korea has increased to a significant amount. As of 2017, the number of the people from the DPRK who entered South Korea passed 30,000 according to the official statistics from the Ministry of Unification as indicated in Table One. While the number may not be a large proportion of the total population of the DPRK, their experience in South Korea has significance when considering their role as a medium from South Korean society to people in North Korea or providing ideas of a unified Korea not yet come to pass (United Nations 2017).<sup>2</sup> Many studies on migration illustrate the influence of migrants on their origin countries is significant in many ways (George 2005, Parrenas 2001, Parreñas 2008, Pedraza-Bailey 1985, Jang 2013).

**Table 1. Number of North Koreans Entering South Korea<sup>3</sup>**

Category	~'98	~'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	15	16	Dec. '17	Total
No. of Men	831	565	510	474	626	424	515	573	608	662	591	795	404	369	305	251	302	188	8993
No. of Women	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	22,346
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	1275	1418	1127	31339
Rate of Women	12%	46%	55%	63%	67%	69%	75%	78%	78%	77%	75%	71%	73%	76%	78%	1	1	1	1

While there are levels of difference in contacting the families in home countries, like the case of other migrants, North Koreans in South Korea contact people in North Korea through brokers. Not only a significant amount of remittances are made through illegal channels (Joung 2017), but the experiences of North Korean settlers influence further migration of people in North Korea (Korea\_Hana\_Foundation 2017, 107).

Based on this condition, this study attempts explore two main paths: social integration system of the South Korean government for newcomers from North Korea and diagnosis of

<sup>2</sup> As of 2017, the total population of DPRK is recorded as 25,610,672 according to the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017).

<https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/DataQuery/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unikorea.go.kr/unikorea/business/NKDefectorsPolicy/status/lately/>

South Korean society with theories on modern capitalist systems, recent Hell Joseon dialogue, and discontent narratives of North Korean migrants. While there are many studies that deal with the discontent narratives of North Korean migrants in South Korea, many studies tend to concentrate on policy improvement rather than looking at fundamental social issues in South Korea. While there are many scenarios for the topography of the Korean Peninsula newly shaping, a closer look at the experiences of North Korean settlers in South Korea could bring much implication for further directions.

1. 1. Kinds of unification

The unification of the Korean Peninsula could happen in various ways. The South Korean government asserts unification agenda based on one nation agenda. However, as Jung et al. clarifies, the process of unification inevitably entails different stakeholders with contrasting interests (Jung 2018, 55). The study from the Seoul National University suggests three types of systems for unified Korea (Jung 2018, 55).

**Table 2. A Survey on System Preference for Unified Korea**

Year	Maintenance of Current South Korean System	Eclecticism of South and North Korean Systems	Maintenance of Two Different Systems	Fine by Any System
2009	43.6	39.1	13.3	4
2010	44.4	38.8	12.6	4.2
2011	48.9	35.6	12.3	3.2
2012	44.2	37.7	15.1	3
2013	43.6	35.4	16.9	4.1
2014	44.9	37.9	13.2	4.1
2015	48.1	33.5	13.6	4.8
2016	47.3	34.5	14.4	4
2017	45.4	37.7	13.5	3.4

Source: Seoul National University Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, 2018, 55.

As the table demonstrates, there can be various types of unification even though the majority of South Koreans chose the “Maintenance of Current South Korean System” as their most preferred option. Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that more than half of the respondents suggested models of the unified Korean Peninsula are different from the integration of North Korea under the current South Korean system. These models that are different from conventional ideas about the unified Korean Peninsula gain more credit when considering North Korean settlers’ discontent narratives of South Korean society.

Eventually, it brings a need of complicated consideration of social systems. For example, what does “eclecticism” mean in the second column of the table Two? To what extent can the compromise between North and South Korea be made? Is it realistic to talk about compromise when the change of social system entails numerous down-to-earth issues such as property rights and taxation? While these questions consequently bring further studies with deep speculation on systems and cultures of both North and South Korea, this study will focus on a diagnosis of South Korean society with narratives of North Korean migrants and a social discourse in South Korea which has gained much attention since 2015.

## 2. Methodology

As the study by Stillman et al. indicates, subjective well-being is hard to be measured due to the complex characteristics of subjective well-being (Stillman 2015). It may be a more difficult task when it comes to minority groups as many theorists have asserted in many different ways (Spivak 2010, Young 2001, Serrant-Green 2011). In addition, measuring the discontent of North Korean settlers requires a sophisticated approach which utilizes multi layers of analysis and observation. While the Korea Hana Foundation conducts surveys and census that questions the level and reason of North Korean settlers’ dissatisfaction of South Korean society, these surveys have limitations to fully cover the experiences and opinions of North Korean settlers. Often, the cookie-cutter answers from quantitative studies hardly reveal the deeper events of life that North Korean settlers go through. Also, there is an additional pitfall regarding the reliability of the answers when governmental organizations approach newcomers and ask questions about the satisfaction level of the host society (Gerring 2012, King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, 5, George and Bennett 2005, 11, Berg and Lune 2017). Thus, the use of qualitative methods can complement answers that were not represented from the existing surveys.

Based on the information mention above, the current study mainly takes an ethnographic approach with participant observation and various forms of interviews including phone interviews and group interviews (Gray 2009, Forsey December 2010, Sandiford 2015). Along the line of participant observations, the “formal and informal” interviews were conducted several times (Sandiford 2015, 414). As Sandiford (2015, 413) indicates, the characteristics of participant observation brings “context observed data” including various forms of interviews and it often becomes an “observation +.” The observations took place

from the year 2012 to 2018. In the process, the researcher met about 64 women and men mostly in Seoul metropolitan areas of South Korea and 18 women in the Northeastern area of China.

While participant observation and interviews of individuals were taken together for above reasons, it required the investigator's earnest relationship with respondents and background knowledge to enable her to reach interviewees with underlying apprehension and familiarity with the respondents' contexts. This required the researcher's immersion into the context, and it followed Mason's emphasis on the epistemological understanding in qualitative methods (Mason 2002, 38, 104, 105, 111).

For the sampling of in-depth interviews, six different channels were used: an NGO cluster which composed of three different NGOs the author was affiliated with; an English volunteer teacher cluster with two different after school programs for North Korean settler students where the author volunteered; a church gathering cluster which consisted of various North Korean settler visitation programs including visitation to *Hanawon*; an informal introduction cluster out of random introductions; a school (Korea University) friends cluster where the author met North Korean settlers in classrooms and various contexts in school; a China cluster where the relationships were formulated from the author's visit to China. As indicated, each cluster consists of various subgroups and they were chosen to avoid selection bias. For example, the NGO cluster is only composed of different NGOs run by representatives from North Korea and the English volunteer teacher cluster entails two different afterschool programs where the author volunteered every week at different time periods and locations. The mix of religious and non-religious groups was made as well. While there were research designs to avoid bias selection, the narratives of individuals were not much influenced by group characteristics.

### 3. Theoretical Background

The history of "self-proclaimed" socialist and capitalist countries illustrates the alienation of people from the system takes place wherever human constructed structures exist. Marcuse asserts the problems of industrial society exist not only in capitalist societies, but also in socialist societies (xxiii): "The defeat of Fascism and National Socialism has not arrested the trend towards totalitarianism. Freedom is on the retreat-in the realm of thought as well as in that of society." (Marcuse 2000, 433) While Marcuse criticized "totalitarian social control and domination (xix)" in industrialized societies, industrialization has taken place regardless of the form of societies. It is well supported by the contemporary history of China (Meisner 1999).

In his explanation, Marcuse further expanded on "certain basic tendencies in contemporary industrial society" where individuals are administered and produced as one-dimensional men with a threatened humanity (Marcuse 1991, xi, 255). In a technological society where it shapes labor and leisure (xii), Marcuse asserts "The liberating force of technology – the instrumentalization of things – turns into a fetter of liberation; the instrumentalization of man (163)." It is "a threat to human freedom and individuality (Marcuse, xii)"

Capitalism and the loss of individuality is a classical topic long discussed by many social scientists including Marx. Sennett (2006) criticizes the culture of new capitalism and explains how neo-liberalism shapes people. According to him, only three types of people can survive in the new culture of capitalism: 1) those who can rapidly change themselves within an institutional culture which swiftly replaces people according to their needs; 2) those with talent who can survive in the meritocratic society though it consequently leads to devaluation of craftsmanship; and 3) those who are willing to discard the past and give up life-narratives and value accumulated life experiences (Sennett 2006, 4-5).

While these points lead to the pitfalls of neo-capitalism which takes away individual subjectivity, such culture impacts immigration policies as well. Glick Schiler and Calger (2009) assert that one major pitfall of integrationist literature is their dismissal of migrants as social agents (Schiller 2009). They usually regard migrants as the subject of integration into new societies rather than social members who can actively shape the new society they settle in. In this criticism, immigrants only exist as bolts of a great wheel called the host society. Furthermore, Wright (2010) claims that the changing needs and goals of migrants are not gaining attention from integrationist approaches (Wright 2010, 368).

Based on these points, while focusing on the concept of “one-dimensionality, a totalizing concept to describe an era of historical development which is supposed to absorb all opposition into a totalitarian, monolithic system (xxvi)” by Marcuse, the next part will explore the link between neo-liberalism and Hell Joseon.

#### 4. Hell Joseon and the Culture of Neo-liberalism

One of the prevailing discourses among young generations in current South Korean society is “Hell Joseon.”(Cho-Han et al. 2016, 15) Starting from an online platform DC Inside, the term “Hell Joseon” became the most popular word in year 2016 (So 2016, 292). There were more than 6,000 media reports with the word “Hell Joseon” from, June 2015 to February 2016 (Cho-Han et al. 2016, 31). Combining two words, Hell and Joseon, which came from the Joseon dynasty from years 1392 to 1897, before Japanese capitalization, it captures the reality of hierarchical society where people suffer from static class (Kim 2016a, 239). Realizing one cannot overcome the unequal gap with individual efforts, young people sarcastically divide themselves in the category of “gold spoon (*geumsujeo*)” or “dirt spoon (*huksujeo*)” and say “this life is doomed (*isaengmang*).” (Cho-Han et al. 2016, 13, 15)

Hell Joseon content consists of lists of the reasons that make South Korea a hell with lists of OECD indicators where it claims South Korea ranked first place.<sup>4</sup> The list includes

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<sup>4</sup> However, many of the indicators turned out to be fake information. For example, indicators relating to car accident from number 10 to 15 are the same items. In addition, the evidence on car accident related indicators suggested from the Hell Joseon website contained wrong information. (Refer to [http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?doclanguage=en&cote=eco/wkp\(2010\)1](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?doclanguage=en&cote=eco/wkp(2010)1)) Also, 1. Suicidal rate 2. industrial accident rate, 3. household debt, 4. income gap between men and women, 5. poverty rate of seniors, 6. adolescent smoking rate, 7. adult smoking rate, 8. lowest minimum income, 9.

suicide rate, income gap between genders, poverty rate of seniors, minimum wage, low birthrate, and excessive spending on extracurricular programs (Park 2016a, 74).

There are various analyses that explain the reasons of ongoing Hell Joseon discourse. Heo claims the reason that South Korea is referred to as Hell Joseon is because it succeeded in settling both industrialization and democratization (Heo 2016, 47). Pushing the whole South Korean population under the “Can Do” spirit after the Korean War, South Korea has witnessed unprecedented economic growth and accumulated wealth with industrious efforts in all levels of society (Heo 2016, 61, Cho-Han et al. 2016, 33). Also, the democracy level of South Korea has developed to the point where people can impeach a president in a peaceful and democratic manner, as was the case in 2017. While the Hell Joseon discourse directly satirize the existing structure, such satire was possible as South Korean society reached the level where one can freely make criticisms.

Nevertheless, it is not only caused from such positive reasons. Fundamentally, Hell Joseon discourse derived from a realization that enough spill-over effect did not take place regardless of the unprecedented development South Korea has had. Many found their quality of life has not changed, if not worsened (Heo 2016, 48). Regardless of the ongoing satires and criticisms about society, many still find it hard to make their voices heard in the structural injustice they face. Considering the level of happiness which is evitable to be affected from comparison of reference group, the sense of deprivation may be greater than the past (Latif 2016, Christopher 2008, Andrew Sharpe November 2010, Tibesigwa 2016).

Another group of scholars found the reason for Hell Joseon when examining capitalism and neo-liberalism (Cho-Han et al. 2016, 32, So 2016, Park 2016b). The modern capitalist society promised a success of individual if one makes efforts (Cho-Han et al. 2016, 32). Despite of the promise, people ended up making efforts only for survival as capitalism instrumentalizes individuals and ceaselessly pushes them onto the conveyor belt to retain the system by its nature (Cho-Han et al. 2016, 42). Hell Joseon discourse started to sneer at the fruitless efforts that people made under the broken promise of modern capitalist society. In the discourse, people started to say *effoort* (*nooryuk*) instead of *effort* (*noryuk*) and asked a question to a society where it does not have an answer (*nodap*). Kim explains the reason from a macro economic structure where the trend of global market systems inevitably leads South Korea into the status quo where many young people are frustrated (Kim 2016a).

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proportion of low wage laborer, 10. car accident rate 11. sidewalk car accident rate, 12. pedestrian accident rate, 13. children’s car accident rate, 14. senior car accident rate, 15. Death rate from car accident, 16. Highest study hour, 17. Environmental pollution, 18. Happiness level of children, 19. Happiness level of youth, 20. Divorce rate, 21. Tuberculosis patient rate, 22. Death rate of tuberculosis patients, 23. Death rate of diabetes patients, 24. Death rate of liver related disease (men), 25. Death rate of colorectal cancer, 26. Death rate from myocardial infarction, 27. Greenhouse gas emission rate, 28. Aging rate, 29. Increasing rate of national debt, 30. Suicide increasing rate, 31. Expenditure rate on public social welfare, 32. Increase of unemployment rate, 33. Household burden on university education, 34. Abortion rate, 35. Lowest interests in science, 36. Death rate of mid-aged women, 37. Expenditure on private education, 38. Alcohol consumption (age 15+), 39. Liquor consumption, 40. Lowest birthrate, 41. Longest working hour, 42. Fastest tax increase, 43. Increase of national debt, 44. Increase of food price, 45. Foreign liquor consumption, 46. Low birthrate (overlapping with 40), 47. Private burden on public education, 48. Worst social safety, 49. Countries with bad political vision, 50. Lowest support to advanced education <https://hellkorea.com/hellbest/48101>

Park claims the term meritocracy is equally accepted as righteousness or justice in recent South Korean society (Park 2016a, 78). While there can be various reasons of juxtaposing righteousness with justice, Cho claims it has a strong linkage with economic conditions in the late 1990s, when the financial crisis hit various levels of South Korean society (Cho et al. 2017, 102, Woo 2007, 79-94). As the current young generations were in their teenage years during the crisis, they observed their parents and relatives who were laid off from the workplace, and they learned competition as a social rule (Cho et al. 2017, 102-103). Combined with hierarchical South Korean education system where it ranks students by their grade, a culture of “neo-liberalism” was intensified and drove young people into endless competitions (Cho et al. 2017, 104).

In addition, the military culture may be another cause of Hell Joseon. Park noja claims South Korea is an “advanced military state” which retains its military governance culture that was gained in the end of the Japanese era (Park 2016b, 9). Such a claim by Park is on the same line as Weber’s assertion that “army is a more consequent model for modernity than the market (Sennett 2006, 23). In the military, “competition and efficiency take on a different character (Sennet, 28).” The hierarchical structure rewards you “if you obey orders,” and such perceptual mechanisms take away the ability to make judgments (Sennet, 31).

## 5. North Korean Settlers in South Korea

How do North Korean settlers talk about their experiences in South Korea and what are their experiences in the current system? Are they satisfied with Korean society? According to the biennial census from the Korea Hana Foundation, the majority of North Korean migrants express satisfaction for South Korea. According to the most recent census in 2016, 67 % of the respondents expressed “satisfaction” in their lives in South Korea (Korea\_Hana\_Foundation 2017, 144).<sup>5</sup>

**Table 3. Satisfaction Level of Lives in South Korea**

Category	Case No.	Satisfied				So-So	Dissatisfied				No Response		
		Very Satisfied		Generally Satisfied			Somewhat Discontent		Very Discontent				
		No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%			No.
Total	11,914	2,882	23.7	5,169	43.3	3,418	29.2	326	2.7	88	0.8	31	0.3
Men	2,997	671	21.4	1,271	42.6	889	30.3	120	4.0	34	1.4	12	0.4

<sup>5</sup> Indicate the response rate as such.

Women	8,917	2,211	24.5	3,898	43.5	2,529	28.9	206	2.3	54	0.6	19	0.2
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Source: Korea Hana Foundation, 2017, 145, 146.

Meanwhile, the Korea Hana Foundation also asks about the main reason of dissatisfaction in South Korean society. According to the survey in 2016, the reasons of dissatisfaction can be divided into 6 categories: 1) economic difficulty 2) various prejudices and discriminations toward North Korean settlers 3) the gap between capacity and the work one wishes to do 4) difficulty to adjust in South Korean culture 5) conflict with families and 6) miscellaneous reasons.

**Table 4. Reasons of Dissatisfaction in South Korean Society (Multiple Answers)**

Category	Case No.	Economic Difficulty		Discrimination +Prejudice toward N.Korean Settlers		Gap between the Work I Want to Do vs. My Capacity		Difficulty of Adjusting to N.Korean Society		Conflict with Family		Others		No Resonse	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	414	243	58	133	31.7	107	25.3	98	24	48	12.1	94	23.1	7	1.8
Men	154	83	53	47	29.6	54	35.7	39	25.7	12	8.3	34	22	1	1.1
Women	260	160	61.3	86	33.1	53	18.6	59	22.9	36	14.6	60	23.8	6	2.2

Source: Korea Hana Foundation, 2017, 153

While the Korea Hana Foundation came up with five reasons of dissatisfaction of North Korean settlers, there were further reasons of discontent from the interviews and participant observations of the North Korean settlers. While there are numerous reasons for discontent for individuals due to their different personal paths, this paper will focus on the discontent that resembles criticisms around Hell Joseon discourse in South Korea. The most common testimony the author gained from the newcomers was that many North Korean settlers expressed they felt North Korean society was more humane on an informal stage, both at the interpersonal and community level.

#### 5. 1. A Society of Competition: Where Meritocracy is Justice

The competitive environment in South Korea has been a frequently stated topic among many North Korean settlers both in China and South Korea. While 17 out of 18 interviewees

I met in China said they do not want to go to South Korea, the competitive circumstance was often mentioned as a reason that discouraged interviewees from leaving China. During my first trip to China, I interviewed four women as a group and asked the question why they would not want to go to South Korea as they all said they would prefer to stay in China. While they provided various reasons, the most prevailing reason was "competition." As they elaborated, they said they would not be able to "survive" in a society with high competitiveness.

Such statements were similarly found from North Koreans in South Korea as well. The people in South Korea frequently talked about the competition they experience in South Korea. One interviewee (age 30, spent six years in South Korea) said in her interview that there is "ceaseless competition in South Korea which makes her and her friends stressed." She further said,

*People think competition would end when they go to university only to find out it is more severe. They expect things would get better once they graduate university, but the situation gets even worse when you start working.*

The narratives of competitive environments at school relates to the long time social problem surrounding the education system in South Korea. Education is often regarded as a driver for the unprecedented economic development in South Korea after the ravage of the Korean War and Japanese colonialism. However, Kim asserts that "education fervor" which developed in South Korean society produced hierarchical education system (Kim 2016c, 41).<sup>6</sup> It became a norm of secondary schools to rank the students by their grade and the students with higher marks went to top universities where they were said to be guaranteed a better future for their graduates.<sup>7</sup> It is a paradox as the education fervor is also the result of "egalitarian ethos" which is the "root of the Korean society's dynamism" (Kim 2016c, 41)<sup>8</sup> This, supposed to be, egalitarian notion on education contributed to the rise of a competitive culture in overall society.

One interviewee (in early 30s, six years in South Korea) said,

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<sup>6</sup> Originally from (Kim 2009, 53).

<sup>7</sup> However, even top universities do not guarantee the future of their students as they used to in the past with high unemployment rates in the current global economy and graduates from overseas universities. As of 2010, the number of unemployed in their 20s is 357,000 and this takes about 36% out of the total unemployed population. (Yoon 2010, 241) However, the reality seems harsher as there was 271,000 more unemployed people who were not counted in the data as they gave answers such as "currently just resting", "working as part-time workers." (Yoon 2010, 241) Considering the number, it is expected that there are about 760,000 unemployed young people, which makes the real unemployment rate to be about 18% (Yoon 2010, 242). Further, indicators show that unemployment rate of 20s is 57% as of Oct. 2012. When such rate is mingled with high level of price in the market, increasing number of contract workers and ever-growing stratification of classes, the sense of crisis felt by young people would be far deeper than one can imagine (Oh 2015, 465). Meanwhile, it is a global phenomenon. 18.4% of the young people are unemployed in the US while 19.1% do not have work in UK as of 2010. In the same year, the rate gets bigger to 22.5% in France and it gets even worse in Spain to extent of 46.2%. In case of Italy and Sweden it is 27.9% and 25.2% respectively (Lee 2011, 155). This is not an exception to Arab countries. As of 2007, 32.8% of university graduates are unemployed while 62.4% of high school graduates are out of work in Northern Africa and Middle East (Lee 2011, 161).

<sup>8</sup> Originally from (Kim 2009, 53).

*I think the competition is hard in the social level. When I look around, I see children are going to after school programs even when they are in the nursery schools. I think they are taking an extreme level of competition which is hard to take at an early age. ... However, to some extent, it is not so much different from North Korea.*

While many students compete to go to a good university, the culture of competition continues even after entering university as the first narrative described. The interviewee (age 30, spent six years in South Korea) told me,

*While I came to know a South Korean friend at my school, I thought I became her friend and shared all the information I gained in the classroom with her. However, I later learned that it was always just me who shared the information. She never shared anything important with me. I think she regarded me as a competitor rather than a friend.*

She said her difficulty adjusting to Korean society was comparable to her rough path from North to South Korea with life threats from security guards on the borders. While she described her experiences of leaving North Korea and said they were “easier” than her attempts to adjust to South Korean society, she said, *“Perhaps, psychological difficulties are more important than physical challenges.”* Throughout her time in South Korea, she lost 11 kilograms from stress.

Another respondent (age 29, spent three years in South Korea and ten years in China) lost locks of hairs due to stress. When the researcher met the interviewee after some time, she noticed the change of her hairstyle and mentioned it. The woman said that she was wearing a wig and slowly started to talk about the reason for wearing the wig. She confessed, *“The more I stay here, the more I come to realize it is never easy to survive in this society. And I keep questioning whether I will be able to do all these things (I am required to do in this society).”*

By the time she talked about her stressful situations, she already completed elementary, middle school, and high school qualification exams successfully within three years after her arrival to South Korea. While this is not always the case for people from North Korea to retake the qualification exams, she needed to take them as she had to drop out of her elementary school in North Korea and spent around ten years in China without formal education. Nevertheless, regardless of the significant achievements she made, what she faced in South Korea was frustration rather than confidence. She often talked about her feeling of lacking competence while she is thrown into the same race with South Koreans.

Later, she successfully entered a university with a good reputation. While she began the university under the special recruitment program for candidates from North Korea, she told me that she feels she does not belong in that place. She said she often feels overwhelmed by other students who seem to know everything – language, common sense and education, in general – better than her. She said she was seriously considering quitting the university.

Meanwhile, as the first narrative describes, such frustration is not only confined in the education sector. Similar sentiment was sensed from another interviewee who was actively working in various areas with her expertise about North Korea (age 48, spent six years in

South Korea). By the time I interviewed her; she was seriously considering immigrating to the United States and talked about her five years in South Korea as,

*It is a pity to throw away what I have accomplished in my years here ... (Yet,) Here, I just say whatever people want me to say. I think that's a strategy to survive here. They do not listen to me anyway. One person even told me at my work, 'Just provide us materials; we will analyze it.' I am just used by the people here. I cannot catch up to South Korean people. They are far ahead me.*

While she was talking about her incapability to catch up her South Korean colleagues at work, she also said it was more challenging for her to position herself in South Korean society as there are too many North Koreans in South Korea already.

*I have a feeling that I would be more likely to succeed in the States. There are too many North Korean defectors here. So, people do not listen to you. However, in the US, there are only about 180 North Korean defectors. So, if I work through Korean churches there, I am more likely to succeed.*

Her experience of “falling behind” South Koreans and losing in the “competition” led to further concerns about her child’s future in South Korea as it will be elaborated in a later part.

In one case, the level of competition in South Korea was compared to that in Canada. Once, the interviewer met a couple who had experienced living in Canada after staying in South Korea for a year. While they decided to come back to South Korea for their son, whom they did not want to be an undocumented immigrant in Canada, they said they would have stayed there if it was not for him. The mother told me she preferred Canada for various reasons.

*I find Canada more comfortable. I still miss the country. There, people would hold the door for you if you happen to walk behind them. When I came to South Korea, I was 41. By that time, I tried to continue my career as an accountant. However, people here told me I was too old to get a new job here. However, I saw that people do not really care about your age in Canada. In the sandwich shop where I used to work, I saw even a granny was working and managing the store. In Canada, they do not care about your age, and this made me feel comfortable. Here, people distinguish you as a North Korean since they can tell from your accent. However, people there do not care about where you come from. In South Korea, there are so many cars and signboards. People always seem busy and competing with one another.*

While there are various elements that contribute to the competitive culture, age is another factor that is regarded as a competency requirement in the job market. The interviewee’s point about age limitation is also indicated by Cho’s (2017) South Korean interviewee whom she met in India. While the narratives of the interviewee describe the reason that he should leave South Korea, he said, “Strangely South Korea had an intensive age restriction (Cho et al. 2017, 30).”

## 5. 2. A Society of Competition 2: Can We Ever Go Up?

The issue of competition eventually leads to the question about social mobility. According to the Korea Hana Foundation, 66 percent of North Korean settlers indicated their social status in South Korea is in the lower class while 1.5 percent and 31.6 percent of respondents answered they belong to high and middle classes respectively.

**Table 5. Level of Social Class in South Korea**

Category	Case No.	Upper Class				Middle Class				Lower Class				No Response	
		High-Upper Class		Low-Upper Class		High-Middle Class		Low-Middle Class		High-Lower Class		Low-Lower Class			
		Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio
Total	11,914	61	0.5	122	1.0	1,284	10.2	2,574	21.4	4,275	36.3	3,485	29.7	113	0.9
Men	2,997	14	0.5	27	0.8	289	8.9	641	21.0	1,048	35.3	948	32.5	30	1.0
Women	8,917	47	0.5	95	1.0	995	10.7	1,933	21.5	3,227	36.6	2,537	28.7	83	0.9

Source: Korea Hana Foundation, 2017, 163, 164.

Overall, the respondents experienced lowering of their class. Among the same respondents, 44.3 percent answered they were in the lower class in North Korea, leaving around 20 more percent of the North Korean settlers regarded their social status as declining from high or middle to lower class. This leads to the downward shift of high and middle class as well. While 5.7 percent answered they belonged to high class in North Korea, only 1.5 percent replied they are in high class in South Korea. Similarly, the middle class proportion decreased from 49.2 percent to 29.2 percent as respondents moved from North to South Korea.

**Table 6. Level of Social Class in South Korea**

Category	Case No.	Upper Class				Middle Class				Lower Class				No Response	
		High-Upper Class		Low-Upper Class		High-Middle Class		Low-Middle Class		High-Lower Class		Low-Lower Class			
		Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio
Total	11,914	259	2.1	430	3.6	3,173	26.7	2,631	22.5	2,093	17.5	3,240	26.8	88	0.7
Men	2,997	77	2.6	125	4.3	872	29.0	664	22.8	539	17.8	692	22.6	28	0.9
Women	8,917	182	2.0	305	3.4	2,301	25.9	1,967	22.5	1,554	17.4	2,548	28.3	60	0.7

Source: Korea Hana Foundation, 2017, 160, 161

Meanwhile, the majority of the North Korean settlers recognize their possibility of going up the social rung in a positive manner. While the census also asks about the possibility of social mobility, 78.7 percent showed positive responses for moving up their social ladder. This trend was more dominant when asked about the possibility of social mobility for their children. As illustrated in table eight, 87.7 percent of respondents provided positive answers to a question about their children’s possibility of social mobility.

**Table 7. Expected Possibility of Social Mobility**

	Case No.	Positive				Negative				No Response	
		Very Likely		Likely		Not Likely		Never			
		No.	Ratio	No.	Ratio	No.	Ratio	No.	Ratio	No.	Ratio
total	11,914	2,142	18.6	7,139	60.2	2,102	17.0	403	3.2	128	1.0
men	2,997	561	19.4	1,744	58.3	533	17.3	123	3.9	36	1.1
women	8,917	1,581	18.3	5,395	60.8	1,569	16.9	280	3.0	92	1.0

Source: Korea Hana Foundation, 2017, 167

**Table 8. Expected Possibility of Social Mobility for Children**

	Case No.	Positive				Negative				No Response	
		Very Likely		Likely		Not Likely		Never			
		No.	Ratio	No.	Ratio	No.	Ratio	No.	Ratio	No.	Ratio
total	11,914	3,500	30.1	6,911	57.6	1,050	8.7	199	1.6	254	2.0
men	2,997	851	29.4	1,728	57.0	268	8.7	68	2.2	82	2.7
women	8,917	2,649	30.4	5,183	57.8	782	8.6	131	1.4	172	1.8

Source: Korea Hana Foundation, 2017

Regardless of the census result, the question remains for many reasons. One interviewee (4 years in South Korea, 27 years old) said,

*When I first came here, everything was so good that I said ‘Wow... this is a heaven.’ Seeing me, people clicked their tongues and told me ‘Just stay three years (and you will realize the reality).’ I did not know what they meant (by the time). However, I came to know what they meant just last year. (Once I begin to realize) this is my status in this society, I come to think there is no solution.*

The words this interviewee heard from other North Korean settlers seemed prevalent words in the North Korean community. Another interviewee said the same expression. She also said, "It is common among North Korean people to say, ‘When you have a chance, leave

*Korea! There's no future for your children in South Korea. It is never possible for them to live like South Koreans here... ”<sup>9</sup>*

Even though these interviewees talked about the hopelessness in South Korean society, they seemed to stay positive in their daily life. Many North Korean settlers talked about hope rather than belittling the value of effort. Regardless of the many difficulties, they talked about their dreams and tried to find positive aspects about South Korean society. While I sometimes asked the interviewees whether they heard of the word Hell Joseon, one interviewee showed a high level of discomfort. Furthermore, even though the first interviewee in 5. 2. (4 years in South Korea, 27 years old) talked about her frustration, her main page of the SNS had a banner that said “The Power of Optimism.” If she had a chance to answer the census from the Korea Hana Foundation, she must have been one of the respondents who listed their answer in the “positive” category.

Sometimes, the desire to leave South Korea out of hopelessness is compromised. When an interviewee was considering immigrating to the United States for her middle school son, as she decided there is no future for the son in South Korea, the boy strongly insisted he would not go to the United States and asked her back how she knows he will succeed or not without even trying. He persuaded his mother that he would go to the US for university, if it is necessary, after making his efforts in South Korea. While telling me how his son persuaded his mother, the interviewee told me, “I found my son is better than me.”

### 5. 3. A Society of Competition 3: Can You Wait for Me?

Sennet claimed in his book, “Meritocracy... is a system as well as an idea, a system based on institutional indifference once a person is judged (Sennet, 124).” It means those who cannot match the pace of competition with others are neglected and dismissed without mercy. Often, it is the social minority, including many North Korean settlers, who take the burden of being left out. While I met 21 North Korea origin students in South Korea, only one middle school student and two graduate students told me successful stories in schools. However, the rest of the students talked about their difficulties to adjust in schools. Similar stories were conveyed through parents with children in schools and the third parties including alternative school teachers for students from North Korea. Indeed, there have been many studies and policy reports about the difficulties of students from North Korea adjusting to the education system in South Korea (Kim 2016b, Lim 2015, Park 2018).

In fact, these problems are not caused from lack of economic support. The South Korean government provides various policies to support North Korean settlers (Ministry\_of\_Unification 2017).<sup>10</sup> They include various social adjustment programs which North Korean newcomers take since they enter *Hanawon* (The Settlement Support Center for North Korean Refugees) upon their arrival to South Korea. They consist of career support

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<sup>9</sup> Interview overlaps with the one in the doctorate dissertation that is planned to be published on Aug. 2018.

<sup>10</sup> A brief table that describes the overall settlement program is in the Appendix I.

programs, various economic education, and psychological and life-plan programs. There is financial support as well. Within five years of arrival, North Korean settlers under the age 35 are free to enter universities and there are special minority quotas for students from North Korea.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, many students talk about the difficulty of following the classes as illustrated in the previous narratives, and many told me they received F grades in the classes. Meanwhile, to make the situation worse, their bad marks lead to a vicious circle as the marks under the minimum line removes the scholarship opportunity from the universities. Without a scholarship, many have to work extra hours to earn 50 percent of the tuition provided from universities and living cost. One university student who was cut from her scholarship hardly had time to study and make up for her previous failures as she had to earn money by doing part-time work in a café. After she finished her classes at three in the afternoon, she rushed to the café and started to work from four to midnight every weekday.

While this case illustrates a lack of a government system that can wait for the people who are left out, frustration of students also comes from misunderstanding of South Koreans who are used to a go-getter's mindset even though they are willing to help the newcomers. A university student took an English after school program from a professor who was volunteering to teach English to North Korean students. While the professor was enthusiastic to improve the English of the students, his students found his requests from the class heavy to take. While many dropped out of the class and the interviewee had to skip her class for a travel opportunity she had from an NGO, the professor was angry about the attitudes of students and told the interviewee *"It is not just you. There are many North Korean settlers who are not serious about learning."*

While the interviewee finally had to quit her English class with a disappointment due to discriminatory remarks from the professor, the confrontation between the professor who was enthusiastic enough to do the voluntary English teaching and students who were regarded as not serious about learning show one characteristic of South Korean society: ceaseless competition prevalent in South Korean society leads to a lack of waiting time that is essential for newcomers to plant roots in the host society.

#### 5. 4. Othering and Discrimination

The issue of competition and difficulty of adjustment leads to the topic of "othering" and discrimination of the host societies towards the people from North Korea. Experiences of being "the other" and discriminated against by South Koreans were other themes that were often mentioned by interviewees. One respondent (age 52, spent three years in South Korea and ten years in China) said her colleague at work kept making prejudiced remarks about her.

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<sup>11</sup> 50 percent of tuition is provided from the South Korean government while the rest 50 percent of the tuition is covered by university in a form of scholarship.(Ministry\_of\_Unification 2018)

*Whenever there is anything he does not like about my work, he would follow me all along and keep yelling at me, 'Why did you even come to South Korea if you would work like that?' ... and other days, he would follow me and sarcastically nag me by saying, 'I heard the government gives you guys houses? That is all coming out of our taxes here!' ... There are dozens of people at work, yet he only comes to me and says all these words to me.*

As it may not be as obtuse as the former case, another interviewee also said “othering” is a factor that makes these women feel uneasy in South Korean society. One respondent (age 38, spent two years in South Korea) said,

*The more I live here, the more I come to realize I am a North Korean. Here, people draw lines between them and us and distinguish us as North Korean. Wherever I go, whatever I do, people treat you as a North Korean. It's same everywhere, even churches.*

While she also left North Korea with her loathing toward the regime and a firm purpose to live in South Korea, She said she even wants to return to North Korea by the end of the interview.

*I say to you, even if I have to eat watery soup, the best place is where I can have a peaceful mind. ... I left North Korea because I could not stand many things there. However, being here and going through all these discriminations, now I pray to God that I want to go back to North Korea even after my death.*

It seemed secondary schools are not free from discriminations as well. In a public seminar<sup>12</sup> where North Korean parents gathered and talked about their experiences of discrimination, one father of a secondary school student said,

*My son would often bring his friends to our home. However, whenever he brings his friends, he told me before his friends enter our home that I should not use North Korean dialect. He tries to hide his friends that we are North Koreans and his friends are not aware of our North Koreanness. ... However, whenever I see my son tries to hide we are from North Korea, I cannot help but question: Do South Koreans really hate North Koreans?*

Another mother shared a more extreme case of her own child and herself.

*I sent my child to an international school for her/him. However, my child happened to tell her/his friend(s) that s/he is from North Korea at a school trip, thinking that her/his friends would keep it as a secret. However, somehow everyone in the school came to know that s/he is from North Korea. ... People called school and told the rector that my child should change her/his school. The rector called me and suggested me my child's new school. ... I participated in a parent meeting only to hear from other parents that my child should change her/his school. After that incident, I*

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<sup>12</sup> It was held by \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_. Check the info.

*happened to have an interview and it was published in a newspaper. After my interview (with negative experiences in South Korea) went out, I got so many apologies from the parents.*<sup>13</sup>

These are not new stories as it is also indicated in table Four. Discrimination and prejudices toward North Koreans have been an active topic in South Korean scholarship and many governmental reports. According to the National Human Rights Commission's survey on people's perception and discrimination against North Korean defectors, 45.6 percent of South Korean native respondents answered there are significant prejudice toward North Korean settlers while only 14 percent answered they feel there is no prejudices towards North Korean settlers (National\_Human\_Rights\_Commission\_of\_Korea 2014, 14). The psychological distance that the general public feels toward North Korean settlers is slightly higher than a median level.<sup>14</sup> While the general public has social distance toward North Korean settlers, it turned out there was not much intention to discriminate against the newcomers (National\_Human\_Rights\_Commission\_of\_Korea 2014, 15). While the intention to discriminate North Korean settlers from South Korean natives was rated as 'normal,' another survey result illustrates South Korean natives simply do not have strong intention to treat the newcomers as equal to those of South Korean origins (National\_Human\_Rights\_Commission\_of\_Korea 2014, 15).

This may have been caused from a prejudice that comes from lack of interaction with North Korean settlers. There was a low level of direct contact of South Korean origins with North Korean settlers as 89.5 percent of the public gain the knowledge about North Korean settlers through the media while only 1.6 percent attain the knowledge about North Korean newcomers from direct contact (National\_Human\_Rights\_Commission\_of\_Korea 2014, 16). When media is the main source of gaining information about North Korean settlers, the possibility of prejudice from distorted information becomes greater. According to a survey from the National Human Rights Commission, othering of North Korean settlers is dominant in the South Korean media (National\_Human\_Rights\_Commission\_of\_Korea 2014, 11).

##### 5. 5. Can I Live as I am?: Threatened Subjectivity as a Newcomer

Othering and discrimination lead to fear of misunderstanding. It takes away the subjectivity of newcomers in the adjustment process in South Korean society. Wright (2010, 373) illustrates loss of autonomy and self-expression migrants go through. While she links these concepts to loss of freedom, self-restraint is linked to pressures to adjust in the new society. One interviewee (27, four years in South Korea) said "The majority of the people (from North Korea) think they should follow the rules as we are foreigners here." While her words illustrate how newcomers go through the process of belittling, if not eradication, of individual subjectivity by their choice from outside, another interviewee (30, seven years in South Korea) said she feels her subjectivity is threatened under the pressure of adapting to a new society.

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<sup>13</sup> While there is no gender indication in Korean pronouns, it was hard to

<sup>14</sup> The psychological distance was scored as 3.3 out of five. Three is labeled as normal, close to statistical concept of median. (National\_Human\_Rights\_Commission\_of\_Korea 2014, 15)

*I am so tired of people telling me that I should be this and that. I have to make my own choice, but somehow I happen to take the path as people tell me to. ... At one point, I realized that I am just going the way as South Koreans told me to do and came to think what is good about South Korean society since what I liked about coming to here was that I could make a choice. From the point I chose to come to this country. I just feel like “just leave me alone.”*

She also expressed burdensome feelings of being summoned by various institutions.

*I think it's a society which only tells us to come. So many organizations tell us to come. Isn't there any organization that tells us to go rather than come?... What I hated most in North Korea was group life. Because we have so many group life like party and youth alliance as such. And I feel like it's same here. I have to belong to some organizations and even make membership fee. I hated group life in North Korea and paid my membership fee there for about two percent or something, and it is same here.*

She suggested patience of South Korean society as a solution to the pressures to adjust that she experienced.

*... Even if North Korean defectors are not good at hanging around with people, they should wait for us. However, they keep telling us to adjust to this society and I feel it is quite tired. ... I think there are so many small Kim Il-Sungs here. ... They should just support us to adjust by ourselves. However, they cannot wait for that and push us.*

Collectivism has been pointed as a characteristic of South Korean society from many scholars (Han 2015, Jung 2010, Park 2016c). As collectivism was combined with a fast pace of South Korean society that is aggressively labeled as a “military society,” as viewed in the theoretical part, the intensity of pressure for North Korean settlers to adjust to South Korean society can cause psychological burden for individuals.

The pressure to conform comes from an idea that there is a certain rule to shape lives in a society as it is well demonstrated by Marcuse in *One Dimensional Man*. Such lineality easily leads to negative labeling and stereotyping toward newcomers. Another interviewee said she pays attention to her behaviours since she is concerned that people might increase the prejudice toward North Koreans as they would say “It is the way North Koreans do.”

## 6. Analysis

As illustrated from the Korea Hana Foundation census, the satisfaction level of North Korean settlers in South Korean society is relatively high as it hits 67 percent of the total respondents in the census. Nevertheless, one of the common factors that I found throughout the process of interviewing North Koreans was that many discontent narratives about South Korean society continue. There can be various reasons behind the gap between the answers in the surveys and in-depth responses.

The first is the sample bias of the interviewees in this study. However, considering other qualitative studies that dealt with discontent narratives, the news articles from different news agencies that deal with the North Korean migrants who are even talking about going back to North Korea, the possibility of sample bias seems low. After all, the discontent discourse is already a widely received fact among many qualitative studies and that of North Korean settlers are not much different from that of South Koreans who mock their home country as “hell” shows there is fundamental problem to tackle in South Korean society.

Another reason may come from the institutional characteristics that are not prone to captures the dynamics of individuals. While the surveys and census are mostly done by renowned organizations or governmental organizations with large funding compared to individual researcher, the official characteristic of the organizations may make it harder for the interviewees to answer questions in a candid manner or reflect the multifaceted dynamics of North Korean settlers’ lives. For example, one interviewee told me “many North Korean settlers are experts on taking surveys” as so many research organizations and researchers are approaching them for surveys and getting answers to research questions. One of them said,

*It is common for us to get paid like 100,000 won (approximately 100 USD), 200,000 (approximately 200 USD) won and even 300,000 won (approximately 300 USD) for answering survey questions. When there are organizations that pay us for surveys, there are people who bring the information in the group chat rooms (on SNS platform) and people would go for surveys in groups. ... They would easily say, “let’s go and earn money” and say “we should write good things since they are paying us.”*

The answers of the respondents to public organizations may be comprised of “official answers” and “informal answers.” While the perception of the people often consist of public/private areas, as many feminist scholars have pointed out, the official stance of North Korean settlers may come from their attempts to adjust to a new society as migrants (Ruth Gavison 1992).

These official answers are, reflection of respondents’ hope rather than a reality. The most expected problems about these contradictory outcomes are, especially when considering the frustrations of South Korean young people who describe South Korea as Hell Joseon, hopes of optimism can always change into disappointment and frustration when the reality does not meet the hopes. While the majority of North Korean settlers maintain positive

answers in their relatively early adaptation process less than ten years, it may not guarantee a rosy future unless South Korean society meets their expectations.

After all, whether it was voluntary or not, North Korean settlers are the migrants who left their home countries. Being in a new land where it requires extra efforts to adjust, many migrants may have different ideas about the host society. On one side, their attempts to adjust in a new society can give them a standardized perception frame that is closer to an integrative approach. At the same time, they are the ones who have experienced living in two or more societies, thus who are naturalized to compare different societies and easily catch the problems of new societies through their life experiences. The fact that North Korean settlers experienced life in another country, North Korea, makes it inevitable for many from North Korea to compare their experiences between North and South Korea.

Can South Korean society protect the hope of newcomers from North Korea, who try their best and believe the best will come to them as they make effort? Will the interviewee's son, who bravely chose to try his best in South Korea, be satisfied with his decision to stay in South Korea after 10 years or 20 years? As a good middle school boy told his mother, it may be too early for him to jump to the negative prospect on South Korean society. However, many young South Koreans are talking about hopelessness.

While there are many explicit problems with North Korean government including human rights violations, the "more" industrialized and capitalized South Korean society has many problems to deal with. Unless the path to the solutions to these problems are openly discussed and sympathized by the general public with discontent narratives of newcomers from North Korea, the ongoing peace process which directly links with unification discourse can only lead to another type of inferno.

## 7. Further Studies

All these issues in this study leads to further research topics that should be linked to find answers from this paper. First one is the future economic topography in South Korea. The confrontation between socialism and capitalism has been a classical topic since the emergence of Marx and the Korean Peninsula has been the stage of the ideological warfare in reality. After seven decades, one is widely called as a winner while the other is rated as a loser. Nevertheless, the overrated winner without deeper understanding about it from outside does not have the answer for the future either. What kind of compromises could be made to what extent while the two Koreas are heading to the path never taken? Going back to the Table Two of this paper, what kind of eclecticism should/could South Korea make? The comparison of various political economic systems will be inevitable.

It eventually leads to another topic of social system and psychological satisfaction. While it includes emotional aspects of human being by their nature, the new form of social

system with consideration of psychological element should be made. The current academic stream on happiness and development will be a good footing to start this topic of study.

Another topic to delve into is further speculation on discontent narrative of migrants. While various types of newcomers to the host societies are often regarded as the agent to integrate or adjust, what kind of implicit requests are given to new settlers from the host society? Is it another form of enforcement from the states? If so, what does it mean? While this question brings one to the topic of state formation and institutions, new perspectives of migration history should be reformulated and written.

## 8. Conclusion

Sung-ha Ju, a North Korean defector journalist asks a question in his article “Then, would you try to go to Buk (North) Joseon (Korea) instead of Hell Joseon.”(Ju 2015) While he illustrates what would happen if any person escapes South Korea with 50,000,000 Korean won (approximately 50,000 USD) and describes a “hell-like” realities one would face in North Korea, he says it is not yet a hell if there is a room to get worse. In a similar tone, Park asserts “Hell Joseon” discourse is a destruction theory that maintains the social system in South Korea (Park 2016a, 73). According to the understanding of Park, the Hell Joseon discourse actually functions as a discourse that allows the reflection of South Korean society and provides more room to improve existing problems.

In the book of Joshua, the Israelites continue their fights even after they enter the land of Canaan. After all, the land of Canaan is a “promised” land, not a happily ever after Cinderella’s castle. When the land of Canaan also was the land where people had to struggle to make the ultimate promise, the life of abundance with peace, love, and justice, the current struggles South and North Koreans are going through may be a process to make this land as the true promised land. However, what kinds of promises should South Korean society make to North Korean settlers as the international community, including the two Koreas, talk about unified Korea? Is it the mere economic prosperity as the Trump and Moon governments has emphasized ever since the Panmunjeom Declaration in 2018? While the capitalism includes various forms of societies and entails various ethical issues, the current peace process misses these points. While Trump publicly talks about South Korea as the model for North Korea, the Hell Joseon discourse and discontent narratives of North Korean settlers throw question whether the path of South Korea can be a precedent case. After all, many young people in the land call their country as a hell.

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## Appendix I. Simplified Table of Settlement Support for North Korean Migrants

Stage	Period	Category 1	Category 2	Details	
Entrance of Resettlement Center (Hanawon)	First Six Months (on Average)	Basic Education in Hanawon		12 weeks (392 hours) education	
		Housing	Housing Placement	Arrange permanent rental housing	
		Social Welfare	Apply for Basic Subsistence Allowance	Obtain identification number and apply for basic subsistence allowance (Ground on Article 26 of the Protection and Settlement Support Act)	
First Five Years after Resettlement Center (Hanawon) Stage	Directly after Hanawon Stage / Moving into Residence	Settlement Subsidies	Basic Subsidy	KRW 7 million (around USD 7000) for single household (KRW 4 million for the first quarter, KRW 1 million over three quarters)	
			Additional Subsidy for Residents in Non-Capital Areas	Extra KRW 1.3 million for residents who lived two years in non-capital areas, KRW 2.6 million (misc.)	
			Additional Subsidy for the Groups who Need Extra Supports	Seniors, people with disabilities or who needs long-term medical care, and single-parent family. Maximum KRW 15.4 million.	
		Housing	Housing Subsidy	KRW 13 million for a single household	
			Local Settlement Centre Local Settlement Education	Two weeks (60 hours) education and adjustment support program in local-level	
	Settlement Protection	Employment	Job Training		Support the total training fee.  Support the training benefit during the training (KRW 1.2 million upon completion of 500-hour training, additional KRW 200,000 for 120-hour training, extra KRW 160,000 for completion of maximum 740-hour training)
			Obtaining Certificate		KRW 2 million for obtaining of certificate.
			Employee Incentive		KRW 2.5 million for working in one place for more than six months (Maximum of three years).  KRW 16.5 million for people in metropolitan area and KRW 19.5 million for people in non-metropolitan area for

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	working three years straight at one workplace
Employer Incentive	The government supports half of the payment to the employers who hire North Korean migrants (maximum four years with the limitation of KRW 500,000) (Only applies to those who entered before Nov. 28, 2014.)

		Asset Growth Program	Doubles savings from working incomes. (Only applies to people who entered South Korea after Nov. 28, 2014)
		Misc.	Running employment support centre, support the starts of social enterprise, start-ups, farming. Voucher programs.
	Social Security	Basic Subsidy	Maximum five years of support for households with family members who cannot work.  Maximum three years for households with family members who are eligible to work.
		Medical Benefit	Designate as the first class recipients of medical care.
		Special Cases for Pension Grants	Special benefits for pension program for the people in the age range of 50 - 60 upon their entrance.
	Education	Special Cases for Minority Groups for University Entrance	Minority Privilege for university entrance
		Scholarships	Tuition waives for secondary schools and public universities. Support 50% of tuition for private universities.

		Counselling	Follow-up support through local resettlement centre, professional consultants, and adjustment helpers.
Follow-up Stage	After Five Years	Follow-up programs through local settlement centres (Hana Centre) in employment, social adjustment, psychological settlement, education, medical care, legal support.	

Source:(Ha 2016) 6-8.

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