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## PART III

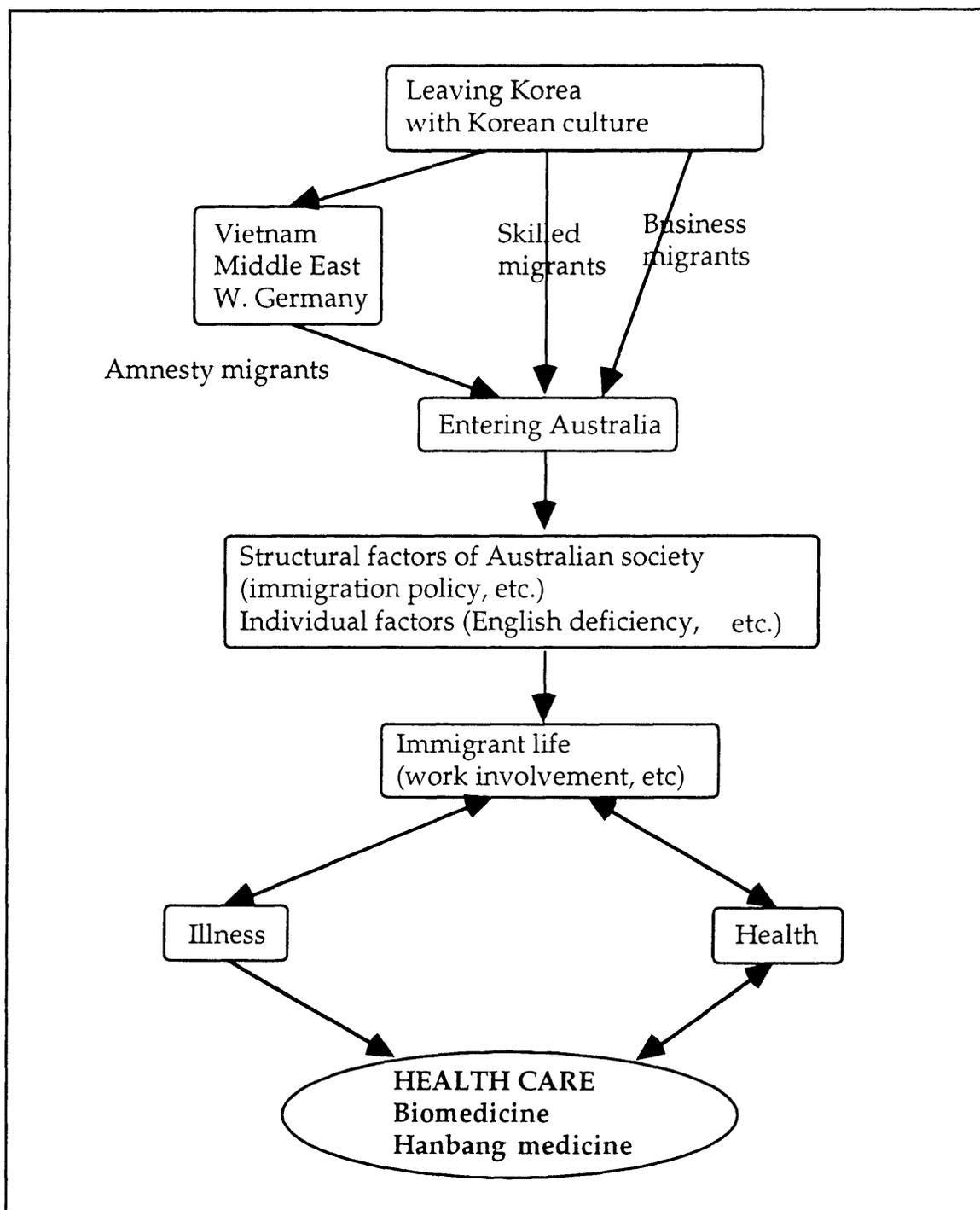
### The Users of Health Care

In Part III of this thesis, I shall present the findings from the data generated through the interviews with the three groups of Korean men using health care in the Korean community in Sydney. In doing this, I have decided to postpone to a later chapter analysis of the data obtained from health care practitioners. This is to enable the views of health care users to be treated in their own right and not be confused with the views of health care providers and vice versa. I shall utilize the information from both respondents and informants to provide an account of the immigrant life, work, health status and health care use amongst Korean men.

Why Koreans left Korea and under what categories of migration (amnesty, skilled migration and business/investment migration) they were admitted to Australia have significantly influenced their lives, work involvement and health care utilization patterns. Korean men's socio-economic backgrounds, influenced by such factors as level of education, were a significant element in determining the categories of admission to Australia. However, it is the categories of admission, rather than the level of education, which most significantly influenced how Korean men adjusted to a new society, affecting their involvement in work and utilization of health care, although most Korean migrants like many other NESB migrants have experienced difficulties and frustrations.

A brief picture of the flow of Korean migrants to Australia, immigrant life and health care use is given in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1: A framework of health care utilization among Korean men in Australia



## *Chapter 7*

### *Australian immigration policy and the settlement of Koreans in Australia*

Chapter 7 discusses how aspects of Australian capitalist development and the changes in immigration policies have influenced the settlement of Korean amnesty, skilled and business migrants in Australia. Utilizing the data from the respondents and informants for this study, I shall go on to explore Korean migrant experiences of leaving Korea and settling in Australia. Changes in Australian immigration patterns and policies, reflecting the changing forms of economic incorporation into the world market, have had a significant impact on the immigrant experiences of racism. This chapter ends with a discussion of the experiences of racial discrimination suffered by people in the three different sample groups.

In discussing international migratory movements in the post World War II, there have been two main phases. In the first phase (1945-73), the economic strategy of large-scale capital was characterized by concentration of investment and expansion of production in the existing advanced countries. The fast-expanding industrial areas of Western Europe, North America and Australia attracted large numbers of migrant workers from less developed

countries or from the European periphery. Common types of migration included the one based on 'guestworker systems', migration of 'colonial workers' to the former colonial powers and permanent migration. Economic motivations through labour recruitment and spontaneous labour migration were the predominant feature in most international migratory movements of the 1945-73 period (Kalantzis 1990). The 'oil crisis' of 1973-4 brought the end of this phase. The consequent recession led to a restructuring of the world economy, involving capital investment in new industrial areas, different patterns of world trade, and the introduction of high technologies. As a result, the second phase in international migration started in the mid-1970s (Castles and Miller 1993: 65-66).

The rapidly changing global economic and political relationships have dramatically influenced Africa, Asia and Latin America. Many countries including South Korea have been through rapid population growth, overuse and destruction of natural resources, uncontrolled urbanization, political instability, and urban and rural poverty. These problems in developing countries have been generating new stimuli for migration to advanced countries. Family reunion, refugee, the asylum-seeker movement and the following skilled and business migration became significant aspects of migration in the period (Castles and Miller 1993). It is during this second phase that the three groups of Korean migrants for this study arrived in Australia.

### **THE 1970S**

Many western industrial countries such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, Spain and Sweden legalized illegal immigrants in the 1970s. Australia's foreign policy linkage to the United States and consequent involvement in Vietnam initiated the first

wave of Asian migration to Australia. The status of a large number of Indo-Chinese boat people was legalized and the number reached 10,000 to 15,000 per year from 1978 to 1982. In Australia, the legalization of the Indo-Chinese and others was made possible under the Australian government's official policy of non-discriminatory immigration selection from 1972 (cf. Collins 1988: 269; Stevens 1996).

As discussed earlier, a large number of Korean soldiers and workers fought in the Vietnam War. As Vietnamese refugees left for the United States, Australia and other countries, many Koreans in Vietnam also travelled by air to those countries in search of employment instead of returning to Korea. According to the informants for this study who helped Korean illegal migrants in document preparation for the amnesties in 1974, 1976 and 1980, a few thousand Korean workers from Vietnam arrived in Australia. About 500 Koreans stayed on and 'benefited' from the amnesties. This news led more Korean workers already overseas and in Korea to Australia. Apart from a small number of skilled migrants, most Koreans in the 1970s entered Australia with tourist visas but overstayed their permit and worked without permission. Those who arrived by the end of 1979 also gained permanent residency.

It should be mentioned that following mass non-British immigration in the 1950s, the Australian government had introduced a policy of assimilationism to encourage immigrants to become culturally and socially indistinguishable from the Anglo-Australian population (Wilton and Bosworth 1984). By the 1960s, it was obvious that assimilationism did not work because of 'the processes of labour market segmentation, residential segregation and community formation', which led immigrants to be distinguishable from Anglo- or English Speaking Background (ESB)

migrants (Castles and Miller 1993: 116). Political parties, becoming conscious of the political potential of the 'ethnic vote' by the 1970s, dropped assimilationist policies and shifted to multi-culturalism, which openly acknowledged the legitimacy of maintaining the languages and cultures of the areas of origin among immigrants. The abandonment of assimilationism was partly to ensure the availability of sufficient migrant labour to buttress the economic boom (Castles, Kalantzis et al. 1988: 60). Like the 1960s, the period of the 1970s observed growing acceptance of difference and a decline in overt racism, largely due to the relative economic prosperity and the increasing recognition of the significance of immigration to economic growth (Castles and Miller 1993).

Under the state's leading role in the recruitment and selection of migrants, the presence of migrants in Australia ensured a sufficient supply of labour for economic development. Informal and institutional discrimination against migrants led them to take low-status, and poorly paid jobs that locals reject, which in turn allowed locals to take advantage of opportunities for upward mobility. Informal and structural discrimination against immigrants and their lack of 'marketable capabilities (education, vocational training or language proficiency)' tended to justify immigrants' disadvantages in the labour market (Castles, Kalantzis et al. 1988: 81, 89).

From the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, Australia attempted to shift the emphasis of the economy from primary production to manufacturing, which created the need for migrant workers in dirty and difficult jobs (Castles, Kalantzis et al. 1988: 91). Migrant workers including Korean amnesty workers played a significant part in manufacturing, particularly steel construction, welding and certain service areas such as, cleaning. Although employment in these areas has declined since the 1970s, the high

concentration in such areas persisted because workers could not easily be replaced by Anglo-Australians (Castles, Kalantzis et al. 1988: 92).

### THE EARLY 1980S

Until the 1970s, Australia (and North America) maintained immigration policies which intended to control and facilitate permanent immigration. The focus shifted in the 1980s to the prevention of illegal migration, the management of refugee and asylum-seeker movements, and achieving the right balance between worker and family migration (Castles, Kalantzis et al. 1988: 89; Collins 1988: 261). Changes in the world economic system in the 1980s had a major impact on Australian immigration policy. The globalization and restructuring of the world economy led to a preference for skilled labour or business/ investment migration (Castles 1992). The international recession of the early 1980s severely affected Australia, with an unemployment rate of 10% in 1983. The Australian Labor Government cut the immigration intake and permitted only 62,000 new entries in 1983-84 and 78,000 in 1984-85, compared to 100,000 per year in 1982-83. However, Asia became the continent sending the largest number of immigrants to Australia (36% of net immigration in 1982-83) (Castles 1992: 57).

There has been no official amnesty in Australia since the one in 1980, despite the arrival of a large number of illegal migrants especially in the late 1980s. The number of illegal Koreans reached about 3,200 at that time (*Sydney Morning Herald*, cited in M.D. Yang 1990). Along with the deepening economic recession in the 1980s, there was a return of racism, with increasing public hostility towards immigration (especially from Asia) and multi-culturalism (HREOC 1991, cited in Castles and Miller 1993: 119). The increase of the Australian immigration intake in the mid-1980s (about 95,000) and 1987-88 (120,000) occurred in the 'labour migration' categories

such as skilled/independent migration (Collins 1988: 261). This policy was followed by an influential report of the Committee for the Economic Development of Australia (see Norman and Meikle 1985), arguing for skilled and business migration to stimulate economic growth (Castles 1992). There was also increased emphasis on the need for 'skills' particularly in the late 1980s, especially after the presentation of the Report of the Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies (CAAIP 1987; Iredale 1996: 417). Most Korean migrants to Australia in the 1980s entered under the categories of skilled/independent and family reunion migrants (cf. Castles and Miller 1993: 90; S. Paek 1990; also see Table 5.2).

Just as overseas education is closely associated with a greater tendency to emigrate amongst Hong Kong students (*Far Eastern Economic Review* 1988 April 7: 71), the large number of Korean students in Australia and their consequent settlement in Australia also contributed to the increase of independent/skilled migrants to Australia.

### THE LATE 1980S AND THE 1990S

However, in the late 1980s, in Australia and North America, the priority given to family-related immigration was questioned and shifted to advocate increased immigration based on economic criteria. Similar to United States and Canadian immigration policies, Australia increased skilled and business migration in the late 1980s (Castles and Miller 1993: 90), but all types of migration in 1991 and 1992 were reduced because of the severe recession.

The Fraser government in the late 1970s had introduced business migration in the hope that wealthy business migrants would relocate their fortunes to Australia. The Hawke government in 1985-96 embraced this program to revitalize the sluggish economy under recession, by introducing a category

of 'entrepreneurial' business migration. This program was to encourage those with high level business experiences to come so that they would generate more employment and income in Australia (Collins 1984a: 18; Collins 1988: 273-274). Australian governments in the early 1990s have encouraged the business/entrepreneurial migrant who brings capital and other economic resources, as distinct from professionals or individuals with particular skills (Inglis and Wu 1992: 196).

It was after 1987 or with the revitalization of the business migration program that the number of Korean business migrants started to increase significantly. In 1988-89, more than 40% of Korean settlers entered Australia as business migrants (Inglis and Wu 1992: 199).

### **THE SETTLEMENT OF THE THREE GROUPS**

Unlike amnesty migrants, who are often known as 'empty-handed migrants' in the Korean community, skilled and business migrants, who are often known as 'container migrants', had planned and chosen their migration to Australia and were admitted as legitimate migrants in the first place.<sup>7</sup> The rationale for allowing amnesty migrants to remain in Australia tended to be strictly economic whereas the motivations for the other two groups were, in addition to economic reasons, a concern for their children's education, an escape from an unkind, congested, corrupted and competitive society and the desire to have a better quality of life.

Amnesty migrants had had many years of experience of living overseas prior to coming to Australia. They appeared to have entered Australia with many ideas about what it is like to live as an immigrant. Most respondents

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<sup>7</sup> Koreans in Sydney coined these terms because amnesty migrants entered Australia with a couple of suit cases and a few hundred dollars or less in their hands and skilled and business migrants did so with their belongings in shipping containers.

(n: 10) of the skilled migrants (n: 14) had also been overseas, but as tourists or working for Korean companies for less than a couple of years. Skilled migrants came to Australia with little understanding about 'living as an immigrant' except two skilled migrants: one who had worked for a Korean company in Vietnam and the Middle East for several years and the other who had lived in West Germany for nine years.

Most business migrants had been overseas on business or as tourists. Half (n: 5) the respondents visited Australia to test out the possibility of migrating to Australia. However, this group of people came with little idea about what it is like to live as an immigrant or to do business in a foreign land.

There are some major differences between amnesty migrants and the other two groups in terms of how they adjusted to their new lives in Australia. Almost all amnesty migrants came to Australia on their own, leaving their dependants in Korea. They started manual work and received no government assistance. Their first few years, until they became legitimate migrants through amnesties, were the most difficult and unstable period of their immigrant life in Australia. They could not have permanent accommodation and had to elude the immigration police.

However, most skilled and business migrants, who came with their families, started their immigrant life by attending six months to two years of Adult Migrant English Studies (AMES) classes with their wives. The husband and wife often explored the tourist attractions in Sydney in the afternoons after the English classes. This was also the time to meet those who had arrived in Australia at similar times and play Korean cards and drink or eat together. Those who travelled by the same plane or attended AMES at the same time easily developed friendships. In addition, skilled migrants tended to spend another six months in the so-called 'Skill Max

Program' which was designed to improve both skills and their English ability at work. They assumed that their efforts would ensure their employment opportunities in their new home country. For the period of these preparations, they received unemployment benefit allowances. This period was one of the happiest moments of immigrant life for these two groups.

The first six months were the happiest period in Australia. I was happy because I hadn't yet come across problems. The fact that I had migrated to Australia was enough to make me happy because it was hard to be selected (Yang Chin-u, computer skilled migrant).

Interview data revealed that the amnesty migrants were the group most quickly and relatively well adjusted to the new society. Given the reasons why they came to Australia instead of returning to Korea, they were prepared to do the dirty, difficult and degrading work immediately available for them irrespective of their qualifications.

### **Amnesty Migrants**

Mostly coming from low socio-economic backgrounds, amnesty migrants initially were not able to gain entry to Australia nor were they able to emigrate to the United States so they went to other countries such as South Vietnam, the Middle East and South America, from where they entered Australia as tourists thus becoming illegal migrants in the 1970s. The primary reason they went to those countries was to escape unemployment and to support their families in Korea.

Coming from a poor family, Kim Wŏn-sul, now in his early 60s, had six years of education in Korea. His education was supported by his elder brother as his father had died when Kim was young. He was a casual worker cleaning a drainage system in a fertilizer factory, on call when the drainage was blocked after rain. Later he gained full-time work in the factory but was

soon retrenched. He also worked in a laundry and as a bartender serving soldiers at an American army base in Korea. He became tired of low wages because he was unable to provide for the basic needs of his family. Finally, he borrowed some money and obtained a tourist visa to go to South Vietnam.

He entered Vietnam with \$100 in his hand in August 1966. The little English he had picked up as a bartender helped him to work for either the Korean or American armies there. After a few years, he wanted to work as a generator technician for the American army. He did a written exam and attended an interview after submitting a false curriculum vitae (CV), which stated that he was a generator technician in an American army base in Korea. In a practical exam, he could not show what a parallel circuit was. He had to confess that his CV was false and asked for a traineeship. He was sent to a generating station on the border between Vietnam and Kampuchea. He managed to pick up enough skills to be a technician. After a while, wanting to learn to drive, he drove an army truck without permission, ran into a ditch and was fired from the job.

As the American army was losing the war in Vietnam, which threatened the economic needs of his family in Korea, Kim wanted to come to Australia to look for any employment. But the officers in the Korean Embassy in Saigon said, 'Return to Korea as you made a fortune here!' Kim went to Bangkok and managed to obtain a visa to enter Australia via Iran. In addition to unpleasant memories about his life in Korea, surrounded by poverty, Kim still regrets that the Korean Embassy in Saigon was not cooperative and was unnecessarily harsh on him and others.

Son U-jong, who managed to start a small business in Vietnam told me why Koreans in Vietnam came to Australia.

As South Vietnam was losing the war, most Koreans there left for other countries instead of returning to Korea. In the 1970s, Korea was a poor country. Korean money had little value and the Koreans in Vietnam experienced the power of American dollars. Furthermore, they knew they couldn't find a job even if they returned to Korea (Son U-jong, amnesty migrant).

Another group of Koreans (over 80 households) who entered Australia were from Tongduch'ŏn, a city close to the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea. The American army based there was supposed to protect South Korea from North Korea and to represent the power of the United States on the peninsula as well as in the region during the Cold War period. The locals mostly had been engaged in serving the army and in the catering service for the American soldiers. Kim Ki-ch'un recalls the low morale he had as a servant in restaurants and social clubs for the soldiers. Yi Man-su, also from Tongduch'ŏn, told me the background which brought him to Australia:

I came to Australia in 1977. About that time, the American Presidential candidate Jimmy Carter announced his plan to withdraw the American defence force from Korea as an electoral promise. I was in trouble as my family was living on my work for the American army based in the city. While I was thinking of a way out of the upcoming trouble, some Koreans from Australia visited Tongduch'ŏn. I was aware that they worked in Vietnam and went to Australia after the end of the Vietnam War and settled there. They explained to us what kind of country Australia was. ... According to them, Australia was a heaven on earth and had beautiful weather. Furthermore, there was plenty of work available.

The actual movement of Koreans from Tongduch'ŏn to Australia was facilitated by others, such as travel agents, who were trying to make their own living. In the 1970s, emigration to the United States was popular amongst middle class Koreans and working for a Korean company overseas was popular for many lower class Koreans. Yi Man-su went on to tell me how he actually got to Australia.

In 1976, only a limited number of Koreans came to Australia directly from Korea. But there was a large number in 1977, because more people came to

know about Australia. Not many skilled Koreans migrated to Australia at that time. ... People sought visas using all sorts of excuses and were granted temporary visas. The reason was to grab the chance to stay on. This alarmed the Australian Embassy in Seoul, and resulted in a stricter examination of the papers before a visa was issued. Well, in responding to that, the travel agents helping to get visas had tricks. I came to know an agent who was recruiting those who wanted to go to Australia. The idea was to abuse the transit visa system. At that time, Nicaragua had no official diplomatic relations with Korea, but appointed a Korean an honorary ambassador responsible for granting visas. So I was granted a visa to enter Nicaragua to work on an oyster farm. I was supposed to reach Nicaragua via Hong Kong, Singapore, Sydney, and the United States. Eleven of us came to Sydney as a group and the transit visa allowed us to be out of the airport. ... When we got out of the airport, we scattered all over the place. That was meant to happen, as we had no intention of going to an oyster farm in Nicaragua. The travel agent ... started my new life in Australia. The same agent recruited another eleven people, who arrived in Australia with the same itinerary one month after my arrival. However, they were unfortunate to be caught and deported back to Korea. ... (Yi Man-su, amnesty migrant).

As already discussed, many Korean immigrants in South American countries such as Brazil and Paraguay were not satisfied with their life there and looked for an opportunity to enter Canada or the United States. Son U-jong, who was the receiver of those Korean arrivals from South America, told me how Koreans in South America came to know about Koreans in Australia.

Of the Koreans who came to Australia from Vietnam, I knew five of them who were dissatisfied with their menial work. They managed to enter Brazil in the hope that they might be able to enter Canada or the United States. They came across many Koreans who were worried about their children's education. One of the major concerns was that Spanish was no good for the children's future. Koreans started to enter Australia since then. About 300 households arrived from South America (Son U-jong, amnesty migrant).

#### *No. 48 Redfern street, Redfern*

As the first major flow of Koreans to Australia was started by those from Vietnam, most of them first settled in Redfern, a suburb in the inner city of the metropolitan Sydney. New migrants were likely to find accommodation

in a suburb like that in the 1970s because of the low rents. The residence at 48 Redfern Street, Redfern was a place for several Koreans from Vietnam. It was a temporary residence for them until they found a job and their own residence. However, Son U-jong stayed there for a lengthy period. He was 58 years old when he arrived in Australia in 1974. Unlike others, his intention to come to Australia was not to look for economic opportunity. He was prepared to be deported immediately if he was caught by an immigration officer.

The residence was used as a kind of welfare centre for new Korean arrivals. A large number of Koreans used the address to correspond with their family in Korea and their friends in many parts of the world. They were careful not to expose their actual place of living to the government, protecting themselves from immigration officers. The correspondence brought more Koreans from Korea, the Middle East and South America and it brought still more after the amnesties in 1976 and 1980.<sup>8</sup> Once a couple of Koreans in a

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<sup>8</sup> Amnesty migrants remained overstayed visitors as they had entered with short term visas. Their status as illegal migrants meant a high possibility of deportation. Kim Ki-ch'un, a university graduate, went to Hong Kong as he had difficulty obtaining a visa to enter Australia. There he bought an air ticket to get to a South American country, via Sydney. His baggage was loaded but he was told that he could not go to Sydney without a visa. He argued that he should be allowed to stay in Sydney for 72 hours as a transit passenger. After causing a delay of the departing plane he arrived at the Sydney Airport. He was caught by an immigration police officer in the airport but he showed him his qualifications and managed to persuade the officer that he could have a tour around Sydney for a few days before he left.

Kim found accommodation in Kings Cross and met a Korean. Kim was told that immigration officers had been around to look for an illegal Korean who jumped out of a window and broke his leg: immigration officers had just caught fifteen Koreans and Filipinos. Some Koreans had been caught while they were eating in restaurants. Villawood detention centre was full of illegal migrants, thus as soon as people were caught they were immediately deported. Kim was frightened and stayed indoors for many days.

Concern for deportation made their life doubly difficult. When Koreans were caught they were told that if they would pay for the trip back to Korea they might have a chance to return to Australia legally and that if not, their chances of returning to Australia were virtually nil. Most Koreans in the detention centre managed to pay for the trip back to Korea, in the hope that they would return. Kim Ki-ch'un regrets that when some Koreans left Australia and arrived in Hong Kong an amnesty was called on 13 June 1980. There were also six Koreans who became legal migrants when they were in the detention centre and were about to be deported next day. The six Koreans have formed a social club ever since then.

few parts of the world came to know about Australia, the news of the 'possibility' of working or settling in Australia spread quickly. When some new Korean arrivals from South America were asked about their destination at Sydney Airport on one occasion they mentioned the address at Redfern.

A clerk in the airport said, 'The residence must be pretty big. Every Korean arrival heads to the place. Why is that?' I told him that it was where the Korean society was and that Koreans there would guide us around Sydney. We could tell them that because we were supposed to be tourists (Sim Mu-ho, amnesty migrant from Paraguay).

Son U-jong searched for accommodation as well as jobs for the new arrivals. Many amnesty migrants whom I have met mentioned Son's name and gratefully acknowledged what he had done for them.

### **Skilled Migrants**

By 1995, there were about 130 computer skilled Korean migrants who had migrated to Australia with their family members. Most of them arrived in the period 1985-90. The emigration of Koreans with computer skill to the United States or Canada had virtually finished by the early 1980s. Like most other Korean skilled migrants, the computer-related workers came to Australia because they wanted a better opportunity for their career and their families as well as economic affluence.

Returning to Korea after working in Saudi Arabia for three years, I didn't like the human relations at the workplace, authoritarian public officers and the life in Korea. I simply couldn't put up with the stress of the salary man. ... One of my close friends came to Australia three years ahead of me and spoke about it in positive terms (Mun Chin-ho, computer migrant).

The respondents among the skilled migrants were generally critical of Korean society. They regarded Australia as a much better country in which to live than Korea. Despite holding jobs in Korea commensurate with their university education, most of them were dissatisfied with the long working

hours which adversely affected their private and family life. It was a relief for them to come to Australia.

I find it comfortable to live in Australia. It allows a proper living environment for a human being. I haven't been able to accumulate a sum of capital but I've always thought that Australia is a good country in which to live (Mun Chin-ho, computer migrant).

The skilled migrants have mentioned their original high hopes which led them to want to stay in Australia instead of returning to Korea. However, the reality of their new Australian lives appeared to be a totally different matter. My question as to 'what brought them to Australia' posed to skilled migrants, brought often a quick reminder of how anxious they were to come to the 'land of opportunity'. However, it was quickly blurred by their hard life in Australia.

My wife wanted to come in the first place, though I had been in agreement with her wish. I thought that there were too many people in Korea ... I was also curious about Australia because in Korea it was commonly known as a 'heaven on earth'. However, it wasn't my priority to emigrate anywhere. But I couldn't help being persuaded by my wife. So I was half willing and half reluctant to come (Yang Chin-u, computer migrant).

Kim Sang-yun, now in his mid 50s, worked on the maintenance of sports facilities at the Korean Defence Academy prior to migration and arrived as a skilled baker in 1986. He trained to be a baker for a year before he successfully applied for migration. The reasons for his migration were for his three children's education and he chose Australia where he, as a member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, could carry out his religious activity on Saturdays. He was a founding member of the church in the Korean community.

The preparation for emigrating to Australia involved many farewell parties from their work colleagues, friends and relatives. It was seen to be a privilege to come to the 'land of opportunity' as 'chosen' people. The picture

of the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House on the wall of the Australian Embassy in Seoul was only a fantasy for them until they finally received the permanent entry visa. Although they felt sad about leaving their home country for good, they were happy to leave such a congested place with many lingering social problems, known as *han'guk ppyŏng* or Korean disease. Arriving at the Sydney Airport they were full of hopes and it was too early to think about the unveiled troubles they would face sooner rather than later.

They were generally in touch with their acquaintances before their arrival, so that they were met at the airport. The friends assisted the new arrivals to rent a flat, choose schools for their children and receive entitlements such as family allowances and Medicare. The skilled migrants generally started their new life by attending AMES classes for six months. After a period of six months or one year, their problems started.

My wife and I didn't know how to earn the bread in Australia. ... Before coming to Australia, I thought that a little bit of work would suffice for our economic needs. I simply couldn't find work suitable for me. In addition, the children had their own problems adjusting to their studies and things. ... We started to quarrel (Hwang Sang-uk, skilled migrant).

The problems which skilled migrants went through in the first three years were complex. Although they were physically in Australia, their minds continually swung between Australia and Korea. They suffered from homesickness and often wondered whether they would be better off returning to Korea. After about three years, they came to have a more formed view of what it is like to be an immigrant. Children were the ones who adjusted quickly to the new school systems and the new society in general. In three years the children were reluctant to return to Korea and women were well advanced in the process of adjusting.

After three years, I had become confident. I understood how I could fit into the new culture, society and how to behave. I was no longer too conscious of what others would think of me. Before, I used to worry that I might be smelly to them [Euro-Australians] because of my garlic consumption. I gradually came to have peace of mind (Hwang Sang-uk, skilled migrant).

However, most men appeared to have remained largely dissatisfied with their new life and suffered from status anxiety.

*What have been the most difficult things in the process of adjusting?*

Loneliness or isolation at work. It was too hard to recover from the stress caused by having to start from the bottom of the hierarchy at work. I wondered whether I wanted to return to Korea or settle in Australia for good. In due course, my children were well adjusting. Then, it became impossible for me to return.

*When did you make up your mind to stay in Australia?*

After three years.

*In three years time, why did your children and wife come to like and enjoy Australia more than you did?*

They were given more rights in Australia. But men's status dropped dramatically. No wonder they didn't like their life in Australia at all. Children pick up Australian culture quickly. I've lost the respect due to a father and husband, which I had in Korea. ... From a man's point of view, the longer they stayed in Australia, the less confident of themselves they were (Yang Chin-u, skilled migrant).

Even though Yang and others seriously considered returning to Korea it gradually became more difficult. They felt more or less 'locked' in Australia because their children were already well adjusted after a few years.

Yi Man-yong worked as a senior manager for a Korean construction company in Korea and overseas for several years prior to coming to Australia in 1987. He said that he had to do some menial work, such as cleaning, for his first four years in Australia, until he obtained a plumbing contract. He deeply regretted that he had emigrated.

Skilled migrants felt that, amongst many problems, the language barrier and racial discrimination were the things they had to put up with if they wished to remain in Australia. The skilled migrants had better written English ability than the amnesty migrants, but there appeared to be little difference in their spoken English. After living in foreign countries, some of the amnesty migrants seemed to have a relatively high standard of English speaking ability, which enabled them to be involved in small business. I learned that the skilled migrants did not seem to have an advantage because of their educational achievement. It may be more appropriate to say that no matter what the level of skill, their prospects tended to be easily undermined by structural forces (e.g., economic recession and major restructuring of Australian economy).

### **Business Migrants**

Business migrants were well off in Korea and the reason for emigration was not only economic but also non-economic. They had relatively easy access to most services and facilities available in Korea. However, following the ever increasing trade revenue in the late 1980s, the Korean government encouraged overseas investment. Apart from their wish to carry out their business overseas, small entrepreneurs, like the skilled migrants, have also become dissatisfied with the continually deteriorating environment, air pollution, traffic jams, and numerous social problems, which adversely affected the quality of life in Korea. The education of children has also been a significant reason to migrate to Australia (cf. Sullivan and Gunasekaran 1993).

The major inflow of Korean business migrants to Australia started in 1987. At that time, \$350,000 was the minimum amount required to be a business migrant. Unlike amnesty and skilled migrants, half the business migrant

respondents visited Australia prior to immigration application. The visitors felt that Australians appeared to be less competitive (cited in C. Kim 1992: 430), so they believed that they would be able to do much better than the typical Australian-born business person. Once they thought in such a light and decided to emigrate to Australia or leave Korea, many Koreans seemed to pursue it until their wish came true.

Following the rapid economic growth in the 1980s and the most serious industrial disputes in Korea in the last few decades, workers demanded better pay and conditions. This had made it difficult for small businesses relying on labour intensive work.

My life was a continuing process of stress. I couldn't produce goods without paying for raw materials in cash. But I couldn't get paid immediately after I distributed products to wholesalers because of competition amongst manufacturers. It was hard to get a loan from bank. Further, conglomerates take advantage of the scale of economy and this makes it extremely hard for small manufacturers to survive. Getting a rubber stamp from bureaucrats is also tiresome and costs a lot of money. ... The increase in wages and decrease in sales hit my business. That was when business migration to Australia had just become possible and popular. I joined a tour program to observe Australian factories (Min Yong-mo, business migrant).

It was apparent that Min Yong-mo had a hard time running his business. It was not surprising that most business migrant respondents pointed out 'unnecessary difficulties', with particular reference to their relations with government bureaucrats. A well known fact, even amongst ordinary people in Korean streets, is that 'If you don't cheat or get involved in fraud or bribery you simply cannot do business.' This has applied to all levels of business from the small to the large conglomerate. Former Korean presidents' taking huge bribes from each conglomerate was only part of the commonly practised norm. Business migrant respondents in Sydney told me that they were tired of the unlawful activities in which they were involved, although many of them were quite used to exercising them in

cooperation with bureaucrats. Despite undesirable business cultures in Korea, they would have been prepared to continue in Korea had their business been flourishing.

In this context, it was tempting for small business persons in Korea to join one of the package tour programs, constantly promoted by immigration agents, in the hope that they could migrate to Australia. The tour usually lasts for a couple of weeks and this is about the time it took them to decide. According to most business migrant respondents now in Sydney, they thought that they could carry out a business successfully. Yi Ki-bung, not fully satisfied with his immigrant life, told me that one needs to spend at least six months in Australia before making the decision.

When I was visiting Western countries for my business I tended to see a lot of good things. Hardship isn't easily visible. I felt that if I did business in Australia I could do even better than I did in Korea. I also thought that if I sold out my business in Korea, I could come to Australia as a millionaire which might be beyond what most locals could achieve. ... Australia has been the most popular lately and the competition for selection is high (Mun Ho-jin, business migrant).

As for Mun who was in search of a place which had good weather, as well as other things, the prospect of running a business was not the most important reason business migrants chose Australia. Offering a better place for the education and future of their children was an important motivation for many Korean small business people to emigrate to Australia. Mun, who employed more than 70 workers in his clothing business in Korea, had a daughter who wished to go abroad for her tertiary study. Concerned about the twenty-year-old daughter, the whole family started to think about emigrating and eventually came to Australia (cf. Goldberg 1985).

Immigration agents in Sydney often prepare business plans for potential immigrants and the necessary documents. It is often apparent that the

primary reason for some respondents to come to Australia was not to run a business but to take a rest.

I was worn out by my work in Korea, which I started by the age of 17. As I was tired of the life in Korea, I thought that I should search for another place to spend the rest of my life (Kim Tong-sik, business migrant).

Upon the success of his application for emigration, Kim Tong-sik did not have enough time to dispose fully of his business in Korea. He handed over the rest to his brother-in-law. After visiting Korea several times in relation to his old business, he does not even want to visit Korea again. His trips led him to think that Korea is too congested and unpleasant.

Son Chang-p'yo, former deputy principal of a school in Korea, chose Australia for a change in his life. He applied for business migration with the money he received in superannuation from the school.

My ancestors have lived in a country town for the last 23 generations or the last 700 years. I served a school in the town for 25 years. I got tired of living in one place, which made my life style or ideas stuck in one place. Then I happened to visit two of my former students living in Australia. The visit eventually inspired me to emigrate. Further, I wanted to offer a better place for my children so that their future world might be broadened (Son Chang-p'yo, business migrant).

Business migrant respondents and Yim T'aek-chin, an immigration agent in Korea in the past and currently in Australia, find that about 80% of the total Korean business migrants in Sydney owned some sort of business or were executive managers for businesses in Korea. The respondents told me that the Korean Business Migrants' Association members include former public servants, ex-military servicemen, and school and university teachers. I also interviewed one with neither business experience nor work experience. He came with money offered by his parents.

A Korean business migrant who lived in Sydney for three years told a reporter from Korea about his immigrant life as follows (C. Kim 1992: 433-434).

My house in Sydney is cheaper and more spacious than the suffocating apartment in Seoul. I have a better car and electronic goods than the ones I had in Seoul. Now working five days a week, I can enjoy the weekend, playing golf and fishing in the ocean. I enjoy clean and fresh air, good quality meat and unpolluted food. Children are placed in a good environment for their education. Public officers offer high quality of service without requiring unnecessary bribes. There's a minimum traffic jam. ... What else would you require to have a good quality of life? We may have less income in Sydney compared with that in Seoul. However, money isn't all that determines the quality of life. Is there anywhere in Korea, where I can enjoy some of the above mentioned?

Koreans in Australia and business migrants in particular described their immigrant experiences in similar terms to the passage above and would agree that it is an adequate illustration of the things they enjoy. These are the factors which appeal to potential business migrants from Korea.

### **EXPERIENCES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

Australia has become one of the most culturally diverse countries, given the origins of its people over the last three decades. This is also the period when the three groups of Korean migrants entered Australia. The ways in which the three groups experienced racism changed over time: from overt to covert. The abandonment of overtly racist national boundaries since the 1970s was inevitable because of 'the increasing economic and political importance of the Asian region for Australia', leading to a move from the White Australia to a non-discriminatory entry policy (Castles 1992: 45; Kalantzis 1990). Following the adoption of an official policy of multiculturalism and the beginnings of legal moves outlawing racial discrimination, the way in which racism is practised has undergone subtle

shifts. However, racism is deeply embedded in Australian society and forms a key parameter of the everyday experience of Korean migrants.

The change of the immigration policy in Australia from White Australia to assimilation and integration and eventually to the present multiculturalism has had an impact on the identity and self-definition of ethnic minorities (Wilton 1994: 97). This influences how a minority migrant lives life in the new country. Kim Chõng-yõp, a skilled migrant, living in Sydney travelled to Brisbane recently with his wife and two sons, in their eighth and ninth grades of school. On their way to Brisbane, they stopped at a McDonald's restaurant in a country town, where many other Euro-Australians were also eating. The mother of the boys, both born in Australia, said,

The boys were natural when using a restaurant in Sydney, but the boy in the ninth grade of school said that he was ashamed of being an Asian in the restaurant, because our family were the only non-Euro-Australians.

The Australian-born boy might have realized over many years that structural racism tends to cause uneasiness. However, it is more important to note that having to cope with racism has become part of everyday *work* for most Koreans in Australia. Over the past years, there seemed to have been little change in the degree of racism, although it might have been felt implicitly sometimes and explicitly at other times, especially during an economic recession.

Before coming to Australia, amnesty migrants had already experienced and also exercised racism against others when working overseas or catering for American soldiers in Korea. Australia was known as 'the White Australia' amongst Koreans even in the 1980s. Thus, it took courage for them to dare to enter Australia and they were determined to 'put up with' harsh racism. The character of racism that the amnesty migrants experienced in the 1970s

was often crude and overt. For example, when Ch'oe Ki-sang was walking in a street, looking for a flat to rent in 1974, somebody upstairs poured a bucket of water on top of his head. He walked up to the person's residence and faced him. But he did not know what to say. People came around the scene only to say 'Why don't you go home?' The incident remains vivid in Ch'oe's mind and still hurts him. While some amnesty migrants felt that the nature of racism has changed from overt to covert, others dissented.

When I arrived in 1973, I felt rather a low degree of racism. Since then the coming of a large number of boat people from Asia seems to have clouded the image of Asians. Thus racism has gone from bad to worse. ... Personally, I can't care too much about racism as it doesn't directly influence my everyday life. I've been told that Asians in public service jobs have terrible difficulties obtaining promotion (Song Chu-p'yo, amnesty migrant).

It is not that racism does not affect his everyday life, but that he appears to be able to ignore it. The obvious increase of Asian migration to Australia seems to have contributed in popular consciousness to the mistaken notion that Asians are taking jobs from Euro-Australians and are contributing negatively to the Australian economy. Such beliefs have tended to become more pervasive especially during times of economic recession. Indeed, multi-culturalism seems to have brought about little change to racism.

Na Kang-jin (amnesty migrant) is a law graduate from a Korean university and had worked as a manager of overseas branches of a few Korean companies in the Middle East and South Vietnam until the early 1970s. His intention to make a trip to Australia after the collapse of South Vietnam eventually led him to settle in Sydney. The way in which he, as a fluent English speaker, dealt with racism differs from that of many other Koreans. One of his experiences occurred in the early period of his life in Sydney as a taxi driver. One day he admitted a Euro-Australian woman into his taxi. According to him, the conversation Na had with her is as follows.

Na: Where shall I take you?

She: Dee Why.

Na: Which way would you like me to take?

She: Don't you know how to get there?

Na: I know, but I should ask you and take the way you prefer.

She: I don't know why you're so troublesome. Do you have a taxi driver's licence?

Na: ... (jokingly) Well, well, I corrupted the supervisor for the driving test.

She: Australia is getting polluted everyday due to the continuing incoming migrants. It was a much better country before.

Na went on to say,

She soon started to be explicit in her racist attitude. I couldn't bear the attitude. At last, I pulled up the car in front of a police office. I reported how I was abused. She completely denied what happened, with a smile. The way she behaved and talked was decent and different from when she was in the car. I decided to forget about what happened, I started to drive the taxi, wanting to take her to Dee Why. However, as the taxi moved, her racist attitude became even more explicit, using all the dirty words to blame Asian migrants in particular. I started to blame her as well, also using dirty words I hardly used before. As the argument kept going on, she might have felt she was losing the battle. Then she got hold of the microphone in the taxi and threw it to my face. I looked at the mirror and saw the blood running off my lips. I didn't wash it off and drove the taxi to another police station. I reported again what happened. Two police officers came and asked her to come to the office. She refused, but she was dragged out of the taxi.

The incident achieved nothing. The unpleasant memory still bothers Na. In this case, Na was somewhat prepared for argument or had sufficient intelligence and English language ability to know what to do in such a situation. However, Na's capacity to be able to cope better with structural racism does not mean the end of it (cf. Castles, Kalantzis et al. 1988: 82). The very reason he had to drive a taxi, which is incommensurate with his qualifications and work experience, was often because of an underlying structural mechanism sustained by a Euro-Australian dominated capitalist development process, which especially disadvantages NESB immigrants in

the labour market. Unlike Na, most other drivers interviewed told me that they often have to put up with racial discrimination, adversely affecting their mental health. Kim Chong-su, now driving his own taxi, said that he drove a taxi for a company for many years, but he always had been treated as a beginner driver with no experience at all until the day of resignation. However, he considered that driving a taxi in Australia is much better than in Korea where 'a taxi driver in Korea is regarded as no more than dirt'. Nevertheless, his stressful life largely attributable to racism, in addition to work-related stress, continued. As Koreans have experienced racism frequently, they often try to forget about it.

I've experienced racism but I don't want to see it as racism. If I think I'm racially discriminated against I get angry. For my own sake, I should control my temper. It helps me overcome the problem (Kim Ki-ch'un, amnesty migrant).

Despite Kim's effort to forget about racism, he had to face it and seemed to have overcome it in an active way.

I was working as a clerk in a supply company. One day three Australian workers were busy talking even though it was a busy day. I wished I knew how to drive a fork lift. As soon as I sat on one of the lifters, one bloke shouted, 'Get out of there you son of a bitch.' ... I decided to get a licence to drive one. Investing 30 minutes or an hour a few times a week for the lessons I obtained the licence in three months. Then I looked for another chance to sit on the seat of a lifter and I did one day. As if they owned the lifter one of them shouted, 'Why don't you get out of it, you f...ing bastard?' Two others joined him. I remained sitting there. As they approached me I showed them my licence. They had nothing to say. ... I didn't really need a licence. Only reason I got it was to overcome racism. The licence has been useful from time to time (Kim Ki-ch'un, amnesty migrant).

Being a wage earner is often alienating and hard enough for anyone, because the worker has little control over work. However, Koreans have to cope with the extra burden of racism, largely because of their facial features and skin complexion. It has implications for their mental health, which has to be taken into consideration, in understanding their physical health.

Unlike the amnesty migrants' experiences of overt racism those of skilled migrants have been subtle. Racism is subtle in the sense that it is not as explicit as pouring water on a person or verbally abusing them. It takes the form that, for example, an immigrant computer worker may never get called for a job interview, or not being fluent in English at work may lead to his resignation. In the Korean community, it is a widely accepted view that racial discrimination as well as lack of English sufficiency disadvantages skilled Korean immigrants and even second generation Koreans in the task of finding jobs or promotion (*Han'guk Ilbo* 1997 February 7: A4). Skilled migrants working as professionals found it hard to find a prospective employer and those already working see minimum opportunity for promotion.

I have a friend with an MBA degree. He was called for interviews numerous times but never selected. He and I think that had he been an Australian with his qualifications and experiences, he would have been welcomed by many companies. My friend got sick of the rigid system which doesn't welcome non-Anglo Australians. He ended up doing an Associate Diploma in Accounting and managed to find a teaching position at an institution of Technical and Further Education (TAFE), for which he was over-qualified but it was his only option (Kim Tong-gwan, skilled migrant).

One of my friends worked for the Australian and New Zealand Banking Co. for a few years and quit the job to be a liaison officer for a Korean ethnic newspaper company. As he has grown up in Australia, his English is as fluent as that of an Australian. He said he didn't see any prospect for promotion (Ch'oe Chin-bŏm, skilled migrant).

Similarly, Yang Chin-u, who worked as a computer programmer for a few years in Australia, said,

Promotion at work is almost impossible. The longer they work the higher level of communication skills is required, which may have nothing to do with computer work. ... Chances appear to be open for non-Anglo-Celtics. In reality, they aren't. ... Australians would smile in front of you but they'll stab you in the back (Yang Chin-u, skilled migrant).

To my questions regarding racism, all business migrant respondents had little to say about their experiences. Although they experienced racial discrimination occasionally, they tended not to take it as seriously as the other two groups did. This is not only because the characteristics of racism have become more subtle since the time of their arrival but also because it has been the Australian government that has wanted business migrants as much as they wanted to come. According to the informants and respondents, the majority of Korean business migrants live on the interest of the capital they brought. When they experience difficulty establishing a business they tend to give up relatively easily because they, unlike other groups, have money to live on (Han 1996b). An obvious result is that there are fewer opportunities for encountering racial discrimination. At the start of their initiating an application for immigration, they felt they had been treated with care and consideration. The 'special' care continued during their initial trip to Australia which has been designed for them to assess the opportunities for business migration.

Other factors which discourage business migrants' involvement in business activities are as follows. Korean business migrants have a lack of understanding about Australian business conditions including its wage structure and union issues. Unlike in Korea, there is little access to cheap labour in Australia. While the success rate is generally low for small business, Korean business persons run a particularly high risk of failure because of the small size of the local Korean market and the limited opportunities for networking which are crucial for success. Many Korean business migrants appeared to have insufficient capital to run a business after buying a house, a car, and other goods.

Racial discrimination is practised not only between Australian-born Euro-Australians and NESB migrants but also between NESB migrants themselves. Koreans generally have a favourable opinion of Euro-Australians but are less favourably inclined towards other ethnic workers.

I've been a migrant in Australia for 15 years. Briefly, I think people [Euro-Australians] in this country are fair. Let's see how overseas workers suffer in Korea. That can't happen in Australia. The supervisors at my production work are [Euro-]Australians. When I have trouble understanding anything about my work they're always prepared to explain kindly to me. Kindness is part of their everyday life. Even when I make a mistake sometimes, it's they who say first 'Sorry.' That makes me feel so guilty that I quickly say, 'Sorry, it's my mistake.' The advancement of the Australian culture in general is incomparable to that of Korea. Even at work, it's not Australians who are bothering me but immigrants such as Italians, Yugoslavs and Lebanese (Hwang Chae-song, amnesty migrant).

Yi Kil-pok, sitting next to Hwang, added,

I find it hard to put up with that. I work in a factory, located in Auburn. It has many immigrant workers from Korea, China, Lebanon, Vietnam, etc. I happened to hear a Lebanese chap talking to an Australian supervisor blaming Chinese workers. What does the Lebanese chap have to say as a menial worker? I told him, 'Leave Chinese alone. I'm a bloody Chinese myself. What's wrong with Chinese? Where the hell are you from? How is Lebanon, your home country?' Chinese workers at my work haven't got much English and seem to think, 'The Lebanese bastards are taking advantage of having been here for longer' (Yi Kil-bok, amnesty migrant).

The NESB ethnic groups, such as Italians, Yugoslavs and Lebanese, have already experienced racial discrimination, as they arrived in Australia prior to most Asian migrants. There appear to be conflictual relations amongst non-Euro-Australians, which for many Asians including Korean migrants means that they are suppressed or unnecessarily 'supervised' by other NESB immigrants such as Italian and Lebanese. In this context, it is only the employer who benefits.

The [Euro-Australian] employers here don't generally care about where I came from, as long as I'm a diligent worker. They treat you okay if you're

good at what you're doing. They won't interrupt your work (Hwang Chae-song, amnesty migrant).

Productivity or efficiency appears to be the first priority for employers. In pointing to Euro-Australians, Koreans used terms such as 'yellow hairs', 'British background Australians', 'people in this country', and 'Australian blokes'. Although they are no more than words on the one hand, they are also the words dividing the Australian people generally into oppositional groups. The words reflect many underlying emotions which indicate that discrimination against certain groups is rife. According to Pauline Hanson, a recent architect of racism in Australia and her One Nation Party, Asian migrants bring diseases, crimes and they take away jobs from [Euro-] Australians.

As a Korean researcher, I observed and should remark that Koreans in Korea and overseas also tend to have racist attitudes and discriminate against other NESB migrants. This is largely because of the booming economy of Korea and mono-racial and mono-cultural background of the people. This has long led Koreans to discriminate against workers from other developing countries in order to maximize their economic benefit. Similarly in Australia, Korean migrants are not only the victims of racial discrimination but are also exercising it, e.g., Korean small business persons employing recent NESB migrants at lower pay than those earned by Korean workers.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Most international migratory movements of the period 1945-73 were characterized by economic motivations, based on 'guestworker systems' and the migration of 'colonial workers' to the colonial powers. The 'oil crisis' of 1973-4 led to a restructuring of the world economy, involving capital

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investment in new industrial areas, new patterns of world trade and high technologies. The restructuring led to much change in Third World countries such as South Korea, which generated new motivations for migration from developing to advanced countries.

In addition, it was the economic and political needs of Australia and Australia's international relations with other countries that characterized Australian immigration policy, and which led to reception of various types of immigrants at different times of the process of the Australian state. A similar principle applies to the sending countries. For example, Korea's political and economic ties with other countries and a continuing process of rapid economic development produced different types of emigrants at different times (see Chapter 5).

## Chapter 8

### *Work and life of Korean immigrant men in Australia*

This chapter discusses how the three groups of Korean men (i.e., 17 amnesty, 14 skilled and 9 business migrants) have been involved in *work*. Data from additional informants (n: 40) are also incorporated to supplement data from the respondents, especially in understanding the life and work involvement of business migrants. Health and health care utilization patterns cannot be discussed without reference to people's work involvement as their lives in the new country have been centred around their access to and commitment to work. Closely related to work involvement, the level of income is also an important aspect of immigrant life and has an impact upon the level of satisfaction of immigrant life and the patterns of health care use.

Health care providers do not service their clients in a social vacuum. Work and how it relates to production influences the health of workers and the demand for health care. Work involvement and the relations of production also have a direct impact on the social characteristics of health care provision, that is, who comes to offer the services, how they are offered, what is offered and who has access to them.

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE THREE GROUPS OF RESPONDENTS

The followings are the ages and educational achievements of the three groups of respondents at the time of interviews in 1995 and their occupational backgrounds prior to their coming to Australia. The places of work or immigration for the amnesty migrant respondents prior to entering Australia are also presented (Table 8.3).

Table 8.1: The range of the ages of the respondents

Amnesty migrants (n: 17)	Skilled migrants (n: 14)	Business migrants (n: 9)
early 50 — late 70s	mid 40s — early 60s	late 50s — plus one in 30s
		(n: 8) (n: 1)

Considering the time of arrivals and how the three groups of Koreans have been admitted to Australia, Table 8.1 is largely representative of the range of the total population of the three groups of Korean men in Sydney.

Table 8.2: The level of educational achievement of the respondents

	Years 6–12	University/Higher degrees	In total
Amnesty migrants	9	8	17
Skilled migrants	2	12	14
Business migrants	5	4	9
In Total	16	24	40

The level of education achieved has been one of the major tools for upward social mobility in the Confucian Korean society, which has been more Confucian than other East Asian countries for the last few decades. However, a large proportion of the Korean population in the homeland, whether they are university graduates or not, suffered low wages or unemployment in the 1960s and 1970s. A little less than half the amnesty migrant respondents were university graduates (n: 8). As mentioned earlier, those who were not able to find employment in Korea in the 1960s and 1970s irrespective of their level of education, went abroad in search of jobs. Of the

university graduated respondents, only one person worked in Vietnam as part of his duty for his company in Korea. All others arranged privately to work overseas (n: 4) or to migrate to South America (n: 3).

The levels of educational achievements for the sample skilled and business migrant respondents appear to be consistent with the general opinions from over one hundred interviewees for this study. However, the sample respondents for amnesty migrants over-represented university/ higher degree holders. Amnesty migrants generally believe that about 20 to 30% of them are university graduates.<sup>9</sup>

According to Yim T'aek-chin, who worked for a Korean immigration agency and processed about 100 applications of business migrants to Australia, more than 50% of them are university graduates and about 60% of them had their own businesses running in Korea. Others were high level managers for companies, school teachers and principals, university professors, and high level ex-servicemen.

Table 8.3: The places of work or immigration for amnesty migrants prior to entering Australia

Tongduch'ŏn (Korea)	Vietnam	South America	Middle East	In total
4*	8	3	2	17

\* One of them previously worked in Vietnam.

As the amnesty migrants had not come from affluent socio-economic backgrounds, they could not afford to migrate to the United States or Canada. Two from the sample of amnesty migrants served the Korean army and retired from the service in Vietnam. Instead of returning to Korea, they sought employment in Vietnam. Most Korean soldiers who fought in the

<sup>9</sup> People from Tongduch'ŏn say that about 25% of their club members are university graduates; similarly about 10% of the clubs of those who came via Vietnam; about 20% of the 'South American club', etc.

Vietnam War are likely to have come from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds because every family did their best to prevent any of their kin going to the battle fields during the period of the Vietnam War. This also applies to those other than soldiers.

Money was the most important reason they went to the war zone, running the risk of their life. ... What else reason could it be apart from money? (Kim In-yong, amnesty migrant)

Table 8.4: Occupational backgrounds of the three groups of respondents (prior to entering Australia)

	Amnesty migrants	Skilled migrants	Business migrants
Occupational backgrounds	Labourers/ semi-skilled workers (n: 10) Businessmen (n: 3) Managers in companies (n: 2) Public servant (n: 1) Anaesthetic worker (n: 1)	Computer programmer/ technician (n: 4) School/university teacher (n: 2) Architect (n: 2) Accountant (n: 1) Businessman (n: 1) Golf link manager (n: 1) Engineer (n: 1) Immigration adviser (n: 1) Publisher (n: 1)	Businessmen (n: 5) Executive manager (n: 1) School deputy principal (n: 1) Ex-serviceman (n: 1) Student (n: 1)*
In total	17	14	9

\* This person in his 30s was an overseas student in Japan for a few years and had no experience of business prior to coming to Australia.

## WORK INVOLVEMENT

Research shows that because of the unwillingness of employers to recognize NESB migrants' qualifications, often hindered by prejudice or institutional barriers, a large number of migrants are unable to find appropriate employment or suffer above average unemployment (Castles and Miller 1993: 109). They tend to be over-represented in manufacturing, particularly in the occupational categories of 'operators' and 'labourers' (Castles 1992: 53, 64; Collins 1988). An ethnic small business has been one route 'out of manufacturing jobs' for migrants in industrial countries (Castles and Miller 1993: 110; Waldinger, Aldrich et al. 1990).

The analysis of the data showed the types of work held by different groups and why the Korean male respondents have been involved in 'immigrant work.' Informants and respondents repeatedly gave me highly analytical views. The types of work in which Korean men were involved in the past and present are closely related to the modes of entry to, and the time of arrival in, Australia. Following their arrival in Australia mostly in the 1970s when the Australian economy was relatively affluent, amnesty migrants were involved in typically working class occupations such as factory work, manual work, welding, car washing, dish washing and cleaning. Of the 17 amnesty migrant respondents, five of them remain as labourers or semi-skilled workers such as welders or carpenters, but others are either running a small business (n: 7) or are retired (n: 5). Thanks to their hard work and the relatively favourable economic environment at the time of their arrival, a significant proportion of amnesty migrants have been able to start various kinds of small businesses in the Korean community.

Table 8.5: Current work involvement of the amnesty migrant respondents (N: 17)

	Labourers/ semi-skilled (n: 5)	Small business (n: 7)	Retired (n: 5)
Types of work	Cleaning (n: 1) Welding (n: 2) Cleaning/delivery (n: 1) Storeman (n: 1)	Floor sanding (n: 1) Driving personalized taxi, (n: 1) Korean food shop (n: 1) Video rental, shop (n: 1) Cleaning materials shop (n: 1) Korean restaurant (n: 1) Builder (n: 1)	

Table 8.6: Current work involvement of the skilled migrant respondents (N: 14)

	Labourers/ semi-skilled (n: 6)	Small business (n: 4)	Professional (n: 3)
Types of work	Cleaning (n: 3) Key cutting (n: 1) Shoe repairing (n: 1) <sup>10</sup> Plumbing (n: 1)	Computer shop (n: 1) Nursing home (n: 1) Korean food restaurant (n: 1) <sup>11</sup> Plumbing contract (n: 1)	Computer technician (n: 1) Immigration adviser (n: 1) Language teacher at University (Part time) (n: 1)

Retired (n: 1)

Most Korean skilled migrants arrived in Australia from the early 1980s when the Australian economy was well in recession and only a small number of them are utilizing their professional skills (see Table 8.6). According to the respondents and informants for this study, the majority of the skilled migrants are doing manual work such as home/office cleaning.

Table 8.7: Current work involvement of the business migrant respondents (N: 9)

	Small business (n: 1)	The spouse of a deceased business migrant (n: 1)	Casual work (n: 1)	No work (n: 6)
Types of work	Mixed shop	Sewing	Journalism (writing occasional articles for magazines in Korea)	Mainly playing sports

It is generally known in the Korean community that less than 30% of business migrants are involved in small business and the rest are involved in an 'unwanted long sports holiday.' The following is a detailed account of work involvement of the three different groups. The involvement in 'immigrant work' often results from deficiencies of individual immigrants such as lack of English language skills. However, individual skills and

<sup>10</sup> About \$30,000–40,000 is required to start a shoe repair shop.

<sup>11</sup> About \$200,000 is required to start a medium-sized restaurant.

qualifications have often been undermined by structural discrimination against immigrants especially in the period of recession.

### **Amnesty Migrants: From Labourers to Business Persons**

#### *(i) Relatively affluent economic environment*

Korean amnesty migrants benefited from the time of their arrival in Australia because the Australian economy was relatively affluent in the 1970s. Research on postwar immigrants in Australia suggests that the Australian economy in the 1970s was in recession and the reason Australia 'legalized' refugees and illegal migrants through amnesties was largely because of international pressure (Collins 1988: 48).<sup>12</sup> However, according to my investigation, the Korean amnesty migrants had no problem finding jobs, though mostly in factories such as battery production, tyre manufacturing, refining iron work, and producing plastic containers, which were considered to be dirty or dangerous work (also see C. Kim and Wŏn 1991). It is possible that in addition to international pressure to offer an amnesty, sections of Australian industry was urgently in need of labour, a view expressed by amnesty migrants.

One of the Whitlam government's plans was to modernize the Australian economy. But the trouble was that Australia didn't have enough labour power. ... In principle, tourists weren't allowed to be engaged in work. ... But the Australian government kept silent about tourists engaging in work even though they knew what was going on (Im Yŏng-mo, amnesty migrant).

Another example,

When I came to Australia, there were plenty of jobs available. If I walked back and forth around factories I was approached by someone and asked if I wanted a job. I was interviewed on the spot and got the job offered. Mostly they didn't ask us to bring a passport. If they did we didn't go. [laughing] It was a good old day (Ch'oe Tong-sik, amnesty migrant).

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<sup>12</sup> However, Jock Collins points out that the Australian economy in the 1970s was relatively better than that in the 1980s and 1990s and that the easy availability of even manual work in the 1970s may not be repeated in the 1990s (Personal communication 1997 January).

All the amnesty migrant respondents were prepared to do manual work, irrespective of their levels of education and English language ability. Of the 17 respondents, none of those with professional skills (e.g., anaesthetic skills, law degree, electrical engineering) have ever had their qualifications recognized or utilized for employment to a significant degree.<sup>13</sup>

As soon as Korean men entered Australia as 'tourists' in the 1970s, they were quickly employed by Australian companies. Employment was what they urgently required and what they came to Australia for. They were involved in dish washing, factory work, cleaning, truck driving, steel work, delivery, mining, menial work for a newspaper company or labouring at construction sites. Whatever jobs they were doing, they earned much more than they would have done in Korea.

In 1974, A\$100 was equivalent to US\$150, which was roughly 15,000 Korean won. An ordinary public servant in Korea received 7,000-8,000 won per month. The first salary for a university graduate was 15,000-18,000 won per month. My *weekly* wage including overtime penalty was A\$110 (about 16,500 won/week or 67,500 won/month) (Song Chu-p'yo, amnesty migrant).

Whilst Australian industry was happy to employ the illegal migrants, the possibility of being caught by the immigration police was a continuing worry for the Koreans. They were sometimes caught and had battles with immigration police because they wanted to run away. Many were deported and only the 'lucky' ones faced amnesties. Amnesty was a dramatic experience for all the amnesty migrants and led to family reunion for most of them. Their wives and children arrived in Australia about a year after their amnesties. However, the amnesties did not change what kind of work

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<sup>13</sup> According to statistics from the Committee on Overseas Professional Qualifications, only one out of 55 Korean engineering qualifications assessed in 1983 was recognized. None of the seven Korean accountancy qualifications were considered to be acceptable in the same year (J.M. Kim 1988: 660).

they had to do and the preparation for a family reunion meant more diligent work with their two or three jobs.

Amnesty migrants tended to concentrate in the occupations where skills could be picked up relatively quickly and they could get paid high wages. Under the affluent economic environment, they tended to look for better paid jobs. An amnesty migrant (Ch'oe Ki-sang) is currently holding his 17th job in Australia. Amongst the most popular were welding, cleaning and other construction-related works. It did not cost anything to learn welding in the 1970s, when welders were apparently in great demand. The only thing which they needed to be aware of was that they were not paid for attending the lesson because they were not permanent residents.

A large number of Koreans sometimes moved together looking for welding. A Canadian refining company in Newcastle once employed more than 70 Korean welders and B.H.P. [Broken Hill Propriety, Ltd.] once employed 180 Korean welders. There were also many Italians doing welding with Koreans. ... I was also involved in building a submarine. The work wasn't too hard, but I quit welding after five years for health reasons. The pay was good. I worked twelve hours a day and had a break on Sundays (Sim Mu-ho, amnesty migrant from Paraguay).

Cleaning work was most popular amongst Italian and German migrants till the 1970s. With the increasing intake of Asian migrants in the 1970s, the old non-British immigrants such as Germans and Italians, who were holding dirty, difficult or degrading jobs till then, started to hand over the tasks. Korean movement into the cleaning service reflects the divisions in the labour market.

It's a simple labouring work not requiring any skill. It pays well, because family members can easily contribute to the work. This saves the wage.

*Koreans might have done a good job.*

Sure, Koreans are good workers. From a customer's point of view, all they want is a financial benefit. Lower cost and better result, that's what they want. Koreans were able to deliver what the customers wanted (Yi Man-su, amnesty migrant).

Koreans from Tongduch'ŏn and most amnesty migrants were in their forties when they came. Starting as cleaners or other manual workers and saving some money, they bought a cleaning contract. As they saved more money they invested it for another contract. In the case of home cleaning, if a cleaner is known to be good and reliable, the customer's neighbour also wants cleaning done. Thus the work load keeps increasing. The cleaners will maintain only what they can manage and they sell the rest of the cleaning 'right' to fellow Koreans who have recently arrived or who want to get into cleaning work. A benefit from cleaning work was to be able to work long hours and enjoy a 'high' income.

If we earned around \$350 or a bit more a week, we couldn't live on it. Many Australians seem to manage okay with \$400–500. But most Koreans would like to earn at least \$1,000 a week. They'd like to save some money by joining a *kye* group, and they don't want to take too long to pay off the home loan; to have a good car; and still have some spending money left (Kim Tal-chun, amnesty migrant).

*(ii) Involvement in small business*

Most Korean amnesty migrants wished to run their own business rather than to work for someone else. For them, owning a small business is considered to be a significant success. They rarely thought of climbing up the social ladder in any other way. By the end of the 1970s, there were less than 20 businesses owned by Koreans in Sydney. However, there were 250 registered ones by 1986 (S. Paek 1990: 25). According to Inglis and Wu (1992: 207), any migrants who are working are likely to be employees rather than employers. However, they found that the Korean migrants who have a very high rate of self-employment make the most striking exception and that they are slightly over-represented in the employer category. It is important to note that Inglis and Wu (1992: 207) argue that

While some of them undoubtedly came in the early years of the business migration programme, many others obviously entered under *other entry categories* and then moved into self-employment [my italics].

Those of 'other entry categories' are more likely to be amnesty migrants (or skilled migrants to a lesser degree for the reasons to be discussed shortly), because Inglis and Wu's study is based on the 1986 Census and there were only about 40 Korean business migrants in total by that time. Korean amnesty migrants' frequent involvement in business is commonly known in the Korean community and is also indicated by the following comment made in opposing the establishment of a large scale food shop in the suburb of Campsie where there are several Korean food shops.

The owners of the food shops, though financially not well off, came to Australia with no money about twenty years ago when people in Korea were very poor. They've been through all the difficulties establishing their immigrant life and starting small business in a new society, despite their lack of English (*Han'guk Sinmun* 1997 January 31: 1, 4).

The amnesty migrants frequently exploited the *kye* system. They form a self-help group of people centred around a key organizer and contribute an amount of money every month. Each month one member of the group receives all the money and then pays it off so others can have their share back. This *kye* has been a traditional Korean way of making a large sum of money which may be needed for a particular purpose, and it cannot be carried out without total trust by all the other members. The members of social clubs organized around their place of work prior to entering Australia are often involved in the *kye* because they had been through similar life experiences and well understand each other's economic needs. This has been a significant source of capital to start a business. They started with a business requiring a small amount and developed to a bigger business such as a restaurant or shop, or supplying cleaning materials.

Of the three groups of Korean men assessed for this study, the amnesty migrants are the ones who started businesses more frequently than skilled and business migrants (Y. Kim 1995: 55). After paying off house mortgages

amnesty migrants had sufficient capital to start small businesses around the mid-1980s and also had sufficient understanding about Australian society to start small businesses. The size of the Korean community in Sydney started to increase with the arrival of skilled, family reunion and business migrants from the mid-1980s. Further, the number of Korean tourists to Australia started to increase. The most popular business activities for amnesty migrants have been gift shops, restaurants, Korean food shops, travel agencies, *karaoke* rooms, and Korean video shops.

Well-known examples of 'successful' business persons in the Korean community are as follows. Starting as a home cleaner himself, an amnesty migrant now owns a cleaning business which presently employs 600 people. Another amnesty migrant started as an employed welder, but now runs a large steel company. The case of 49 year old Chŏng Pyŏng-nyul is yet another success story. About twenty years ago he went to Iran to work as a trailer driver after finishing his technical high school. He entered Australia in August 1976 and was fortunate to become a legal immigrant, after the amnesty in June 1980. Until the amnesty, he was wandering all around Australia since the Department of Immigration had sent him notices to leave Australia on five occasions. He had picked up welding skills and worked in a factory in Newcastle, earning A\$1,000 per week for seven years. The income was possible because he was doing overtime without much rest.

He bought two acres of land in Sydney and planted a few varieties of Korean vegetables, which became popular. Of course, he continued his welding job. After two years, he bought 16 acres of land at the present site and developed the land to plant more varieties of Korean vegetables. The farm was flooded five times, but each time he recovered. His farm, now 32 acres, is the biggest Asian vegetable producing farm in the state of New South Wales. He

supplies vegetables for most Koreans in NSW. His net income is more than A\$100,000 a year (C. Kim 1992: 435). Although Chõng's diligent work and careful strategy contributed a lot to his success, it would have been more difficult without a relatively favourable economic climate. However, these successful cases are indeed exceptional and rare not only in the Korean community but also the broad Australian community.

### **Skilled Migrants: From Professionals to Labourers**

Of the fourteen skilled migrant respondents, only two of them are still utilizing their skills on the basis of which they were selected to migrate to Australia (computer worker and immigration adviser). Six are presently doing manual work such as cleaning, key cutting, shoe repairing. Four are running small businesses (computer shop, nursing home, plumbing and restaurant). One is utilizing his training but holding half-time employment. The remaining one has never had his accounting skill recognized in Australia and is currently retired. Also, according to the members of the Korean Nurses' Association and their husbands, the husbands are all university graduates and had professional occupations prior to coming to Australia. Less than 10-20% of the husbands are currently involved in professional jobs. Similar to this finding, Inglis and Wu (1992: 207) found that 'all the male immigrants, *except the Koreans*, are better represented than the total recently arrived population in the managerial, professional and para-professional occupations' (my italics) despite significant proportion of skilled/ independent migrants in the Korean community by the time of their research. Inglis and Wu (1992) also found that among all the ethnic groups, the Korean men and women are most likely to be employed as plant machine operators/ labourers. It is likely that a large proportion of them consist of skilled/ independent/family migrants.

A few factors which adversely affected the work involvement of skilled migrants were identified. Whilst amnesty migrants were fully prepared to maximize their *physical* power for manual work, skilled migrants were less prepared to do so, because they were well educated, had professional jobs and were *selected* by the Australian government. The structurally embedded racial discrimination and high aspirations complicated the matter of work involvement for skilled migrants more than it did for amnesty migrants. In addition to the worsening economic recession in the 1980s, the lack of English language ability worked against them in finding jobs or transforming overseas qualifications to Australian ones.

*(i) Factors militating against successful work involvement*

Most skilled migrant respondents found that attending the Adult Migrant English Studies classes for six months or a little longer was insufficient to enable them to mingle with their colleagues at work. Yi Mun-jip, a former manager of a construction company in Korea and overseas, decided to pursue a plumbing business, but he finds it difficult.

I'm still a mere plumber and have no licence to sign a contract. ... Those with some plumbing experience have to attend a conversion course, which takes one year and is followed by another year at TAFE. ... I had no trouble doing technical subjects such as 'water supply, drainage, gas' in a year. However, I couldn't pass 'business principles', which is about running a business. It was more of an English test to me. I passed all other subjects except business principle for the last three years. The 180 questions were subjective ones. That subject was the easiest one for Australians, but it was a hassle for non-English speakers like me. It's not fair. ... The subject is useful for new comers in plumbing. Although I understood the content of it, it was hard to express myself in English. I couldn't score 60% in this subject (Yi Mun-jip, skilled migrant).

After learning English for a year, I looked for a job. I couldn't find one because of the economic recession. I registered myself at the Commonwealth Employment Services (CES). The clerks said: 'Even Australians can't find jobs, the chances would be worse for you with little English. Why don't you fill out the form to receive an unemployment allowance?' I was unemployed for two years (Yi Man-yong, skilled migrant).

The happiness to have found employment does not generally last for skilled migrants. Of the 14 skilled migrant respondents, there were 4 computer skilled migrants. Three of them could not continue with their expertise despite their desire to do so. Yi Yun-se was an exception. He was an executive officer in an American computer company in Korea and emigrated to Australia in 1975 when he was transferred to a Sydney branch of the company. He told me of the complex links between racism, NESB worker's language ability and personality. He knew Mr. Kim a computer programmer who worked with Yi for the same company in Korea. As Mr. Kim immigrated to Australia he approached Yi. Yi said,

Mr. Kim once lectured in a Korean university and is an intelligent person of great self-respect. I helped him find a job in Sydney. The trouble with him in the company was that as his supervisor was assigning him a task, he rarely asked his supervisor a question. Mr. Kim would get to his work site and, after a while, report to the boss what he had done. The boss was repeatedly disappointed with the work results because they weren't what the boss wanted. I introduced Mr. Pak to the same company. Mr. Pak was also a capable worker, though with limited English ability. But he did well because he always asked and clarified when in doubt. It was natural that Mr. Kim became relatively unpopular and eventually tendered his resignation. He regretted that my introduction of Mr. Pak resulted in Kim's loss of the job (Yi Yun-se, skilled migrant).

Yi Yun-se argued that efficiency or productivity is what is most required at work, however, 'a great degree of self-respect or pride' can cause problems. He knows several Korean computer-related workers who have continued their work at computer companies. Kim's personality might have been unpopular at any kind of workplace. Why was one capable worker from Korea not able to survive his work and another able to survive, however? There seemed to be more than efficiency required. The problem is not only at the level of the individual but also at the social level which expects the new workers to act differently from the dominant group.

*I was told that many Koreans have resigned because they couldn't put up with racial discrimination.*

It depends on the individual. There're many workers from diverse ethnic backgrounds in my company. For example, people from Vietnam tend to have a high degree of self-respect. Those workers just concentrating on the work only without paying attention to human relationship eventually can't survive. Racism is a matter of how it's handled (Yi Yun-se, skilled migrant).

I mentioned to him again,

*I was also told that some Korean computer workers wouldn't be promoted because of their race.*

It again depends on the individual. When I was appointed as a manager, what was important was my skill as a technician. As I got older I left the position and gave way for the younger generation. There were many 'black haired' [NESB] managers in my company. I'm not sure as to how influential 'black hairs' would be in decision making. Eventually, what's required at work is work capacity and a good personality (Yi Yun-se, skilled migrant).

In fact, I managed to find Mr Kim. He appeared to be a person of self-respect. But I found his personality rather warm-hearted. It is interesting to hear Yi's relevant experience.

Amongst many people in my company there was one person with a British background. He was a character. He worked for the company for 35 years but he's never been abroad. He had travelled by air only once when he went to Tasmania. I wanted to offer him a cup of tea many times. He wouldn't respond. He was a kind of headache for me. I sometimes jokingly abused him in Korean. He asked me what I said. I told him, 'I said, you're son of a bitch'. As time passed we became friendly with one another. When I gave him a birthday card, he was so happy and hugged me. ... Educated and intelligent persons wouldn't discriminate against people on the basis of birthplace. He had received only six years of education (Yi Yun-se, skilled migrant).

Yi has put an extra effort into overcoming structural racism manifested by his colleague at work. It would be wonderful if every migrant worker could be so co-operative and maintain a friendly personality at their work. Although I was highly appreciative of Yi's approach, I was concerned about

his continuing preoccupation with 'the victim bashing' attitude.<sup>14</sup> Although I was rather impressed by Yi's constant effort to create and maintain a friendly relationship with the dominant group, I was worried about racial discrimination which is deeply embedded at the level of structure, which determined, for example, how Yi and his Euro-Australian colleague would interact at work. There seemed to be an expectation that 'a friendly climate' at work must be created by NESB workers rather than by the Euro-Australians. It was hard to explain how a primary educated person survived as a computer technician for 35 years and a university educated and experienced Korean worker could not survive the same job for more than a few years, although the amount of formal education could sometimes mean little.

Of the 130 Koreans who came to Australia as computer skilled migrants, about 30% of them were working as computer-related workers. The rest were involved in menial work, such as cleaning and a small number were involved in small business, such as plumbing or Korean restaurants.

Ha Yun-sang, president of the Korean Computer Skilled Migrants' Association, experienced difficulties in surviving as a computer expert and also came across many other Koreans who had similar experiences. Ha came up with his own opinion as to how to survive and he often made suggestions to the members of the Association as follows.

The major hurdle is the language. If a computer migrant stays in his job for five years, he should be alright. Working in a specified area requires a high level of language ability, but not in tasks such as coding. An ability to

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<sup>14</sup> In another part of my interview with Yi Yun-se, he said he helped his children overcome racism at their schools. Whilst he coped well with racism he seemed to have been under distress because of racism.

I sometimes visited my children at school and observed them from a distance. I wanted to make sure they weren't under stress and their school life was okay. My eldest son was good at *t'aekkwondo* and won many prizes from competitions. One day, I put a trophy in his school bag. When his class mates saw the trophy they were reluctant to tease my son (Yi Yun-se, skilled migrant).

talk to the machine is all that's required for coding (Ha Yun-sang, skilled migrant).

Whilst most computer skilled migrants from Korea want to best utilize their individual expertise, limited language ability makes them work in relatively simple or less challenging tasks. Experienced computer programmers' involvement in coding or manual work such as cleaning seems to be not only a waste of skills but is also humiliating and alienating for professionals.

The new computer migrant is easily tempted by numerous positions advertised in newspapers which offer attractive wage packages. It's important to realize that the advertisements are meant to swap the positions amongst [Euro-] Australians. It's an effective way of enhancing the profiles of the companies. When a Korean sends off about 100 job applications and doesn't even get called for one interview, he's quite frustrated. I tell the new comer that once he gets a job, it's important for him to stay at least for three to five years so that he can improve his English and he may have an opportunity for promotion within the same company or elsewhere. I tell them to forget about what they did or how experienced they were in Korea. If he leaves for a better paid job before three years he'll soon be weeded out. I tell them not to read the advertisements at all but to be satisfied with coding for a few years. ... The Australian boss will quickly notice whether a new worker is happy with his work or not. ... Limited language ability shouldn't be a major hurdle in working as a computer worker. I discourage them to be involved in administration. ... If they wish to settle in Australia they should relax and adjust to the new society for several months and try to learn good things in Australia. They get paid even though they don't work (Ha Yun-sang, skilled migrant).

It seemed that there are too many hurdles for a Korean computer worker to get over before he is able to work like his Euro-Australian counterpart. The hurdles are more than the issues of language and culture.

In comparison with the overt racial discrimination experienced by the amnesty migrants, the skilled migrants appeared to have experienced a rather more subtle variety. Skilled migrants seemed to have felt that racism is deeply embedded in the whole society and militates against their *work* opportunity.

If you're a capable worker in Korea, you'd be promoted. But here, no matter how good you're, you won't be promoted. That's primarily because of your limited command of English. The crucial reason I quit my work was because I couldn't see the prospect for a better future at the job. Unlike with wage earning work, faithful small business persons tend to get an appropriate reward if they work hard (Mun Chin-ho, skilled migrant).

Emphasizing the significance of racism, skilled migrants tended to downplay their lack of English which is a basic tool at work. Survival as a computer programmer for more than five years is a relative success. As Ha Yun-sang suggested, Mun might have been able to stay on at the job provided that he had not minded doing rather mundane work and was happy with the given wage. While talking to the various groups of Koreans in Sydney including the skilled migrants, I realized that they thought it was a privilege to have had a professional job which required a high level of communication skills. It seemed to be particularly so amongst the skilled migrants. They already had held professional jobs in Korea and wanted to continue their work at least for several years but in a better environment such as Australia. They were not only highly regarded by the general public in Korea, but had been 'chosen' by the Australian government. Their reason for coming to Australia was not to be under-employed, nor to be involved in a small business such as a restaurant or contract cleaning. As I was concerned about why skilled migrants had given up their expertise for the rest of their life I asked,

*Computer engineers in Korea have been generally known to have a good English capacity. Wouldn't you have been able to perform well had you stayed a bit longer?*

I don't think so. How could I catch up with those brought up in Australia? It's an impossible task. My English might improve if I study consistently like you. It isn't a problem to work with the computer itself all day. As time passes more English language ability is highly required (Mun Chin-ho, skilled migrant).

I concluded that skilled migrants' work capacity was diminished because of their limited command of English. The constant demands of their work deprived them of a chance of further improving their English. Not being able to advance their skills has led them to lose self-esteem.

*Like your case, Koreans being under-employed worries me greatly.*

There's nothing much I can do about it. If I can't freely express myself, the last thing I can do is a menial work. That would be the bottom line to come up with an actual outcome (Yang Chin-u, computer migrant, currently doing shoe repair).

Yang Chin-u regretted that he entered a wrong company, saying that

My task was too specific, that is, developing a particular software. Such work requires continuing interviews and consultations. ... I should have worked as a computer technician. If I can fix a computer, the result is immediate and my ability would have been recognized. But the work I did required continuing communication and involved many trials and errors. If it takes too long to accomplish a task it's no good (Yang Chin-u, computer migrant).

Pak Kwang-su has taught Korean in TAFE and universities in Australia for four years and earned a Master's degree in Australia. He is currently holding a half-time contract position in a university. While he tried to become involved in a research project and to find full-time work he learned that he should be far better than Euro-Australians to be equal to them.

Many unqualified people are teaching the Korean language at university level. They have the least understanding about Korean culture and the backgrounds of the Korean language. As I've majored in teaching Korean, I could be better than many of them. It's problematic that those people form the dominant group. My experience tells me that Australian society isn't running on the basis of fairness (Pak Kwang-su, skilled migrant).

### *(ii) Involvement in small business*

The skilled migrants came to Australia to enjoy more than economic affluence. They wanted to achieve it by maintaining their professional expertise in Australia, rather than merely in the Korean community.

However, a few years of bitter experience in the process of settling in, despite their hopes, led them to menial work or to a small business. Thus, their initial hope to enjoy more than economic wealth was shattered. Instead they turned back to the pursuit of economic wealth which often entailed very hard work or long working hours. Whereas the matter of a decent or a better life was at stake at the start of their immigrant life, the matter of survival appeared to have become more important.

I had enough problems. If I could utilize my previous expertise, i.e., computer work, it would have been good. But too many obstacles made it impossible. The language barrier was one problem and the way in which work is distributed in Australia differs from that in Korea. For example, working as manager of a section in Korea, I didn't have to work on the software program. But in Australia, I had to start from scratch. I worked in the computer section of the Westpac Banking Co. for 5 and 1/2 years. Starting at the bottom, I couldn't see any prospects for the future. I decided to leave the job and take up a small business. There were numerous cases like me (Mun Chin-ho, skilled migrant).

Up to 60% of the Korean working population may be involved in cleaning, according to two Korean journalists in the Korean community I met together. They also maintained that Koreans tend to be ashamed of their occupations if they are involved in menial work. Informants and respondents mostly agreed with this. According to the 1991 Census, 'Korea-born males were more likely to be employed as labourers and related workers (24.9%) and trade persons (21.9%)' (BIMPR 1995). Considering the time of the Census and the fact that a significant proportion of the amnesty migrants were involved in small business or retired, the above statistics might predominantly have included the skilled migrants. If the 60% is an exaggeration, somewhere between 45% and 50% would be involved in cleaning work. Skilled migrants' comments were indicative of their frequent involvement in cleaning.

My friends are working day and night. When I ring them in the night,<sup>15</sup> I'm mostly told that they were at work. Even if I talk to them over the phone they tell me that they should go out to work soon. Their life is extremely busy (Pak Kwang-su, skilled migrant).

However, what is certain is that a large proportion of the skilled migrants are involved in menial work. Yi Ki-ju, who worked as a cleaner for several years, observed that

Many *Kup'o* [referring to the amnesty migrants] are doing business, such as a food store or restaurant. There aren't many *Chungp'o* [Koreans who have stayed in Australia for a medium period or the skilled/family reunion migrants] doing small business. Those who arrived from Vietnam are *not* generally involved in cleaning work at present, though some of their brothers or cousins who came to Australia under the family reunion program are involved in cleaning. ... Home cleaning workers are mostly university graduates (Yi Ki-ju, skilled migrant).

Again, a point Yi made was that the amnesty migrants tended to be more involved in small business in comparison with skilled and business migrants. The skilled migrants were often involved in labouring work or small businesses which may have required only a small sum of start-up capital. This has also been indicated by Y. Kim's (1995) survey on small businesses in the Korean community in Sydney and Melbourne. Some amnesty migrants who are currently running small businesses argue that skilled migrants' frequent involvement in manual work rather than small business could be explained by their relatively short stay in Australia.<sup>16</sup>

Skilled migrants found that it is almost impossible to start a business without understanding the culture or consumption patterns in Australian society. After learning that he could not find an appropriate job, Hwang

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<sup>15</sup> Most cleaning work other than home cleaning is normally done after work hours or generally in the night.

<sup>16</sup> Research on Korean migrants in North America found that a significant number of them have been involved in small businesses (e.g., P. Min 1984; P. Min 1990; cf. S. Kim 1997: 13).

Sang-uk (former school teacher) and his wife wanted to run a take-away food shop.

... We trained for a week to take it over. We found it extremely tiring. We had to do shopping early in the morning. There wasn't even time to have meals ourselves. After we signed a contract to take over a shop we had to cancel it. The premium required was A\$50,000 (Hwang Sang-uk, family reunion migrant).

They used some of the money in purchasing a house and some for buying an office cleaning contract, which the husband and wife have been doing for the last seven years. They were often not sure why they were doing such a job and often cried together about it. Fortunately, they have recovered from a major psychological crisis and now have a positive attitude towards their immigrant life.

Running a small business after experiencing many difficulties working for a company is not the end of experiencing structural racism or other difficulties, which NESB migrants have to go through. Running a business seems to cause further problems.

*Do you have any trouble with racism in running a business?*

Well, it isn't terribly explicit but I have to put up with it. It happens with the inspection of the work I've done. Whereas an Australian business person could pass easily I've had some trouble. Well, I passed in one region but not in another region for the same result. If I complained I was told that it was a matter of the regulations. I often felt that had I been a 'yellow-haired' [blonde haired] business person, I wouldn't have run into trouble at all. Racial discrimination is often not obvious as it's subtle, but it's there (Yi Man-yong, skilled migrant).

### **Business Migrants: From Entrepreneurs to Long Sports Holiday Makers**

According to Yim T'aek-chin, an immigration adviser, other informants, and the business migrant respondents, about 10% of Korean business migrants returned to Korea; 10% run businesses and move between Korea and Australia, but their children always stay in Australia; 30% run

businesses in Australia; and 50% play sports such as golf and fishing. Of the nine respondents (eight male and one female—the wife of a deceased business migrant<sup>17</sup>) of business migrants for this study, only one was operating a business (a mixed shop) and also doing a few hours of cleaning work every night (see Table 8.7). The female respondent did sewing at home; one<sup>18</sup> was assisting his wife, doing sewing at home; and one was a casual worker for various jobs such as writing articles for the magazines in Korea. The remaining five were not involved in any particular work and one of them is *occasionally* doing cleaning work. Apart from the female respondent and the one running a shop, all the respondents were actively involved in playing golf, fishing, or gardening. Moreover, business migrants came with a large sum of capital (\$350,000 to more than a million dollars) and they do not urgently require employment or are often not interested in work.

Business migrants' relatively higher aspirations and economic success made it more difficult to adjust. Of the nine respondents, the ex-serviceman and the now deceased man did not have any intention of doing business or any employment. The former school deputy principal hoped to be employed for any worthwhile work related to education. The remaining six wanted to do business, but only one of them was running a mixed shop, of which he is not proud.

*(i) Non-involvement in business*

According to the respondents, the common reasons they could not participate in business include their lack of English language and

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<sup>17</sup> When I asked a business migrant to introduce other business migrants to me I was introduced to this respondent. I did not know the respondent's husband passed away a few years ago until I reached the respondent's place. I asked about her immigrant life as well as that of the deceased. I included this female respondent because her case broadens the understanding of business migrants.

<sup>18</sup> Strictly speaking this person is unemployed like 5 others.

understanding about Australian society, and high wages. They complain that there is no reliable source of information for running businesses. Business migrants used to benefit from the cheap and disciplined labour in Korea and are now frustrated that it is no longer accessible to them.

Wages are so high that I can't get the right retail price. I once considered running a small sized business, but I gave up. All my family members are here. ... I'm just taking a rest and learning English. I'd later encourage my children to go into business. ... Some of my friends, who did business in Korea, are now doing businesses in China and Indonesia. I visited Indonesia. Labour is cheap there. ... If I want to run the size of business I had in Korea in Australia, the wages I'd have to pay out would be enormous. If I employ Australian workers I don't even think I could manage to pay their wage. Operating a home industry might be alright. ... To be frank, no Korean business migrant seem to have achieved what they originally wanted to in Australia (Min Yong-mo, business migrant).

Above all, business migrants are reluctant to start a business mainly because they are not fully informed about how to do business in Australia and they are aware of some business failures which led Korean business migrants to lose an enormous amount of capital. Korean business migrants, mostly in their late 50s or older, think that if they cannot earn money in Australia it would be 'better to hold on to what they have, as life in a foreign land without money would be a miserable one'. The respondents thought that it takes about five years for business migrants before they are able to start some sort of business. Two or three years are seen to be too short to get prepared.

Most of them are quite old [mid 50s or older]. As in Korea, once they fail in a business, it's almost impossible to get it going again. Therefore, they're hesitant to get into a venture unless they're sure about what they're doing. However, if they can't start a business in five or six years, they get too scared to begin anything (Yi Ki-bung, business migrant).

Not being able to get into business, business migrants tend to have their own excuses. Those who did 'reasonably big' business in Korea like Mun Ho-jin, who ran a dress making company and employed about 70 workers in Korea say that it is not worth doing a 'small' business in Australia.

I'm entitled to retire and enjoy the rest of my life after working hard for many years. Although I'd like to do a business I can't do it, as I don't understand Australia yet (Mun Ho-jin, business migrant).

Business migrants are reluctant to do labouring work such as cleaning, the most easily available work in the Korean community, because of self-respect and their reliance on their bank balance.

The most easily available task is cleaning or other menial work or worker's labourer. But those Koreans from Vietnam were prepared to do anything. Let's see business migrants. As they were well off in Korea their attitudes towards work are quite different from us. What they first say is that 'Even if I starve to death I'll never do a cleaning work.' Of course, they don't do it in their early days (Kim Mun-ho, amnesty migrant).

Most Koreans in Sydney are involved in dirty jobs. Business migrants like me brought 'some' money. Whether I can do a dirty job is a matter of self-respect (Kim Tong-sik, business migrants; cf. *Han'guk Sinmun* 1996: 4).

In a recent article about the low income of Koreans in Sydney, *Han'guk Sinmun* (1997 January 24: 3) presents the migrant experience of a typical Korean business migrant.

Park Kang-ün (53 years old) ran a printing business over twenty years in Seoul. Because of economic recession in Korea, he came to Australia as a business migrant in May 1996. His immigration adviser told him that he would be a successful businessman in Australia. He was happy to come to Australia and was hopeful for his new life in Australia. He thought of doing a printing business in the Korean community, but concluded there wouldn't be enough demand because there're already people doing it. His English wasn't good enough for any business. ... He's tired of searching for an appropriate business. He has spent much of the capital he brought for business. He's worried about spending all of it and is thinking of returning to Korea.

*(ii) Involvement in small business or other work*

If business migrants are in a business or doing other work, such as cleaning, they are more likely to be the ones who arrived in 1987 or 1988 rather than those since 1989. They are likely to be younger (i.e., 50s) and tend to have their children at school or university. This is largely because the officially

required amount for business migration in 1987-88 was \$350,000 which increased to \$650,000 from 1989.

In 1986-87, about \$300,000 was required to be a business migrant in Australia. What could you do with that money? If you bought a house with it, there'd be nothing left for business. If you have to pay house rent and live an everyday life it's a hard life. I had to do something to support my family (Yi Ki-bung, business migrant operating a mixed shop and doing cleaning work at night, arrived in 1987).

Yi Ki-bung spent his first two years in Australia learning English. His other major activities were playing golf and fishing. As the business migrants who arrived in 1987 and 1988 came with 'lesser' capital, this helped them to adjust to a new society relatively quickly. They appeared to have similar life styles to those of skilled migrants and the ways in which they have settled with their work seemed also similar although business migrants brought more capital which was helpful in doing small business.

After two years, I thought of doing something. The most easily available work here has been cleaning work. I undertook training for cleaning for six months. Then, I bought an office cleaning contract, which I'm still doing at night. ... I've been running this mixed corner shop for the last 18 months. ... Those who haven't brought lots of capital, like me, have no alternative but to get engaged in some sort of work, as they have to support their family. This helped me quickly adjust to the new society. Those who have a lot of assets in Korea have a different story. They say, 'There's no work for me in Australia. My life doesn't last forever, thus I'll keep selling things in Korea.' Alas, they take things too easy. Now living in Australia, we could play golf, go fishing or enjoy the nature. But leisure isn't my 'expertise'. Those who used to work in Korea enjoy a short period of rest in Australia. But they soon miss work. Human beings are supposed to *work*. They could be employed to work for others, but they don't want to do that. They aren't prepared to do business. As they have time they visit Korea and see their friends or relatives and realize that their businesses keep growing. Then the business migrants ask a question, 'What have I done when others have progressed?' I've seen some of those people returning to Korea. Looking at those people, I learned that it's important to have a regular life rhythm. Otherwise, people become 'crippled' (Yi Ki-bung, business migrant).

It is well known that some Korean business migrants came to Australia without completely disposing of the whole of their assets or business. As

they continue their businesses in Korea, they frequently move between Australia and Korea. The requirement for maintaining their permanent residency is to spend a certain period in Australia but they barely meet the requirement.

When business migrants are not able to find a source of income, they or their wives, in particular, take on tasks such as sewing. When I visited Mun Ho-jin, his wife was sewing in their car garage in which there were piles of materials to be finished. He indicated that as he brought in 'enough capital', her work is to make some pocket money for herself and the children and some spending money to visit Korea. The sewing work seems to offer Mun the opportunity of some work as he assists her.

In the case of the wife of the deceased business migrant, the sewing is not only her major occupation but also a way of supplementing the interest from her bank balance. As she was aware of the fatal ill health of her husband well before coming to Australia, she was determined to settle in Australia and she has quickly adjusted to the new work and the new country.

### *(iii) Unwanted long sports holidays*

Playing golf is an important activity for business migrants without a particular commitment to work. They often hold golf competitions exclusively for the members of the Business Migrants' Association. The association frequently advertises as below. As they are not able to engage in a business as they would wish, they tend to concentrate on sports activities and tell themselves and others that 'Australia is not a place for earning but for spending.'

**The 75th Business Migrants' Golf Competition**  
Date & time: Friday 4th August, 10:30am, Tee Off  
Venue: Carnarvon Golf Club (Nottingham Rd., Lidcombe)  
Further information: Ring 415-1995, 642-4129  
Those who came under the category of business immigration are welcome.

SOURCE: *Wik'illi Top* 1995 July 28: 9

Although possessing adequate finances appears to be a significant source of 'relief' as well as life satisfaction amongst some Korean business migrants in Sydney, it would be naive to say that they are content just because they are relatively better off than other groups of Koreans. When they are unable to carry out the kind of business they wished to do, they seem to tell themselves that since they had worked hard enough in Korea, now it is time to relax. When they realize that they have to pay a higher level of tax than they did in Korea, they again say that 'Australia is not for accumulating wealth but for spending what you have already got.' Whereas the majority of them were small entrepreneurs in Korea they are now either small shop owners or enjoying sports only, i.e., unemployed. They have been downgraded from owners or executive members of small businesses to shop keepers, cleaners or 'sportsmen.' This causes a great deal of concern for them.

When we [amnesty migrants] sometimes play golf, it's something enjoyable. However, playing golf everyday is an enormous stress for business migrants. The reason they play golf is because they've got nothing else to do. No business or studying or anything. When I play golf it's good for physical and mental health (Na Kang-jin, amnesty migrant).

## **INCOME, FINANCIAL STATUS AND HOME OWNERSHIP**

The amount of income they earn and their financial status have a direct impact on many aspects of their immigrant life including their health status and health care choices. Of the three groups used for this study, no particular

group appeared to enjoy economic affluence, similar to the situations of other NESB migrants. However, the level of satisfaction with their income and home ownership is related to the amount of capital they brought with them, their modes and times of entry to Australia.

### **Amnesty Migrants**

Although a relatively higher proportion of amnesty migrants than the other two groups are involved in small businesses they tend to be small scale and they are not financially well off (cf. *Han'guk Sinmun* 1997 January 24: 3). A husband and wife have often been working long hours or employing no more than a few people. However, the respondents mostly owned their own homes (except n: 5) and did not have to pay a mortgage. Further, amnesty migrants do not generally have children attending schools. Thus, they could live 'comfortably' with the incomes from small business or wage earning. Four respondents did not own their homes and three of them came to Australia in 1985, 1987 and 1988 and two of them remain 'illegal migrants'. Three respondents who did not own homes but had children at school were especially under financial difficulties.

The reason most amnesty migrants own their own homes is due to more than their relatively lengthy stay in Australia. They had the advantage of relative economic affluence of the Australian economy in addition to their diligent work. Coughlan (1992: 144-145) found in the 1986 Census that 14.5% of women (15 years old and over) in the Korean community were unemployed and 50.5% were employed. He also found that most of the unemployed were mostly recent arrivals, which indicates that those who arrived in the 1970s and early 1980s are more likely to be employed unless they are retired. The figure for the employment rate of women is very high in comparison with that in Korea. Until the mid-1980s, married women in

Korea were rarely involved in paid work. As family reunion occurred after the amnesties in 1976 and 1980, Korean women entered Australia and became involved in work, mostly in factories. This contributed to the economic needs of their families.

Kim Pang-i (1986: 30) found that the level of house ownership among Koreans was relatively *higher* than for other ethnic groups at the time of the 1981 Census, because most Koreans worked hard. According to the 1981 Census (cited in P. Kim 1986), amnesty migrants formed the majority of the Korean population in Australia; the average income of each Korean household was \$20,733 whereas that of the average Australian household reached \$16,490. These phenomena are notable because the major proportion of the Koreans at the time of the 1981 Census was drawn from low socio-economic backgrounds in Korea and they entered Australia with virtually no capital, although 72.3% of the Koreans were at least high school educated. The amnesty migrants have been relatively 'successful' financially through hard work, enjoying little leisure and rest, utilizing the relatively favourable Australian economic environment. No matter how hard a worker one may be, she or he does not work in a social vacuum, but in a pre-existing or current economic structure.

Putting time and energy into work or over-working as much as I could, for example, home cleaning for several years was necessary if you wanted to own your own home at all (Song Chu-p'yo, amnesty migrant).

### **Skilled Migrants**

The average ages of the skilled immigrants at the time of arrival in Australia are between their middle and late 30s. The potential skilled migrants who lack working experience and who are over 40 years old are disadvantaged and not favoured by the Australian immigration officer in Seoul. Considering the period of employment in Korea, the sum of capital

they brought with them would be rarely more than A\$100,000. This would not buy them a home in a suburb of Sydney.

At the time of the 1986 Census, the Korea-born community exhibited an income distribution which was *slightly higher* than the median figure in Australia. Further, very few of the Korea-born community lived in dwellings that were owned (11.3%) or being purchased (29.5%). About fifty five per cent (54.6%) lived in rented residences (cited in Coughlan 1992). This is probably due to a large proportion of new Korean migrants entering under the category of family reunion migrants in the early 1980s.

However, the level of income or the proportion of those who owned or were buying their homes did not improve by 1991 when there had been a significant increase in the proportion of skilled migrants. At the time of the 1991 Census, the median annual income of all Korea-born individuals aged 15 years and over (A\$11,100) was 21.8% *lower* than that of the total Australian population. Only 15.8% of Korea-born households owned their own homes and a further 21.8% of Korea-born were purchasing them, whereas 41% of total Australians owned their homes and 27.1% were buying them. About fifty six per cent (55.7%) of Korea-born households rented accommodation (BIMPR 1995). BIMPR (1995: 28) cites a probable reason for the low income of all the Korea-born. There were about 3,000 Korea-born students in Australia at the time of the 1991 Census, which may have been the reason. However, it would also be important to note that the Korean skilled and business migrants tend to have government allowances for the early years of their life in Australia, which puts them in low income categories. More importantly, their income would not be as high as that earned by the amnesty migrants at the times of the 1986 and 1991 Census.

The relatively low level of income of the skilled/family reunion migrants may be attributed to a number of reasons. Firstly, the Australian economy in the 1980s was relatively unfavourable in comparison with that of the 1970s. At a time of recession, it is the immigrant who finds it most difficult to gain employment. Secondly, unlike the amnesty migrants, skilled/independent migrants were reluctant to hold two or three jobs simultaneously. Even if they wished to do so, the jobs may not have been as easily available as in the 1970s. For these reasons, the skilled migrants may take a longer period before they owned their homes than did the amnesty migrants.

I asked one family, where the wife worked as a medical technician and the husband (Yang Chin-u) ran a shoe repair shop.

*As you're both earning income, your finances may be good enough.*

Not at all. We're just managing despite both of us working so hard. As our children are in the high school, we have to spend a lot on them. We have to pay off the mortgage, etc. (Yang Chin-u, skilled migrant)

There's no set income for me. If there's work for me I earn. If not, I go without. It's fortunate that my wife has a set income. We barely manage after paying off the house mortgage. When my wife and I worked in Korea, we always had a large balance in our bank accounts. In Australia, we have no more than a few hundred dollars in our bank account (Yi Mun-jip, currently working as a plumber).

Yang Chin-u, a computer immigrant who is currently paying off his house mortgage, said

Of the skilled migrants around me, the number who are renting accommodation is much more than those who are purchasing or own their own home. It's too expensive to purchase a house.

Interview data reveals that most skilled migrants barely manage to make ends meet.

**Business Migrants: 'Keep Spending Without Earning'**

According to the respondents and Yim T'aek-chin, an immigration adviser, the main source of income of most business migrants is the interest from their bank balance left after buying a house and a car. This is obvious because of their lack of involvement in earning income. Similar to the amnesty migrants, home ownership is very high amongst business migrants. Korean business migrants rarely have young children at school. Although no business migrant respondent mentioned that they enjoy high income, neither did they appear to suffer from severe financial difficulties. Many non-business migrant respondents often complained that some business migrants take advantage of social welfare payments.

Since 1989, the officially required minimum for business migrants has been A\$650,000. If a business migrant brought that amount, the balance after buying a house and a car would be about A\$400,000. Finding it difficult to ask how much he brought, I asked Kim Tong-sik, 'After buying a house and a car, if you put \$400,000 in the bank what is the interest you would get?' He answered quickly as if his bank balance was close to that level, saying,

The interest would be about \$3,000 per month. But the interest rate fluctuates. Anyhow, an annual income would be about \$35,000. After paying tax from the income, I could just manage. But it's not better than those [Koreans] who are doing manual work. When we came in 1992, the bank interest rate was 14%. Under that rate, my family would have been able to manage for some years. However, as the interest rate has fallen, I've ended up using part of the principal. Therefore, unless they [business migrants] are careful or find work to do, it's quite easy to be broke. But it's hard for those already in their late 50s to start a business [in Australia].

Kim's comment indicates that unless business migrants brought around \$800,000 and above, they may need to be involved in paid work, unless they can get involved in a business. Unlike amnesty migrants, business migrants are happy to take up government paid welfare allowances. They consider it their right.

*Are business migrants able to receive a family allowance?*

If their bank balance is less than \$300,000 they're entitled to it (the spouse of a business migrant).

Korean non-business migrants or amnesty migrants in particular, think that it is not right for business migrants to rely on government paid allowances, such as the unemployment benefit or family allowance. The tight financial conditions seem to make some business migrants with no work live frugally. As I was often told that business migrants are under financial distress and want to cut the price of groceries, I wanted to double check this. Whilst talking to a grocery shop owner about what I was researching, he asked me to pass the message to business migrants that 'They should not try to cut the prices of a few dollars worth of groceries.' When I discussed this matter with a business migrant, he said, 'As they [business migrants] did business for many years they are highly aware of the value of the money.' However, non-business migrants provided a more convincing explanation, which is likely to be true for those business migrants who have brought less than \$800,000.

No matter how rich you are, if you keep spending the money you have, you'll see the end of it some day. However, even if you don't have a lot if you keep earning and spending, you would feel secure (Kim Tal-chun, amnesty migrant).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The most significant aspect of male Korean immigrant life was centred around their work involvement. It goes without saying that in the process of leading an immigrant life in a new country, all the three groups of Korean men suffered from individual deficiencies such as lack of English as well as from structural discrimination. Economic recession also had an adverse impact on the immigrant life of Koreans, especially on skilled and

business migrants. The case of male Korean immigrants in Australia suggests that structural constraints in a given society appear to have a strong effect and individual agency has only limited room to exercise its influence.

However, the levels of expectations which each of the three groups had also affected their life and work involvement. Amnesty migrants were well prepared to do any labouring work available to them regardless of their levels of qualifications. Their readiness to do menial work and the relatively favourable Australian economy enabled them to buy their own homes in a relatively short period of time and to start small businesses. However, skilled and business migrants had different expectations from and attitudes towards their immigrant life. Skilled migrants have rarely utilized their expertise and qualifications. The majority of them are involved in manual work. Business migrants are frequently involved in 'unwanted long sports holidays'.

I have discussed immigrant life and work involvement among Korean men because of their significant impact upon their health status and health care utilization patterns. The latter is the issue to take up in the next chapter.

## Chapter 9

### *Health status and health care use: the views of the users*

#### HEALTH STATUS: 'DAMAGED HEALTH'

Physically demanding work and psychological stress for a lengthy period have a negative impact on health status. Most respondents and informants indicate that Korean men's heavy involvement in manual work in the past or present has adversely affected their health status.

There must be definite side effects from hard work. You'll develop problems like muscular problems and neuralgia if you've been doing heavy manual work. Moreover, if you're psychologically stressed, you'll fall ill (Yi Man-su, amnesty migrant).

I'm 47 years old. For the last few years my health has been deteriorating as a consequent result of harsh immigrant life during my early years in Australia. I feel that my health is obviously getting worse, my eyesight is getting bad and I get easily tired (Yi Man-yong, skilled migrant).

The involvement in manual work by all amnesty migrants and most skilled migrants for a lengthy period in the past or present led them to suffer relatively severely from their physical ill health. Both skilled and business migrants suffer from 'psychological stress/ mental illness' to use their words mainly because of their low achievement and dissatisfaction with their work

despite their original high aspirations of the benefits which might follow from migration. Most amnesty migrants, irrespective of their qualifications and educational levels, tend to enjoy relatively good mental health because they thought that they benefited more in Australia than they would have had they stayed back in Korea, in terms of their financial achievement and children's education. However, better educated amnesty migrants tend to be dissatisfied with their immigrant life, which is similar to the situation with skilled migrants. Business migrants' little involvement in work but frequent involvement in sporting activities led to their relatively good *physical* health. The physical and mental health of the three groups of Korean men could be described as in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1: Physical and mental health of Korean men in Sydney

	Amnesty migrants	Skilled migrants	Business migrants
Physical health	-	-	+
Mental health	+ / (-)	-	-

- relatively bad; + relatively good; + / (-) mostly good, but some bad

As already mentioned, cleaning (home cleaning or other kinds) is one of the most commonly held jobs by Koreans in Sydney. It is commonly known in the Korean community that Korean men in their 40s or 50s occasionally die of overworking. I have not come across Koreans who could confidently say that first generation Korean men in Sydney enjoy reasonably good health. Korean men in Sydney all know that the majority of them are involved in menial or physically demanding work or are unemployed and it has adversely affected their health. The following is a detailed account of a number of factors identified from the data, including the types of work Korean men have been involved in, which affected health and health care use.

### **Stressful Immigrant Life: 'Too Much Hard Work' and 'Ongoing Process of Adjusting to the New Life'**

As I enquired about the immigrant life and health of Koreans, all the respondents of the three sample groups for this study often mentioned that immigrant life is tiring and stressful. This may also be true for non-immigrants. But there are more difficulties for NESB migrants at the bottom end of the job market. Recent studies suggested that stress should be understood in the social context and that it has implications for health (Collins 1988; Kleinman 1986; Noh and Avison 1996; Otto 1985; Otto 1989; Shin 1992; Stoller 1968; Young 1980). The causes of stress for the respondents ranged from their lack of money to not being able to communicate properly because of lack of English. Other common causes include cultural differences and racial discrimination.

Unlike Korea, if you're short of money, it's almost impossible to borrow some quickly. ... Financial burden is always the main reason for stress. When I bought a house or a car, I'd have to pay off the mortgage. The fixed weekly expense is enormous. That's the stress for adults. Children have their own problems. The racial discrimination children have experienced at school is as serious as adults have to cope with in society. They were made fun of, as they couldn't speak English. And they sometimes refused to go to school as they were beaten up by older Australian students. So my children wanted to transfer their school. All this causes stress for adults as well (Yi Man-su, amnesty migrant).

Living far away from relatives and close friends also makes life difficult in terms of support networks (W. Hurh 1996). Lack of English continues to cause more stress and anxiety for those who are actively involved in earning income such as amnesty and skilled migrants. If a Korean is a sojourner or a guest for a short period, she or he may be prepared to cope with the disadvantages and the problems resulting from lack of English. It is not only the lack of English but also the way Koreans pronounce English that causes communication barriers. For example, a university graduate respondent was embarrassed in a post office because his pronunciation of 'stamp' could not

be understood despite repeating the word a few times. However, as citizens of Australia most Koreans seem prepared to put up with the difficulties for the rest of their life.

I've been a migrant in Australia for 13 years but I have a lot of unresolved stress. Not being able to cope with the culture of this country and not being able to speak English properly are all reasons for stress. At work, there're many rights I should seek. But, as I can't express myself I can't claim any right. If I try to say anything with my limited English I end up feeling ridiculous. Now, my attitude is that I'm a guest in this country so that I'll take whatever is given to me (Hwang Chae-song, amnesty migrant).

The stressful immigrant life amnesty migrants had especially before they became legitimate migrants may be hard to understand for those without similar experiences. Heavy drinking and smoking in their congested boarding houses and playing poker machines were the ways to 'overcome' stress or to 'help' themselves forget about the sad realities they had to face.

Living under constant stress became a part of everyday life of most Koreans regardless of whether they work for others or operate a small business. After he worked in a plastic manufacturing company and his wife worked in a shoe company, Cho T'ae-ik accumulated a little capital. They ran a take-away food shop for five years. As they found it too tiring, they had to quit the business. They had been unemployed for two years, wondering what to do next. While thinking of opening a restaurant, they came across a Korean video shop for sale. They bought it, thinking that watching videos in the shop might be all that the job entailed. They have been running it for the last few years. They receive most of the Korean TV dramas and shows on video tape from Korea. There are twenty Korean video shops in Sydney so there is a lot of competition. His wife looks after the shop while he converts the tapes from NTSC to PAL and mass produces them. He has learned that nothing is easy and that life is hard.

Physically, it's not as hard as the take-away. But it requires enormous psychological attention. Work hours are extremely long. Overall, this is harder than the take-away. But what can I do when I don't have a professional skill? Although my health is affected by the work, I have no alternative (Cho T'ae-ik, amnesty migrant).

Like other amnesty migrants, Cho T'ae-ik thinks that he does not have any alternative but to carry on with his work. This applied to all the amnesty migrant respondents as all of them worked as manual workers in the past and some are presently involved in small businesses.

I know my health isn't good. But I try to think I'm healthy enough. As I keep moving forward I tend to forget about health matters. ... I simply can't pay too much attention to health. ... I feel okay in the morning but very stressed in the afternoon everyday. ... As I have a concrete [financial] plan I can't worry too much about my health. I have no option but to keep pushing ahead. When running a take-away, I had headaches and troubles with arms, which led me to go to doctors frequently. During the two years I wasn't working, I had many X-rays and tests done. Nothing was found. I think it's due to too much stressful and hard work. My children are in the eighth and tenth grades of school. Until they finish university studies, I'll have to keep going (Cho T'ae-ik, amnesty migrant).

Skilled and business migrants had relatively high expectations to become part of Australian society in terms of human interactions, work involvement and life styles and tried hard to achieve acceptance. Most of the respondents have been deeply disappointed not to be able to do so. They tend to blame their lack of English and cultural differences between Australia and Korea. 'Living in a foreign land' is a stressful experience. Although their nationalities have been changed from Korean to Australian, they remain largely 'Korean' and live as 'foreigners'.

I find it difficult to be fully absorbed into the wider Australian society. This prevents me from enjoying life in a broad sense. When I was working as a computer worker Australian colleagues used to drop into the pub on Friday afternoons. But I couldn't do such a thing. The point is that I don't live in *my* country, which is always the most stressful thing. Though the life in general is comfortable here ... Now living in an English speaking country, the customs and culture I was brought up with

simply don't fit here. That's a continuing source of stress (Mun Chin-ho, skilled migrant).

Not being able to feel part of Australia and living as aliens had a negative impact on their health. I asked Yang Chin-u, a former computer worker and currently a shoe repairer,

*How's your health?*

I have trouble with high blood pressure and I'm taking tablets for it. Although I had the problem in Korea it wasn't as bad as I can feel now. After coming to Australia it became so severe, that I had to have medication for it.

*What do you think troubled you in Australia?*

I had lots of stress in the ongoing process of adjusting to the new life here.

In the last several years, *karaoke* businesses have been booming in the Korean community. There were ten in early 1997. According to the respondents, it is an important place where they can sing Korean songs and *temporarily* forget about the stresses of immigrant life. As I was once present with a group of Koreans singing in a *karaoke* room, I was repeatedly told, 'This is how we can overcome our stressful immigrant life.'

### **Involvement in 'Immigrant Works' and Their Consequences for Health**

Amnesty migrants have been over-worked at the expense of their health. Their involvement in 'dirty, difficult and degrading work' for a lengthy period regardless of their qualifications has had a negative impact upon their health. Working hard and long hours, their palms were as rough and hard as the soles of their feet. Many respondents mentioned that they were 'too busy to fall sick or couldn't afford to fall sick.' According to the respondents and informants, many of the amnesty migrants passed away before they turned 60 and 'over-work' is often blamed. Working diligently, they often achieved a few things like owning their own homes, education

for their children and operating a small business, which they might not have achieved in Korea had they stayed there. These are the sources of relative psychological satisfaction with their immigrant life. However, the process of achieving those had consequent impact on their health. As amnesty migrants are relatively older than other two groups for this study, they are more vulnerable to ill health and premature death. However, the respondents from the amnesty migrants suggest that their ill health is closely linked to their heavy involvement in 'immigrant work.'

Entering Australia with no capital, amnesty migrants were relatively more disadvantaged in comparison with other two groups. Amnesty migrants' *economic aspirations* were extraordinary, as they supported their family in Korea and prepared to bring them to Australia. Four to six amnesty migrants often shared a little flat before their family reunions, saving rent. Holding two or three jobs simultaneously and working often 12 to 15 hours a day, many of them drove 400-500 km every day. Working long hours like this is commonplace amongst them. They rarely slept more than four hours a day. They rarely cooked decent food. Before family reunions, cooking food was cumbersome and difficult for the busy men and they often lived on noodles.

*(i) Welding and other 'immigrant work' and their consequences on health*

Many amnesty migrants have been engaged in welding and this seemed to cause more physical ill health than was experienced by those in other jobs. The following example by Sim Mu-ho of the experience of ill health illustrates well the experiences of ill health for amnesty migrants who have been doing hard 'immigrant work' for years. Sim Mu-ho told me why he quit a welding job after five years.

If you're welding poisonous gas will get into the breathing system. The company generally offers a glass of milk at lunch time, which is supposed to protect your lung. Over the years, my lungs and eyes had developed

trouble. I had bad phlegm and bad eyesight. There were regular check-ups from company doctors and individuals were encouraged to do self check-ups. I was diagnosed to have bad lungs. Since then, I worked in an oyster farm for a few years (Sim Mu-ho, amnesty migrant).

As an illegal migrant, Sim had no compensation for the health problems he picked up from welding. Sim said that most Korean welders could not continue the job for more than five years because they developed bad lungs and eyes. He had to earn his living elsewhere to live and to recover his health. Developing health problems from an 'immigrant job' and moving to another 'immigrant job' was often a continuing process of immigrant life for amnesty migrants until they started a small business. It was only after a few years at the oyster farm that he became a permanent resident as a result of the amnesty in 1980. As his health seemed better after working in the oyster farm, he went to work for a plastics company for a year. It was not because he wanted to, but because he had little alternative. Since then he opened a Korean food store which he has been running for the last 13 years.

When I first opened the store the business was going well. My wife was working in a cosmetics factory. I was busy taking my wife to and from work and collected vegetables from the wholesale market. I frequently lived on noodles. I started to have more problems with my health five years ago. I couldn't eat anything. I had more than 50 X-rays taken in various hospitals but they couldn't find what was wrong. I was at home and under severe stress. My weight changed from 72 kg to 42 kg in four years. When I had a radio opaque dye done they found a swelling on the wall of my stomach. I was told that if the swelling continued I could be a cancer victim. After a further test I was told that cancer wasn't developing. I was put on to two kinds of medication and I soon felt much better. But many parts of my body became numb and I was often in a daze. ... My wife had to quit her factory work and help me run the food store. I've been enjoying some hobbies such as gardening, writing. Now I feel much better (Sim Mu-ho, amnesty migrant).<sup>19</sup>

He pointed out a few major reasons for his ill health when I asked,

*What do you think made you so ill?*

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<sup>19</sup> Recently, I have unsuccessfully tried to talk to him, but learned that he sold his food store.

Irregular meal times, lack of exercise and a stressful life broke the balance of the body. Early diagnosis would have been useful. Frustration and stress caused by ill health made it even worse (Sim Mu-ho, amnesty migrant).

These are identified as common problems causing ill health among amnesty migrants. However, amnesty migrants have been through the problems for many years since they left Korea in the 1960s or 1970s. They know there is such a thing as 'immigrant work'. Their awareness of the links between 'damaged health' and over-working for economic rewards did not help their health. According to my investigation, Sim Mu-ho's experience of ill health is more or less similar to what most amnesty migrants have been through. Not to exaggerate, it is probably those who had been through harder times than Sim Mu-ho that died of over-work.

I interviewed an illegal migrant who was a senior manager in Korea and has overstayed for the last 16 years. He was proud of his good health and he thought that his health has not been affected by welding work, although he stated,

Because of dust and smoke, people complain that they'd like to quit welding. But they can't easily change their job, for example, buying a cleaning contract. It won't make as much money as they get from welding. To be brief, Koreans look after the jobs which Australians don't like, such as welding, which damages their eyes and lungs. 'Yellow hairs' avoid difficult and dangerous works and Koreans take them up. Further, Australians may take more than 10 days to carry out a task but Koreans finish it in 7 or 8 days. It's natural that Korean welders are popular for their efficient work. That's why many Koreans are working in welding or boiler making sectors (Yang Su-wön, illegal migrant).

Increasingly, the research literature suggests close links between particular kinds of work and cancer (Wright 1987). Although it would be impossible to establish the relationship between work and cancer in the present study, the interview data indicates that the respondents thought that the types of work

people are involved in might be a partial cause of cancer. Yi Kil-pok specifically talked about cancer sufferers in the Korean community.

As a member of a Korean voluntary service group, I often visit a variety of Korean patients in their middle or old age. More than 80% of them are cancer sufferers. This is shocking. The number of Korean cancer sufferers which I know of would be at least 40 to 60. It's well known in the Korean community that many Koreans have died in their 40s and 50s. I knew a lady who worked in a cosmetics company. She was very healthy. One day she fell sick and was diagnosed to die soon (Yi Kil-bok, amnesty migrant).

According to the interviewees' observations, the cancer victims in the Korean community were doing hard manual work for years and were under severe stress. They often looked healthy and fell ill suddenly. Yi went on to talk further about his fear and one of his late work colleagues,

I have a neurosis of developing cancer. When I'm sick, the first thing that comes to my mind is 'It could be a cancer!' I knew one of my colleagues at an iron company. One day, he complained that he had a stomach ache and he couldn't sleep in the night. Leaving his tool box aside, he went to Prince Alfred Hospital. He was found to have a stomach cancer. He had an operation and I visited him soon after. He died in a less than a week. ... I've seen two Korean welders, close to me, who died of cancer just recently. It seems that welders are vulnerable to lung cancer. I know of many Korean welders who died of it. When they fall ill and go to hospital, they never get out of it (Yi Kil-bok, amnesty migrant).

Korean men doing other forms of manual work also suffer frequently from ill health. Na Chong-sang, in his mid 40s and doing cleaning and furniture delivery, talked about his and his friends' health.

My friends' health seems generally okay. Some of them have *damaged* their health because they had been chasing money. In Australia, there're always monetary rewards if you work hard. As you come to possess some money you get greedy. In due course, fatigue accumulates. You end up developing bad health, from which you suffer severely (Na Chong-sang, amnesty migrant).

These problems are identified too commonly amongst amnesty migrants and to a lesser degree amongst skilled migrants. Even though Koreans are aware that over-work can cause ill health, it is almost an unavoidable aspect

of the immigrant life of Koreans. Talking to more than one hundred Koreans for the purpose of this study, I learned that the above mentioned few examples typify the general picture of how most amnesty migrants in particular have suffered. They are very well aware that the jobs they were frequently engaged in were directly influencing their health.

I worked for a company producing a plastic toilet cover. The chemical smell is harmful and poisonous. Most Koreans worked at factories, handling poisonous material. A tyre manufacturing company is similar. Working at battery company leads you to lead poisoning. Working at a shoe company causes asthma, and at a cosmetics company repetitive strain injury. Some Koreans are still doing welding. It's apparent that the health of Koreans is terrible and is in a great danger (Sim Mu-ho, amnesty migrant).

My job was to make man holes using concrete mortars. As I was paid according to my productivity I worked hard. The trouble was that I couldn't stretch my fingers in the morning. They were so painful I couldn't even open doors in the morning. I had to be hospitalized. Although I enjoyed making a good money I stayed with the job only for several months (Kim In-yong, amnesty migrant).

Because of their health, Koreans left for other manual jobs. But they caused other types of health problems. Son U-jong, former president of the Korean Society in Sydney, contributed much to the welfare of Koreans in Sydney. He is well aware of the health status of amnesty migrants.

Their health is both good and bad. Most of them had two or three jobs at the same time, which was too much. The symptoms are now becoming apparent after over-working for so many years. They complain that shoulder is aching, hurting here and there. ... I've just met a friend after a long time. He said that he was hospitalized and he had trouble with stomach in which bugs have been found. The trouble was that the bugs have spread over his whole body and he has come to have a stiff shoulder. ... Some have died of cancers. As [amnesty] Koreans have come here with nothing they had to run with bare feet [start from scratch]. The very reason they went to Vietnam was because they were poor. Children's education was also part of the reason why they've over-worked. ... As far as I'm concerned, my health had deteriorated and I can't do what I used to do before. Many Koreans look okay from their outlook. It seems their health is just like a car having a problem of rust somewhere inside. You never know when the whole thing is going to break down suddenly (Son U-jong, amnesty migrant).

A few amnesty migrants with less motivation to accumulate wealth seemed to enjoy better physical health. Kim Wŏn-sul, now sixty years old, is an example. Although he worked hard enough to give his children a tertiary education, he said that he has not tried to make a big fortune. He spent 17 months in his daughter's place in the United States when he was in his early 50s. He now lives in a rented flat and his wife is sewing at home to supplement his pension. He told me that some of his close friends died of over-working. Although he enjoyed his physical health, he did not seem happy with his immigrant life despite his satisfaction with his children's success, one of them being a dentist.

*What do you think of your immigrant life in Australia?*

Well, I feel that I arrived in Australia not long ago. It's been more than 30 years now. Now I'm over 60. [speaking emotionally] I'm saddened by my harsh immigrant life in Australia. If I'm rich I might feel differently. The old age pension from the government isn't enough to provide a living, so my wife is working at home (Kim Wŏn-sul, amnesty migrant).

As the predominant proportion of skilled migrants have been involved in long working hours in manual work or small business, they do not enjoy good health especially when considering their relatively younger ages. Probably because of their relatively short period of immigrant life and involvement in hard manual work, their health status did not appear to be as poor as that of the amnesty migrants. Despite a high dissatisfaction with their life in Australia and subsequent stress, all the skilled migrant respondents viewed their health to be good on the one hand, if they were not suffering from any serious illness. However, they expressed much concern over their ill health on the other hand. It may be common for everybody to have health problems from time to time. However, a tragedy of many NESB immigrants, such as Koreans, is that they have little option but to continue manual work even after experiencing work-related health problems or injury, despite the fact that it is going to aggravate their health.

Hwang Sang-uk, a former school teacher, and his wife are doing an office cleaning job for a few hours at night. Hwang had a knee operation in Korea. Whilst working as a cleaner in Australia, the problem recurred and he had another operation.

When I rest, my knee feels much better. The harder I work the worse the pain. I was told that the rate of recurrence is about 70% (Hwang Sang-uk, skilled migrant).

Having just turned 50, he has little alternative but to continue his work and aggravate constantly the problem in the knee. Nevertheless, the couple's positive attitude towards their life was conspicuous compared with other Korean migrants. They try not to over-work and have a complete break from work every weekend. Hwang's wife thought that the health of Koreans in Sydney was 'terrible', saying that

Living in Australia, they haven't learned how to relax and live in an Australian way. Work is everything for them during the week days and weekends. It's obvious that their health has become bad. ... We try hard to adjust to the Australian life style as we don't plan to be big business people.

Concentrating on his church activities, Kim Sang-yun thought that what he was doing for his living was not too hard for him and that he enjoyed relatively good health, saying that

I work for a bakery from 6am in the morning till noon. Then, in the afternoon, I do cleaning work from 4pm till 10pm. It makes over 10 hours a day. I can handle it as I'm healthy enough so far (Kim Sang-yun, skilled migrant).

However, he could not help getting a work-related injury.

One day last year I felt something wrong with my knee. I consulted a doctor and was told that it was caused by over-work and I should take a break from work. The trouble led me to take exercise such as swimming and golf (Kim Sang-yun, skilled migrant).

Some skilled migrants more readily complained of the status of their health than others. Their complaints were especially centred around dissatisfaction with their work, ill health and stress.

I was 43 when my health gradually went downhill. I believe that it has a lot to do with the harsh life in my early years in Australia. ... When I turned 45 my eyesight became bad. ... I'm under too much stress from running my plumbing business, I got diabetes. I'm almost scared of the weekend coming as I have to pay out the wages for three employees. ... If they have to go without work for a week they leave me, as they too have to make a living. So it's stressful that I have to keep finding contract work. I get easily irritated by a visit like yours (Yi Man-yong, skilled migrant, currently running a plumbing contract business).<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, Kim Yong-jun, who has divorced his wife since coming to Australia and currently lives on unemployment benefits and the proceeds of several hours of casual cleaning work, seemed to see himself as hopeless.

I didn't have trouble with my health in the first few years in Australia. Recently, I've been seeing a Korean doctor because of high blood pressure and stomach-related disease. Blood pressure has become worse lately. ... I do want to take care of my health, but it's hard. Nothing in the world seems to be working out for me (Kim Yong-jun, skilled migrant).

### *(ii) Dying of over-work*

Just as the amnesty migrants mentioned to me that some of their fellow Koreans passed away from over-working, some of the skilled migrants also told me of similar incidents.

Cleaning jobs are supposed to be harmful to the health of cleaners. Working with dust, breathing in the chemicals and the dust from carpets. ... They often are doing several jobs at the same time. They even die of over-work. It's all because of money. ... It's silly (Kim Yong-jun, skilled migrant).

Death notices appear in Korean ethnic newspapers from time to time. The following mentioned by Yi Yun-se is widely shared by the Korean community.

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<sup>20</sup> Listening to him, I as a researcher felt too limited to be able to do anything for him. I felt I was burdening his harsh immigrant life in spite of his kind participation in my research.

People work hard and sometimes catch an *imin ppyŏng* or illness out of harsh immigrant life. Korean migrants suffer from it when they are about to enjoy a somewhat better quality of life after working hard for many years (Yi Yun-se, skilled migrant).

The *imin ppyŏng*<sup>21</sup> may have been common amongst amnesty migrants in the Korean community till the early 1980s. Since then and in the 1990s, it has become more pervasive amongst skilled migrants, because they are the ones often involved in manual work and long working hours. The actual number of people dying of over-work is certainly not great, but the occasional incidents indicate the health of the victims as well as that of other Koreans having similar life styles.

#### **Status Anxiety of Skilled Migrants: 'Not Happy with Their Work'**

Gradual or sudden realization that their skills and qualifications do not provide skilled migrants with appropriate jobs causes a high level of frustration. The problem of status anxiety causes more problems for skilled migrants than it does for amnesty migrants. Whilst amnesty migrants tended to think that they had no option but doing manual work, skilled migrants thought that they deserve more than 'manual work' because of their skills and qualifications. Yi Su-jin, a midwife and ethnic obstetric liaison officer, is a close observer of the health of Korean immigrants in Sydney. She is aware of the social aspects of the health and is married to an engineer who experienced difficulties in having his qualification approved and who had been working as a plumber. Commenting on the health of Korean men in Sydney, she said,

The ill health which Korean men suffer from is often mental or psychological. Physical sickness isn't so significant. Many Korean men have become alcoholic. Mental illness occurs because the self is being shrunk to a great extent. They see themselves being extremely belittled.

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<sup>21</sup> In the Korean community in the US, this is known as *miguk ppyŏng* or American disease (W. Hurh 1996).

They're under psychological torment as they can't find an appropriate job (Yi Su-jin).

Although Yi Su-jin tends to underestimate the problems of poor physical health she has expressed well the psychological problems of Korean men. I understood that her comment was most applicable to the skilled migrants and also to a lesser extent business migrants. Yi found that self-esteem amongst skilled migrants is so low that it is hard to make them realize that 'they can actually do something'. She also comments on the problems she, her family and her friends' families had experienced.

When my family first arrived in Australia we were all happy. The first problem we had to experience was the issue of employment. The unemployment caused a financial problem. That was only the start of many problems. Things go from bad to worse. In Korea, when the children have a problem, parents' visits to the school usually resolve it. Here in Australia, it's not that simple. After the parents visit the school of the troubled child they have a quarrel over the unresolved problem at home. ... Above all, the most serious problem is the unhealthy relationship between the husband and wife. ... It's primarily because they find it so hard to make ends meet (Yi Su-jin).

Indeed, financial shortage, stress and family problems are closely interrelated. Psychological distress often causes insomnia. Yi Su-jin told me of a particular incident she knew.

When a Korean man suffered from sleeplessness he went to a doctor and had sleeping tablets prescribed. He kept visiting the doctor and the dose was increased every time he did. One day, when he was taking his children to the school he had a traffic accident.

The primary cause of mental distress amongst skilled migrants is that they are not satisfied with their work. Whatever they may be doing now after trying unsuccessfully to utilize their qualifications in their work, the victims are always preoccupied by resentment. The frustration about work often causes the disruption of the whole family.

Our family life was alright for several years. But for the last two years, there's less talk amongst family members. ... The main reason is that

when my husband has problems at work he just doesn't share with me. That's what causes the problem. I have to question my husband three times before I hear his answer, which annoys me very much and seems to cause a whole lot of problems in the family. We've been immigrants for ten years. We're definitely in a crisis. ... Had we not migrated to Australia, my husband now in his mid 40s would have been in a comfortable position at his work. But he still struggles to earn the basic needs (Yang Sun-mi, the wife of a skilled migrant).

It appeared that not only the personality of the husband of Yang Sun-mi, but also the experience of immigrant life, especially the problems with their work, adversely affects the whole family and causes psychological frustration. Few under-employed skilled migrants appeared to have overcome the problems well. Mun Chin-ho, who now runs a key cutting shop, appeared to be relatively well recovered from the loss of his computer programming work.

When I quit my computer work it was a great sorrow. After all, I majored in computer science at the university and worked in that area for 15 years. Now I'm in completely different work. I feel rather relieved. Constant psychological pressure to work as a computer programmer in a foreign workplace at the age of 45 was a problem for me. Now I'm free of the pressure. The thought that one has to utilize the expertise could only create an unnecessary trap. When I think about life in a broad way, what I do for a living is of little significance (Mun Chin-ho, computer skilled migrant).

Whether she liked it or not, his wife has been a source of encouragement for Mun. I also asked,

*What do your family members think about your change of work?*

My wife prefers my present work. First of all, I have more income and the level of stress is much less. As I'm running my own business, nobody interferes. When working as a computer worker I had to carry a page for 24 hours, so that I was under a constant tension. Well, I've moved from a white-collar work to a blue-collar one. But my life is no more stressful. Um ... there's no chance of promotion at my present job at all and I do have different kinds of problems. But I'm happy. My child doesn't care (Mun Chin-ho, skilled migrant).

Although he said that he was happy, his level of resentment still seemed high. Without his wife's support and his commitment to church activity he may have had very little chance to overcome his stressful life. Finishing the interview with Mun for this study, I went across to another shop where my friend worked. My friend told me that Mun is a very home-oriented person and enjoys a good family life. As he closed down his shop he went into a cake shop nearby and left with some food. I was again told that that is what he often does. Nevertheless, talking to him it was not hard to notice a deep sense of resentment about what has happened in his occupation. This is more than understandable given that he was brought up in a Confucian culture for many decades and the culture places a lot of emphasis on occupational achievements. All the skilled migrant respondents expressed such resentment caused by the non-use of their professional skills. Hwang Sang-uk, a former school teacher in Korea, came across a few of his past students in Sydney. He said that he was losing face because he was working as a cleaner.

### **Status Anxiety and Relative Satisfaction: A Distinct Experience of Amnesty Migrants**

Compared to the other two groups, amnesty migrants were much more satisfied with their immigrant life in Australia. The level of satisfaction among amnesty migrants compared with the other two groups was indeed startling especially at the time of data collection. Whether amnesty migrants were highly educated or not, they did not have many economic opportunities in Korea. The opportunities available in Australia led them to relative satisfaction and the majority of them tend to remain satisfied. They were most happy to pay taxes and were grateful to the Australian welfare system because of what they thought they gained from Australia. Amnesty

migrants are inclined to feel grateful to Australia because it allowed them to achieve so much compared with what they had brought to Australia.

I never regretted that I migrated to Australia. In fact I see it as the greatest luck in my life (Yi Man-su, amnesty migrant).

Nonetheless, amnesty migrants had also suffered psychological stress caused by doing 'immigrant work' such as cleaning during the early years of their life in Australia. Their self-esteem was often severely damaged. Although their situations are well understood by fellow Koreans in similar situations in Australia, they have not been well understood by their friends and relatives in Korea.<sup>22</sup>

I didn't feel ashamed of doing cleaning work in Australia. The problems came when I visited Korea and met my old friends and when they asked me what I was doing in Australia. I really hated the question. Who'd like to tell their friends in Korea that they were mere cleaners in Australia? But I had to tell them the truth. I was later informed that what they said to each other was, 'The silly bastard left home and travelled so far away to Australia and all he's doing there is cleaning' (Yi Man-su, amnesty migrant).

Such a comment is relevant to the culture of the very hierarchically structured Korean society. Yi's recent visit to Korea taught him that his friends are financially better off than him and that, nevertheless, had he not come to Australia he would not have been able to support his children's

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<sup>22</sup> Some amnesty migrants could not even disclose their occupations to their wives. There are many episodes regarding this matter.

One person I know went to Korea and introduced himself as a professional to some of his acquaintances and successfully married a woman in Korea. The man dresses himself up in a suit and used to leave for work with a briefcase every morning. The wife was unsure about the husband's occupation after a while. One day, she followed the husband. He entered a hotel and didn't come out. She soon found him dish washing in the hotel kitchen with his apron on. He's now running a small business and the couple have a good marriage (Na Kang-jin, amnesty migrant).

Another case was mentioned by Pae Sök-ku (cited in *Han'guk Sinmun* 1996 March 15: 49).

When I got married in 1977, my wife might have thought that I was a big business person. That made me wear a suit and tie and leave for work every morning for the first three months. But I was a mere welder's hand. I still clearly remember she was very surprised to find my work overall.

tertiary education. His eldest son is undertaking doctoral studies in the United States and the second son is a dentist. He is proud of his children.

As they have become financially more comfortable in recent years, better educated amnesty migrants especially wish that they had utilized their qualifications in respectable occupations and had more frequent chances to talk to educated Koreans to share 'intelligent' matters. The latter problem does not have much hope to improve because amnesty migrants mostly interact with amnesty migrants only. These problems are similar to the status anxiety which the other two groups have suffered.

I once was a toilet cleaner in a hospital. Of so many kinds of cleaning, why toilet cleaner for the person who was the boss of a company in Korea?  
(Son U-jong, amnesty migrant)

There is hardly anyone with whom I can discuss any serious matters (Na Kang-jin, amnesty migrant).

### **'Improved Physical Health' but 'In Distress': A Unique Experience of Business Migrants**

Most business migrants are not engaged in work and spend lots of time on sports activities and this helped maintain their physical health. Further, the respondents generally said that their health has improved since coming to Australia. Little or no involvement in work is a relief from the busy and stressful life all of them had led in Korea. The respondents reported that there was no need to continue to drink heavily after coming to Australia. They believe that this helped to improve their health in general. In Korea, successful business persons are usually heavy drinkers. In fact, Korean companies sometimes employ the so-called *sul sangmu* or 'drinking executive manager'. The business migrant respondents thought that refraining from drinking, having plenty of sleep and good air helped improve their health.

After coming to Australia, my health has improved. Playing golf has fixed my backache. I'm still confident of my health. I'm careful with what I eat and I look after my health. I don't take 'fast' food, but eat lots of fruit and vegetables (Ch'oe Min-gu, business migrant).

In Korea I had a problem with frequent flu and I used to take tablets for digestion. Here in Australia, the air is clean and the level of competition isn't as high as Korea. In Korea, the work continued even after returning home. I don't have such problems in Australia. Well, I'm not doing any business or work at all (Min Yong-mo, business migrant).

Rev. Dr Lee Sang-taek, a long time observer of the Korean community, commented that business migrants are generally 'physically healthy, but psychologically distressed'. I was told about the well-known case of a business migrant. He could not find any work suitable for him and was under severe stress and could not cope with his wife at home. All he did was to leave home in the morning, kneel down somewhere and kill ants all day, moving from one spot to another. Like skilled migrants, business migrants suffer from status anxiety or 'doing nothing'. Although the extent of the influence of relatively bad mental health on the physical is not clear, the respondents considered it to be negative.

Amongst most 'busy' Koreans in Sydney, there're some business migrants who always find time to play golf. It's important to note that they aren't the ones enjoying good health. They're really wobbly [their health is bad]. They're distressed because nothing of their capability is recognized in Australia. It causes a great feeling of emptiness (Pak Kwang-su, skilled migrant).

Indeed, despite their claim to be physically healthy, the long-term effect of psychological distress on their physical health remains to be seen. Like most skilled migrants, those business migrants involved in work or business do not enjoy physically good health. This is only to be expected because of their similar life styles and work involvement.

... I'm generally satisfied with my life in Sydney. My major concern is over my health. My work is physically demanding and I'm busy moving around. It's time for me to care for my health (Yi Ki-bung, business

migrant, currently running a mixed shop and doing cleaning work at night, as well).

A great satisfaction for business migrants comes from their children's educational achievement, which is an incentive to overcome psychological depression. For example, Yi Ki-bung and his wife were happy with their three children, two of whom were studying at university and one at a selective high school. Nonetheless, he views himself as a 'little shop owner' and mentioned his former life in Korea where he had a better 'reputation'. He appeared to suffer significantly from status anxiety.

### THE USE OF HEALTH CARE

Whilst work involvement has a direct impact on their health the respondents have made a constant effort to maintain their health or to recover from ill health. They have maximized their use of the 'freely' available biomedical services under government subsidized Medicare. There was little that was distinctive about the use of biomedical health care amongst Koreans in comparison with other NESB migrants in Australia. However, Koreans have also utilized Korean traditional herbal medicine and acupuncture and other informal remedies despite their high cost, bearing in mind that health is a 'capacity to work' in the current environment.

#### **The Use of Biomedical Health Care: 'Because It Is Free'**

##### *(i) Easy access to health service*

When amnesty migrants were illegally in Australia, they utilized biomedical doctors least. Most of them rarely saw a biomedical doctor until they became legitimate migrants and the Korean community had the first Korean speaking General Practitioner in 1987.

Those who came 'empty-handed' rarely consulted a doctor. They were taken to the hospital only when they met with a motor car or industrial accident. ... I had never consulted a doctor [until I became lawful in Australia] (Kim Tal-chun, amnesty migrant).

If they had to visit a doctor the doctor usually was a non-Euro-Australian doctor from an Asian background, mostly Chinese or Indian. It was not only because Koreans felt comfortable with non-Euro-Australian doctors, but also because the number of doctors from Indian and Chinese backgrounds was relatively high. However, the language barrier between the doctor and patient was problematic. Koreans could not have proper conversations with their doctors to explain their symptoms in detail. Koreans often looked up dictionaries to find out the right words before they went to see doctors, which was far from satisfactory. Thus, seeing a doctor involved some extra work or preparation, which discouraged them from consulting doctors.

As soon as the first Korean clinic was opened in 1987, the language barrier disappeared. Language barriers did not affect skilled and business migrants who arrived since then. As only a small proportion of amnesty and skilled migrants could express themselves well in English, most of them who were already with non-Korean speaking doctors changed their General Practitioners and went to the Korean doctor. They did not mind waiting for two or three hours for a consultation of 10 to 15 minutes. In fact, this long wait in the surgery reception room has been a continuing problem in Korea, too. The amnesty migrants became relatively comfortable with their finances towards the end of the 1980s. Many of them owned their own house and were involved in small business. This allowed them more time for leisure and to visit Korean doctors when they fell sick. As these people were the group in Korea who were particularly deprived of their right to use a scientific medical service, they tended to enjoy receiving the 'freely available, high quality' health service more than the other two groups, who

have also readily 'praised' the Australian health care service and found it much more accessible in comparison with their experiences in Korea.

The welfare system in Australia is just wonderful. Whenever I fall sick I can go to a surgery and medical service is *freely* available there (Kim Sang-yun, skilled migrant).

It doesn't cost anything to see a doctor or to go to a hospital in Australia, whereas in Korea many people who urgently need immediate operations have died because they couldn't afford to pay a deposit (Kim Yong-jun, skilled migrant).

People's lives here are considered much more valuable than economic matters. If someone is seriously ill, doctors pay attention to the patient first and ask for money later. ... In Korea even though a patient is dying, doctors wouldn't see the patient until a carer signs a paper about money. Australia is a heaven. I'm happy to pay tax (Yi Ki-bung, business migrant).

According to the respondents, the use of biomedical services by all three groups has significantly intensified since the coming of Korean doctors into the Korean community. Of the respondents for this study, a small number of amnesty (n: 2) and skilled (n: 3) migrants in the Korean community are still with their old doctors, mostly Indian or Chinese ones because of geographical convenience or the human relations they developed over the years.

My doctor, working near my place is from an Indian background and studied medicine in Australia. ... The doctor has no trouble understanding how I feel. I once saw an Australian doctor and asked for an antibiotic injection. No way, he wouldn't give me what I wanted unless he goes through many tests starting from a very basic one. The Indian doctor understands quickly what I want (Song Chu-p'yo, amnesty migrant).

My doctor is from an Indian background. He's quite an experienced doctor. If I go to a Korean doctor, I waste too much time waiting. Further, all Korean doctors are too young. My doctor is always thorough in diagnosis. ... I take a regular check-up every three months to check cholesterol level, blood sugar level, liver, and blood pressure (Yim T'aek-chin, skilled migrant).

There are a few aspects worth commenting on here. Firstly, busy Koreans find it hard to afford time for a long course of pathological tests, which could continue over a period of several weeks. Instead, Koreans in Sydney often pursue a 'heavy dose of injection to fix quickly' minor problems such as flu, which has been a common practice in Korea for many decades. This culture of wanting a 'quick cure' tends to delay their adjustment to medical practice in Australia. Secondly, 'drugging the people', i.e., over-servicing (cf. Alubo 1985; Alubo 1987) and trying to fix *scientifically* the cause of the problem has been long practised and is still pervasive in Korea, as well as in Korean communities overseas. Koreans in Sydney are used to the practice of 'over-servicing'. Thirdly, regardless of who the doctor is, 'doctoring as a business' is easily observed (cf. Alubo 1990). The practice needs to satisfy the clients irrespective of possible adverse long-term effects. However, the respondents were not happy with the limited time given to each patient. When the patients spend about ten minutes with their General Practitioners, the doctors stand up, which is 'indicative of the end of consultation time.'

Of the three sample groups, business migrants had least trouble finding time to consult doctors when in need for themselves or their families because of their lesser involvement in work and the 'abundant' time available to them.

When my child is sick I try to consult a couple of doctors no matter whether they're Australian or Korean doctors. But I see Korean doctors more often. I feel comfortable with them. ... I don't like waiting for two or three hours to see a Korean doctor. But if I feel it necessary to see a particular doctor I don't mind waiting for that long because I trust him (Ch'oe Min-gu, business migrant).

#### (ii) *Regular check-ups*

A small number of those who are in their 50s or older or those with chronic problems such as diabetes or blood pressure have regular health check-ups, sometimes as often as once or twice a year. Those who are in mid-40s or

younger are more likely to neglect health check-ups, relying upon their youth. However, *more* of them do not have the time or are not used to regular check-ups. Respondents were aware that when some Koreans are taken to the hospital suddenly they often never get out of hospital.

We Koreans have been brought up in an environment where a hospital visit is costly. That's why Koreans rarely go for health check-ups. That mentality continues here in Australia as well. I know sometimes I have to consult a doctor, but it's hard to get there. I'm simply not used to it. ... I often see some Koreans around me, saying that they would like to have a health check done. What they told me some days after was often that they couldn't find time (Pak Ch'an-su, amnesty migrant).<sup>23</sup>

Pak's comment is more likely to be applicable to the amnesty migrants in particular, considering their low class backgrounds and the situation of the Korean health services they were used to until they left Korea. I interviewed a Korean welder who has overstayed and has never been to a biomedical doctor. His experience illustrates what amnesty migrants went through until becoming legitimate migrants. The two illegal migrant respondents make little use of biomedical care in the 1990s just as all Korean amnesty migrants, as the 'illegals' did so in the 1970s.

I've been to a dental clinic for emergency a few times but *never* to a doctor [General Practitioner]. As fatigue accumulates over a period I get extremely tired. Then I go to a chemist and get a packet of Panadol [a pain relief tablet]. If I have an ache in the body I go to a *hanŭisa* [*hanbang* doctor] and receive acupuncture therapy. When I lifted a heavy material I had a backache. Acupuncture fixes such problems very well (Yang Su-wŏn, illegal migrant).

He frequently takes *hanbang* tonic medicine as well as health food and he tries to eat well, saying that

Isn't there a popular saying in Korea that pork and liquor will clean up the dirty throat [caused by dust and gas from welding work in his case]?

<sup>23</sup> Another example,

Unless they're sick, some Koreans don't go and see doctor. Even if they're sick, they try to endure without seeing doctor (Kim In-yong, amnesty migrant).

I'm fond of meat and eat lots of it. As my work is hard I should supply enough energy (Yang Su-wŏn, illegal migrant).

Although the two illegal migrants in the sample utilize various medicines available or food to help their health condition they do not or rarely visit biomedical doctors. This is largely because as illegal migrants they do not have a Medicare card and also they find it hard to find time, as they are too busy with their work (i.e., involved in welding and cleaning respectively).

However, I was told that some Koreans with the card, which offers them State-provided medical services, are not interested in regular health-checks and tend to visit doctors only when they are seriously ill. It is of concern that many Koreans, always working hard and neglecting their health, may be developing problems. It is obvious that minor health problems without attention can develop into something more serious.

Some people see a doctor only when they can't move some part of their body. I know people who died suddenly. Probably the problem didn't develop all of a sudden. It might have developed gradually. Had they found the problem early enough, they might have survived (Na Kang-jin, amnesty migrant).

Sudden death occurring in the Korean community for the above reasons alarms the small-sized Korean community, but the warning does not usually last long enough. It may be partly related to individual carelessness, but more closely to the reality of immigrant life, i.e., making the migrant busy and tired. The common saying about the phenomenon is that 'As the life has become much better he has left the world' or more cynically, 'As he became financially stable he died only to benefit another chap', meaning that the wife of the late man might marry again so she will inherit and share the wealth with the second husband.

### **The Use of *Hanbang* and Other Informal Health Care: 'Good for the Body'**

The data from the three sample groups for this study reveal that high proportions of both amnesty migrants (n: 9 out of 17) and skilled migrants (n: 9 out of 14) have utilized in Australia or were currently taking *hanbang* herbal medicine (*poyak*) or relevant remedies such as ginseng and deer antlers. However, only two business migrants have done so.

Analyzing what the users of health care said, I noticed that there were discrepant or inconsistent answers regarding the use of *hanbang* herb medicine. That is, a small number of respondents (five amnesty migrants and two skilled migrants) were reluctant to admit openly that they have consumed *poyak*, but they generally indicated subsequently their regular consumption of it or favourable attitudes towards it. This tendency of 'being reluctant to admit' was not observed with regard to the use of biomedicine. The major reason for the reluctance appeared to be the negative connotation attached to *poyak*. Although most Koreans would be prepared to admit their use of *poyak*, some are still reluctant to admit it. Cho Tu-yŏng, an experienced psychiatrist, comments on the tendency, 'Those who are taking *poyak* pretend not to have used it, but there are lots of people who say that they have bought *poyak* for their families' (T. Cho 1997: 5). I have observed this tendency when I interviewed a husband and wife together on a few occasions.

*(i) Discrepant answers about their use of and ideas about hanbang medicine*

It is worth examining why favourable attitudes towards *poyak* and their consumption of it did not always lead to their admittance of the consumption of it. Further, if they consumed *poyak*, their comments on its effect are sometimes unclear.

I don't normally believe in *hanbang*. When my mother visited Australia, she suggested that her two sons in Australia take *poyak*. It improved my appetite (Hwang Sang-uk, skilled migrant).

Um ... I don't bother with it much. There's good food in Australia. I've tried *poyak* several times but it doesn't seem to make much difference to me. I take ginseng quite often and some health food tablets (Kim Yong-jun, skilled migrant).

Whether Hwang thinks *hanbang* is effective or not is unclear and he is only indirectly admitting the consumption of *poyak*. In fact, a while after his above comments, he said, 'I sometimes go to a Chinese [ethnic] doctor to buy *'uhwang ch'ŏngsimwŏn'* [a mixture of many *hanbang* remedies and the powder of cow's gall bladder stone]. Why does he try it without trusting the effect of *hanbang* or Chinese (or East Asian) medicine? Another typical answer is as follows.

*Have you tried poyak?*

Not really. I'm a good eater of all kinds of food.

The respondent might have meant that he has tried it sometimes, but it was not effective or that he usually has a good appetite and he does not need *poyak*. Whether the respondents have tried *poyak* or not, I have learned that consuming *poyak* is *not always* considered desirable amongst a few people and is thought to be related to weak health.

I take *poyak* sometimes. It's not particularly effective, but increases appetite and makes me put weight on. Thus, I don't take *poyak*. If I take *poyak* due to my illness, it increases appetite. Well, *poyak* isn't just for sick people. I'm not currently taking *poyak* (Yi Man-yong, skilled migrant).

Kim Tal-chun (an amnesty migrant) also provides an example of discrepant answers, saying, at one point, '*Those who are over-conscious of their health and trying to look after their health tend to consume poyak.*' In the context of this comment, he did not appear to include himself in the category of '*those consuming poyak*'. However, when I asked about his experience of using *poyak*, he said, '*When the opportunities come I drink deer blood, take ginseng or poyak.*'

Ironically, being able to afford to buy *poyak* is something to be proud of and Korean immigrants in Sydney, especially those who are involved in manual work or long working hours, exploit it as a way of sustaining or recovering their health. It is a significant financial commitment to spend about \$350 for twenty packets of *poyak*. The amount is not easily affordable for low income earners. Kim Yong-jun, a skilled migrant, living on unemployment benefits and several hours of cleaning work in a week, certainly could not afford it. His answer regarding the use of tonic medicine was that he had 'no trouble with appetite', perhaps meaning that he could not afford it, irrespective of his wish to take it.

Apart from the negative connotation attached to *poyak*, the time of departure from Korea of amnesty migrants may be also related to their reluctance to admit their use openly. Some amnesty migrants tend to think that restorative *hanbang* medicine is to be used mainly for curative purpose or when one is ill, whereas ginseng can be consumed often in order to boost their health even when they were not ill. This has to be understood in relation to the place of *hanbang* medicine in Korea till the 1970s. As indicated in Chapter 6, the pervasive use of *hanbang* medicine for curative purposes in Korea was common until biomedical health care became more widely available in the 1980s, from whence *hanbang* medicine started to become more 'prevention-oriented' (i.e., *poyak*). Since then, the demand for and supply of *hanbang* herb medicine expanded dramatically and *hanbang* medicine has been understood as almost synonymous to *poyak*. Similarly, whilst herbal remedies such as ginseng and deer antlers had been used as tonic remedies in Korea for many centuries, they have assumed a more significant part of *hanbang poyak* since the 1980s (Han 1997).

Amnesty migrants mostly left Korea well before the burgeoning use of the *hanbang* tonic medicine from the 1980s when wage earners in Korea started to seek tonic medicine as a way of improving their health, irrespective of whether they were ill or not. I argue this is part of the reason why a few amnesty migrants tended to consider *hanbang* herb medicine not desirable if it can be avoided. It also tends to make them reluctant to admit the use of it even after consuming it. In the case of biomedicine, the respondents from all the three groups think that the use of biomedicine is necessary and natural when they are sick. There is no negative or positive connotation attached to the use of biomedicine.

However, skilled migrants were more willing to admit the use of *poyak* if they have used it. They have been familiar with the culture of consuming *poyak* prior to and after their migration.

I've taken *hanbang poyak* a few times when I didn't feel very well about my body [health]. I used to take it at every autumn in Korea (Yi Mun-jip, skilled migrant).

I take *poyak* from time to time. It isn't what you take only when you're sick. The trouble with it is that it stimulates my appetite too much and the excessive appetite leads me to be fat. This is what happens to me when taking royal jelly as well (Yi Man-yong, skilled migrant).

*(ii) Poyak: 'That's how I have managed hard work'*

'Why are some people using both biomedicine and traditional medicine?' is a continuing question in health sociology/anthropology. A frequent answer by Korean immigrants was that the longer Koreans stay in Australia the less inclined they are to use Korean traditional medicine and are more inclined to use biomedicine. This is a naive assumption, which is in line with Miller's hypothesis (1988; 1990), which tends to neglect Korean immigrants' work involvement in particular and the consequent demand for traditional medicine. Data from the respondents of health care users for the present

study showed that their length of stay in Australia and their level of education have little to do with Korean inclination to use biomedicine and/or Korean traditional medicine. It is rather that biomedicine is in high demand for everyone, especially under government subsidized Medicare and the use of traditional medicine has intensified due to the many reasons discussed earlier.

Yi Yun-se, a successful migrant in many aspects, seemed more relaxed about his health and enjoys relatively good health. He comments on the use of *hanbang* tonic medicine by the people around him.

Almost all Koreans around me take *poyak*. *Hanbang* medicine and health food shops are doing very well in the Korean community. Koreans love *poyak*. It's almost a Korean habit to take *poyak*, if they can afford it. They go for a drink of a mixture of deer blood and whisky. Some of my friends go to a deer park once a year. They enjoy a deer meat BBQ with whisky. They say that it's very effective for their health. I should go there sometime as I recently had a sore knee (Yi Yun-se, skilled migrant).

Being critical of *hanbang poyak* was indeed rare amongst any informants and respondents for this study. Most of them think that *poyak* is 'good for the body'. It would be unlikely that first generation Koreans who left Korea mostly after the age of 30 over the last three decades have dramatically changed their views about *hanbang* regardless of the extent to which they have embraced biomedicine, unless they have particular reasons as follows.

I don't like *poyak*. I worked for a pharmaceutical company to produce vitamin tablets and other nutritional tablets. I know they wouldn't be beneficial to you. Too many children take those tablets and develop side-effects. Having nutritious meals is more important than anything else for your health (Yi Ki-ju, skilled migrant).

Yi Ki-ju appeared to be well aware of a nature of medicines, i.e., commodification without necessarily being beneficial for health. Even though *hanbang* medicine (*hanyak*) is not covered by Medicare, it is popular especially amongst amnesty and skilled migrants, but much less so amongst

business migrants. Rev. Lee Sang-taek informed me that in the 1970s and 1980s when Korean immigrants fell ill and consulted a biomedical doctor, the advice often given to them was to take weeks of rest. Such a break did not always provide an opportunity for them to recover from the accumulated fatigue or to recharge their energy to get back to work. Whilst they took a break from their work and got paid for sick leave, they used the period to take up extra work such as cleaning. This was because they wanted to relieve their financial burden, such as a mortgage, as much as they could. The medical services they sought seriously were acupuncture to recover from injury quickly and herbal restorative medicine (*pyoak*) to boost their health. Rev. Lee referred to the 'practice of over-working with little rest amongst Korean men' as some 'tragic aspects of the life of immigrants.'

After all, no medicine has been effective enough for fatigue resulting from over-working. Despite their awareness of the social aspects of illness and health, Koreans often blame the 'unfortunate individual body' and think that what biomedicine could not help may be helped by *hanbang* medicine.

Western medicine is good for solving an immediate health problem, whereas Eastern medicine offers an holistic cure. ... The best way to overcome a disease is by looking after the whole body (Yi Po-sam, church minister).

Similarly, high blood pressure may have to do with family history or it may have been caused by the continuation of a stressful life. As biomedicine is not able to 'fix' the problems of stress and fatigue, Koreans in Sydney are seeking medical help from Korean *hanbang* doctors (*hanŭisa*).

Some of those who have used *pyoak* told me that they have not found it effective, although it increased their appetite. The effect of a tonic medicine depends on individual expectations. Some users hope to improve their appetite and some wish to be a much healthier person just over a period of,

say, six months. Anyhow, most of those who have used *poyak* were inclined to think that it was effective. A man in his late fifties took twenty packets of *siptchŏn taebot'ang* (a restorative *hanbang* medicine) together with royal jelly in order to increase his sexual stamina as he had expected to spend time with his girl friend from Korea for a few weeks. He said,

I was dubious about the effect of *poyak* until I tried it recently. Now I totally believe in it. I had no trouble having intercourse three times a day. It was really great and effective. I was surprised by the efficacy.

Whether *poyak* really helped him or it was a mere psychological effect is hard to know. Similarly, whether *poyak* is effective or not is a question beyond the scope of this study. An important question for this study is rather why Koreans think that it is effective and why they rely on it as a way of improving health. In my interviews with Korean *hanbang* doctors (*hanŭi*) in Sydney, I discovered that *hanbang poyak* was most popular amongst those Koreans in their 40s to 50s because many of them are engaged in manual work such as cleaning or welding. Although this finding from the interviews with *hanbang* doctors will be discussed in detail in another chapter, the view corresponds with the findings from the interviews with the three sample groups. That is, the most frequent consumers of *poyak* are the ones who are involved in manual work or long working hours, mostly in their 40s and 50s. They were predominantly amnesty or skilled migrants. 'Involvement in hard manual work' is a good reason for Koreans to take *poyak*, irrespective of their health condition. The identified and crucial reasons for the respondents to take *poyak* include getting tired easily and involvement in hard work (cf. S. Cho 1988; 1989).

Plenty of good deer antler makes high quality *poyak* accessible here. I take *poyak* at least two or three times a year. Once I take it my appetite improves greatly. I hope a good appetite will cover up whatever health problems I may develop (Yang Su-wŏn, illegal migrant, in his 50s, currently doing welding).

I've tried *poyak* many times. Frequent interactions with relatives in Korea or visits to Korea bring us lots of ginseng. Who doesn't bring it if Koreans visit Korea? Ginseng has become so popular recently, it may not be even regarded as a *poyak* (Yi Man-su, amnesty migrant, retired).

Although the use of ginseng was popular even before the change in the nature of *hanbang* medicine from 'curative as well as preventive' to largely 'preventive' since the 1980s, ginseng is one of the most important ingredients for a *hanbang poyak*. However, ginseng is not thought to be part of curative medicine any more, but a material to improve one's general health.

The amnesty migrant respondents took *poyak* as a way of recovering from extreme fatigue or illness, frequently caused by over-working. According to Mun To-sul, the first *hanbang* doctor in the Korean community in Sydney who opened his clinic in 1980, '*Hanbang poyak* was and still is in great demand amongst the Koreans doing hard manual work.' Considering the short history of Korean migration to Australia, most of his clients were those Koreans who arrived in the 1970s as they formed most of the Korean population in Sydney until the early 1980s. According to amnesty migrants, they used to visit herbal doctors in China Town and buy *poyak* until the opening of the first *hanbang* clinic in the Korean community. Some still go to China Town for the same purpose.<sup>24</sup>

Table 9.2: The use of *poyak* in Australia: Responses to the question, 'Have you used *hanbang poyak* since you came to Australia?'

	Amnesty migrants	Skilled migrants	Business migrants
Yes I have used	9	9	2
Unclear answer	5	3	2
No I haven't	3	2	5
In total	17	14	9

<sup>24</sup> A Chinese speaking herbal doctor, whom I interviewed, is still advertising his clinic in the Sydney Korean Directory.

My argument that *hanbang poyak* is often exploited to sustain health amongst those who are involved in manual work or long working hours is backed up by more 'frank' respondents.

Yes, I've taken a lot of *hanbang poyak*. That's how I've maintained my health even after many years of hard work (Son U-jong, amnesty migrant).

If we [amnesty migrants] wanted to continue our such hard manual work, we often had to take *poyak* and stay healthy (Kim Tal-chun, amnesty migrant).

As an increasing number of amnesty migrants are retiring, retired amnesty migrants appeared to show much less interest about *poyak* than they as hard manual workers would have done in the past. Their pursuit of *poyak* is rather 'passive' in the sense that they consume it when their wives or children have bought it. Further, they are more prepared to accept fatigue as a symptom of getting old. They are not under pressure to be involved in 'unwanted manual work' any more.

As I'm getting old, I don't worry too much about *poyak*. When I get tired, I understand it as part of getting old (Kim Tal-chun, amnesty migrant).

The skilled migrant respondents, mostly in their 40s, think that they are in a critical stage of their lives in terms of their health. That is, if they do not look after their health in their 40s when they are actively involved in work (both physically and professionally), they will lose their health rapidly and in their old age will suffer from bad health. This belief often leads them to take *poyak*.

If they could afford it they would like to take it at least twice a year, once in spring and once in autumn. It is generally thought that it is not a good idea to take *poyak* in the summer because the essence of the medicine may be lost with sweating. One informant told me that his friend, doing a cleaning job, takes a break for a few months every year. The cleaner would try to relax

completely and take *hanbang poyak* for that period. Although there may not be many other cases like this, i.e., not working while taking *poyak*, taking *poyak* a couple of times a year is common amongst those who are doing manual work. This reflects the links between work and health, and how workers engaged in labouring work are concerned about their health.

The use of *poyak*, which includes deer antler and ginseng, has become an important part of health care amongst Koreans in Sydney. Many *hanbang* doctors, however, warn that some tonic ingredients must be used with care as they affect people differently. *Poyak* is often bought for a spouse or son-in-law or parents, irrespective of their health, and without consultation with potential consumers, who are only grateful for the 'care'.

As I'm working hard and get easily tired, my parents-in-law in Sydney, purchased a course of *poyak* for me and my wife. Deer antler seems to give me headache. It may be because I'm too conscious of deer antler. Sometimes I threw away the packets containing deer antler. ... Instead, I boil ginseng roots and drink its juice frequently (Cho T'ae-ik, amnesty migrant).

I take *poyak* just because my children bring that to me as a sign of gratitude. If I had to spend the money out of my pocket, I wouldn't buy it (Yi Yun-se, skilled migrant).

I've tried *poyak* several times in Australia. The price of *poyak* is relatively affordable. One course<sup>25</sup> is about A\$350. ... When my mother visited Australia she persuaded me to take *poyak*. It improved my appetite (Hwang Sang-uk, skilled migrant).

Some Koreans are critical of the tendency among Koreans to consume too much *poyak*. They tend to criticize their fellow Koreans maintaining their own culture and habits, e.g., eating dog meat. They do not wish to see any undesirable 'tag' attached to Koreans in Australia.

Koreans always try to solve their health problems by eating something. ... Also they like *poyak* too much. If they take it too often it becomes less effective. If you visit a Chinese herbal doctor, they'll ask straight away,

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<sup>25</sup> One course is made up of 20 paper packets or 40 processed plastic packets.

'Would you like some *poyak*?' It's shameful (Na Kang-jin, amnesty migrant).

Whether *hanbang poyak* has been effective or not, amnesty migrants have generally seen it as a way of improving their health which was their fundamental need when doing hard manual work. It also provided them with confidence to be able to participate in the job market. Korean immigrants' favourable attitude towards the effect of *poyak* and their frequent use of it is partly related to the *poyak* culture which has been rooted in Korea for centuries. However, invoking this cultural perspective does not have full explanatory power. It is the specific immigrant experience of work involvement which led Korean men in Australia to maximize their existing 'cultural' heritage like *hanbang*.

Considering the time they left Korea and their socio-economic status, it is likely that, of the Koreans in Sydney, business migrants might have most frequently used *poyak* prior to their migration (see Chapter 6). They were deeply influenced by the popularity of *hanbang poyak* which has been expanding in Korea since the 1980s. Also they were the ones who were best able to afford the herbal remedies. However, whether or not they have maintained the frequent use of *poyak* in Australia is not clear from my interviews. My investigation about the links between business migrants' comparative lack of involvement in work and their low use of tonic medicine has not led me to a clear view. It was not only because of their general lack of involvement in work but also because of their relatively short stay in Australia. As the respondents have generally improved their physical health, they did not feel it was necessary to consume tonic medicine. (However, *hanbang* doctors have provided appropriate answers for these issues, which will be discussed in another chapter).

The reason Son Chang-p'yo, a former deputy principal of a school who has been studying English for the last few years, takes ginseng does not seem to be closely related to his immigrant life in Australia. That is, he takes ginseng as a way of maintaining his health, but he does not think that it is a way of 'getting ready for heavy manual work'.

I take ginseng from time to time. I experienced its efficacy. I used to find it hard to cope with cold weather. After drinking the ginseng juice, I got much better. ... According to *hanŭisa*, ginseng brings up the body temperature (Son Chang-p'yo, business migrant).

Like other two groups of Korean migrants, business migrants have not changed their favourable attitudes towards *hanbang*. However, their financial strain seems to have also limited their frequent use of *poyak* (cf. Han 1996b).

### (iii) Health food and folk medicine

Health food is another way Koreans try to maintain their health in Sydney. But it is more affordable and easily available.

There're always a few kinds of health food at home, although I often forget to take them (Cho T'ae-ik, amnesty migrant)

The reason for the use of health food is the same as for *hanbang poyak*, although it is more difficult to establish the links between taking health food and 'maintaining their health to be ready for work'. Koreans take it when they feel weak or even when they are quite healthy. When they are seriously ill, they tend to consult biomedical doctors in the first instance. Whereas *poyak* is regarded as medicine, health food is seen as a nutritional substance. Thus it is easier to try health food than *poyak*. It is also easier to stop taking health food and waste part of what they bought mainly because of its relatively low price. *Poyak* or health food are often consumed together with

or after biomedicine. Na Kang-jin, running a Korean restaurant and taking tonic medicine at the time of interview, said,

Whether it's good quality or not, I continually take royal jelly in the forms of liquid, capsule and powder in turn. I keep taking it, not thinking about whether it's doing me any good or not (Na Kang-jin, amnesty migrant).

Although some of the respondents take it, they are also dubious about the quality of health foods. The demand for health food amongst Koreans in Sydney seems not as great as that for *pyoyak*. Na Kang-jin told me that one of his friends wanted to export 'naturally produced' Australian royal jelly to Korea, where there is a great demand for all kinds of health food. However, the friend discovered that it is impossible to produce the requisite amount of royal jelly for the Australian market and that lots of it had been 'fast produced' in China. It is manufactured in Australian factories and then exported. Na Kang-jin's friend, seated next to him, mentioned the efficacy of health food which one of his friends experienced.

Working so hard after coming to Australia, my friend's weight went down to 40 kg. My friend was told that he take royal jelly. He somehow managed to find *genuine* royal jelly. His health returned to normal in a few months. Well, some may be *genuine*, in which case it could be efficacious. But there're many 'royal jellies' and all kinds of health food in so many health food shops everywhere. How can you trust them? (Na Kang-jin's friend)

In people's search for genuine royal jelly, it is clear that the level of commodification of health food is quite high and that Koreans want to utilize whatever is available to help their health. The use of health food for Koreans seems to be an extension of using many kinds of 'nutritious' pharmaceutical tablets. They have become popular in Korea as pharmaceutical companies began to grow rapidly in the early 1970s. For Koreans it was a way of supplementing what they ate, which was totally lacking in nutrition. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the majority of Koreans in Korea suffered from malnutrition at that time. This led to the

production of numerous kinds of nutritional tablets, such as, calcium tablets, comprehensive vitamins, energy tablets, and iron tablets. Those tablets have been in great demand in Korea ever since. The amnesty migrants in particular (who left Korea in the 1960s and 1970s) and other Koreans in Sydney have found nutritional tablets in Australia but slightly modified with different names, i.e., health food rather than nutritional tablets. Health food is in significant demand in the Korean community. It is especially so amongst those who are actively working, aged mostly in their 40s and 50s: 'I take a few kinds of health food simultaneously. I take one to protect the liver, aloe, vitamins, etc. I take them everyday (Na Chong-sang, amnesty migrant)'.

Compared to the use of *poyak*, the use of health food is much less popular amongst Korean immigrants in Sydney, but it is often sent to their relatives in Korea. This, in addition to its demand from Korean tourists, has been an important reason for the expansion of health food shops in the Korean community.<sup>26</sup>

I send health foods to my relatives. Honey and royal jelly. Honey is particularly good (Yi Ki-ju, skilled migrant).

As with *hanbang poyak*, business migrants had little interest in health food. Why it is not so popular is unclear by talking to the users of health care (including health food) alone although it may be similar to the reason why *poyak* is not popular amongst business migrants.

Health food is a kind of food rather than a medicine. People say that it takes at least six months before they realize the effect of it. I've taken it for three months and I now have a comfortable stomach (Min Yong-mo, business migrant, 'retired').

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<sup>26</sup> There were 40 health food shops in the Korean community in Sydney at the time of data collection in 1995.

Aloe is used as a folk medicine and it has been increasingly popular in the Korean community. Aloe, like any other health food or folk medicine in Korea and overseas Korean communities, has been used to produce several new products which are supposed to be 'good for the body.' Its use is highlighted by Hwang T'ae-su who is in his late fifties and working as a cleaner. He was an illegal migrant at the time of interview. He told me about his work and the use of aloe, which illustrates much about the experience of the amnesty migrants in the past and of those who are involved in long working hours.

One day, I dropped a heavy material on the top of my right foot while working. It was deadly painful. I happened to have a couple of pieces of aloe and squeezed it and rubbed all around the foot and also covered the wound with some of them. It was painful on the day of the accident, but, in the next day, I even forgot that I had had trouble with my foot. It was wonderful to experience such a powerful healing effect. I also experienced the effect of eating raw aloe a few times a day. Before I took aloe, I often asked my family members to help with one of my cleaning work, which was supposed to take just 1.5 hours by myself. My wife and I don't ask the children for help any more. These days I sleep just a few hours. While moving from one place to another I sometimes take 10 to 20 minutes sleep in the car. ... I can fall asleep immediately. My wife tells me that I'm snoring like a pig. I feel great after a short nap. I'm confident to say that my health is completely under control. No matter what time I get home, two or three o'clock in the morning, I never go to bed without having a warm shower as a way of helping the blood circulation in every part of the body. The most important principle in my life is that if I lose money I haven't lost anything; if I lose reputation I've lost half of my life; and if I lose health, I've lost everything (Hwang T'ae-su, illegal migrant).

Is his health really under control? How can he sustain his health if he lives such a life continually over a lengthy period? Hwang has been suffering from diabetes for many years, so has had to have a special diet. Whether it be *poyak* or health food, many Korean migrants seem to rely heavily on the effect of those medicines and remedies. Unfortunately, when they have to continue to lead their difficult immigrant life, it seems to be no more than an illusion to expect an effect from the medicines.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Amnesty and skilled migrants' involvement in hard manual work or long working hours often resulted in their ill health. Not being able to engage in the kinds of work or business they liked, skilled and business migrants suffered from psychological dissatisfaction. However, it appears that amnesty migrants have enjoyed relatively better mental health mainly because of their achievement in Australia which they would not have achieved in Korea had they stayed there. In contrast, involvement of business migrants in 'a long sports holiday' has helped to improve their physical health in Australia.

All three groups have easy access to biomedical health care. In addition, both amnesty and skilled migrants make frequent use of Korean traditional medicine or *poyak* and health food. This is mainly to improve or recover their health so that they can continue their work. Business migrants' consumption of *poyak* did not seem as frequent as with other groups of Koreans.