

**REGISTERED (UN)BELONGING:  
NEGOTIATING SOUTH KOREA'S INSTITUTIONALIZED BOUNDARIES OF  
BELONGING FOR MIGRANTS**

by

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## Abstract

South Korea, a country once mired in the myth of national identity based on *hyultong* (혈통, bloodline), in 2006 officially declared its efforts to invest in building a *damunhwa sahoe* (다문화사회, multi-ethnic and multicultural society). Yet, despite various efforts South Korea has not been able to avoid discrepancies between its migrant integration policy objectives and their outcomes. In this thesis, I propose that both a problem and a solution lie in the boundaries of belonging embedded in South Korea's mainstream policies. I build my conceptual framework through reviewing literature written in English and Korean by migration and policy scholars and build my analytical framework on comparative policy analysis. This is a primarily theoretical thesis that makes use of real-world citations when possible, aiming to be a building block for subsequent empirical studies. I highlight South Korea's resident registration policy as an example that illustrates how the policy practice of "fringing" (as opposed to mainstreaming) migrant issues and integration has contributed to the integration gap in South Korea. I then suggest how South Korea's history in negotiating institutionalized gender boundaries to reform its family registration system can be used to evolve the exclusionary boundaries of belonging within its resident registration system and similar mainstream policies.

## **Lay Summary**

South Korea, once mired in the myth of a homogenous ethnic national identity, declared its intention to build a multicultural society in 2006. Yet, despite various efforts, there remain discrepancies between its migrant integration policy objectives and their outcomes. I propose that both a problem and a solution lie in the boundaries of belonging in mainstream policies. While integration is an everyone problem, policymakers have addressed integration through migrant-specific policies while maintaining the status quo in mainstream policies. I suggest how South Korea's history in reforming its family registration system can be used to evolve the boundaries of belonging in its current resident registration system to be inclusive of migrants. If South Korea truly seeks to facilitate migrant integration as well as eliminate the second-class treatment of its migrant residents, it must ask what messages existing policies send to migrant residents and whether they help achieve integration policy goals.

## **Preface**

All parts of this thesis are the original work of myself, including the identification of the focus, design, and analysis.

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## List of Abbreviations

ARC	Alien Registration Card
FRS	Family Registration System
Korea	South Korea
RRC	Resident Registration Card
RRN	Resident Registration Number
RRS	Resident Registration System

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and Maung Aung Tinhtun, 틴툰 (1976—2021),  
who gave me a place to belong in Korea.

## Chapter 1: Introduction – The South Korean Integration Policy Gap

During the COVID-19 pandemic, South Korea<sup>1</sup> has been lauded worldwide for its quick and organized response to its outbreak. Yet lesser known is how Korea's pandemic response shined a harsh light on the second-class treatment and othering of its more than 2.5 million foreign residents.<sup>2</sup> During a recent survey by the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRCK), 73 percent of the 307 foreign residents interviewed reported that they felt left out of the government's COVID-19 policy response.<sup>3</sup> The respondents outlined various experiences of policy exclusion, including when they were prevented from receiving relief fund benefits, when the emergency text messages that they received from the government were in a language they could not understand, and when they were excluded from the government's face mask rationing and distribution system. More recently, several provinces and cities in Korea were internationally scrutinized for "singling out foreign workers for mandatory coronavirus testing."<sup>4</sup> As a recent article by Juheon Lee, Sarah Cho and Gowoon Jung aptly noted, the policies implemented by the Korean government to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 not only clearly revealed "the country's deep-seated xenophobia" but also showed how its nationality-based policies harmfully exclude its foreign residents.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Formally known as the Republic of Korea, hereafter as "South Korea" or "Korea" unless indicated otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> This thesis defines "foreign residents" as registered aliens without Korean citizenship (such as migrant workers, marriage migrants, and foreign students), overseas Koreans without Korean citizenship, naturalized Koreans, and children with an immigrant background. According to the Korea Ministry of Justice, Immigration Services, as of 2019, the number of foreign residents totals over 2.5 million (2,524,656 to be exact), approximately 4.87 percent of the total population of South Korea (Korea Ministry of Justice, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> (National Human Rights Commission of Korea, 2020, p. 18-19)

<sup>4</sup> (Financial Post, 2021, para. 1)

<sup>5</sup> (Lee, Cho, & Jung, 2021)

This thesis addresses how mainstream policies—that is, general national policies such as the resident registration system in Korea that are not explicitly identified as migrant- or integration-targeted policies—contribute to the continuing othering of the country’s migrant residents, despite the Korean government’s various efforts toward achieving migrant integration.<sup>6</sup>

This thesis is descriptive and analytical but also develops policy implications. The descriptive elements also provide an understanding of the impact of mainstream policies on migrant integration. It will show how Korea, as well as other non-traditional immigration countries,<sup>7</sup> can break through part of its integration policy gap dilemma by re-evaluating how its policymakers fringe integration from mainstream policies and limits inclusive boundaries of belonging in mainstream policies.

## **1.1 Research Scope**

### ***1.1.1 Focus on the Integration Policy Gap***

South Korea is not alone in having to explain the discrepancy between migrant policy intention (i.e., integration) and legislated policies that work as designed but create a lack of integration. The much debated<sup>8</sup> migrant policy “gap hypothesis” is a theory that describes the discrepancy between “goals of national immigration policy (laws, regulation, executives actions,

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<sup>6</sup> The scope of the term “migrant integration” in the context of this thesis is further defined in section 2.1.1, but essentially refers to providing “equal opportunities for immigrants [and foreign residents], [and] ensuring [that they] become an integral part of society” (OECD, 2015, p. 10).

<sup>7</sup> Non-traditional, as opposed to “traditional” countries of immigration, the latter of which the literature uses to refer to Canada, the United States of America, Australia, and New Zealand (International Organization for Migration, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> A detailed review of the decade-long debate around the gap hypothesis can be found in Echeverría, G. (2020). *Towards a systemic theory of irregular migration*. Springer. p. 42-46.

etc.) and the actual results of policies in this [area] (policy outcomes).”<sup>9</sup> However, the usage of the theory has evolved to describe other “gaps” or discrepancies between policy action and outcome, including what Czaika and de Haas (2011) describe as the “discursive gap.”<sup>10</sup> The discursive gap refers to the discrepancy between stated policy intentions and policy decisions.

I argue that such a discursive gap persists in the specific area of migrant integration policy and refer to this phenomenon as the “integration policy gap” or “integration gap” throughout this thesis. For instance, I assert that in Korea, there is a discrepancy between the government’s stated commitment to migrant integration and the policy decisions that are subsequently made. By doing so, I contribute to the public and academic discourse that has sought to explain why governments have found it difficult to close integration policy gaps.<sup>11</sup>

### ***1.1.2 Focus on the Integration Policy Gap in Korea and its Mainstream Policies***

I focus on the integration policy gap within the context of South Korea specifically for several reasons. First, Korea makes for an interesting study of the integration policy gap as it is a non-traditional migrant-receiving country that recently experienced a rapid increase of foreign residents. For instance, the number of foreign residents in Korea increased nearly 50 times over the past 30 years.<sup>12</sup> Second, the Korean government is promoting the idea that receiving migration and facilitating integration is crucial to its economic and social prosperity.<sup>13</sup> Third, it is

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<sup>9</sup> (Cornelius & Tsuda, 2004, p. 3)

<sup>10</sup> (Czaika & de Haas, 2011, pp. 494-497)

<sup>11</sup> “Flawed policies, macro-structural factors, domestic and international political constraints, and ambiguous or contradicting policy intentions” have been argued to be factors that help maintain the gap (Cornelius & Tsuda, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> (Kang, 2020, p. i)

<sup>13</sup> (Kang, 2020 pp. 284-293; Lim, 2010, p. 69; Presidential Committee on Social Inclusion, 2006)

a country that faces distinct challenges and advantages. For instance, long-upheld boundaries of belonging based on a homogenous one blood, one nation, one culture story coexist next to a serious regard for international human rights norms and a premium put on maintaining a good global reputation.<sup>14</sup>

The current literature is rich with endeavors to explain and address the integration policy gap in Korea.<sup>15</sup> Many studies have critically analyzed the framework (or lack thereof) of Korea's so-called integration—*sahoetonghap* (사회통합, social harmony) and *damunhwa* (다문화, multicultural)<sup>16</sup>—policies, the scope or perceived scope of their beneficiaries, and its implementation.<sup>17</sup> However, very few have chosen to evaluate *mainstream* policies—again, general national policies that apply to all members of a jurisdiction and not only to a specific group—and the ability of these policies to neutralize or negate integration efforts.<sup>18</sup>

Several scholars, including Chulwoo Lee and Hye-Kyung Lee, have sought to expose how both migrant and mainstream policies help sustain, rather than widen, established parameters of belonging which then deter migrant integration in Korea.<sup>19</sup> For instance, they show how a central integration policy plan was named the “Basic Plans for *Foreigner* Policies [emphasis added]” as policymakers and decision-makers shied away from using the more politically inflammatory language of “immigration policy,” or how the term “foreigner”

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<sup>14</sup> (Han, 2006; Oh, 2007)

<sup>15</sup> (Lim, 2009; Lim, 2010; Chung, 2011; Choi, Kim, & Park 2011; Kim, 2015; Hwang, 2016)

<sup>16</sup> I use Korean script throughout the thesis as there can be confusion with its romanized form. I also use the term “*damunhwa*” deliberately in this thesis in order to differentiate it from its Canadian counterpart (“multiculturalism”). For instances while for Canadian readers, “multiculturalism” is an inclusive term, in Korea, “*damunhwa*” (the literal translation of “multiculturalism”) is a term that is used exclusively to separate “native” and “settler” Koreans.

<sup>17</sup> (Han, 2006; Oh, 2007)

<sup>18</sup> (Chung, 2011; Kim, 2006)

<sup>19</sup> (Lee, 2003; Lee, H., 2011)

continues to be favoured over “minorities” as a policy category for foreign residents.<sup>20</sup> However, this discourse, except within citizenship law, remains relatively underdeveloped and has tended to be reactive rather than proactive. If this discourse is left unchanged, the field risks losing a comprehensive understanding of, and solution to, the current integration policy gaps.

As such, I argue that it is critical for policymakers to study the incompatibility and compatibility between mainstream policies and the state’s *sahoetonghap* and *damunhwa* agenda. More specifically, I criticize Korea's “fringing” policy practices. Fringing is a word I use in this thesis to contrast with “mainstreaming” policy practices. Mainstreaming is a well-known<sup>21</sup> policy practice that changes policies that target a specific group (e.g., migrants) within a jurisdiction into policies that are directed at the general population of a jurisdiction.<sup>22</sup> In other words, fringing means policy practices, such as policymaking or discourses around a policy, that attempt to address broad societal issues (migrant integration) through standalone policies (*sahoetonghap* and *damunhwa* policies) directed at an identified “problem-causing” group (migrants). I ultimately propose that fringing migrant integration contributes to the integration policy gap in Korea while delaying the expansion of boundaries of belonging.<sup>23</sup>

### ***1.1.3 Focus on Korea’s Resident Registration Policy 1962-2019***

I present Korea’s resident registration policy between 1962-2019 as an example that will help illustrate more generally how migrants have been unnecessarily excluded from mainstream policies and what the implications of this policy action are. The resident registration system

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<sup>20</sup> (Draudt, 2019)

<sup>21</sup> (UN Women, 1995; Economic and Social Council, 1997, p. 3)

<sup>22</sup> See 6.1.1 for a more robust discussion and definition of “mainstreaming” and “fringing.”

<sup>23</sup> This position of course, assumes the commitment of Korea to its *damunhwa* promises.

(RRS) is a policy mechanism that has already been accused multiple times of creating a prejudicial environment for non-citizens. The resident registration card (RRC), an identification card based on the RRS which is perceived as a national identification card and is loaded with the symbolic weight of one's proof of legitimate belonging, has also been similarly criticized. Yet, most of these criticisms rarely go beyond reprimanding the RRS' inconveniences to migrant communities.<sup>24</sup> I intend to demonstrate how migrants are currently excluded from the RRS and how it could continue to contribute to the othering of Korea's migrant residents.

## 1.2 Research Goals

By demonstrating how mainstream policies such as the RRS can perpetuate membership boundaries that negate a government's social integration efforts, I aim to enhance our understanding of why it is important for mainstream policies, not just migrant-targeted policies, to be re-evaluated in countries that seriously seek to close their integration policy gaps.

As it stands, one can observe a "papereality"—a concept coined by David Dery (1998) to describe realities defined through government records "that take precedence over the [actual] things and events" they are meant to represent<sup>25</sup>— birthed by the RRS that fails to reflect Korea's increasingly diverse inhabitants. I argue that maintaining this specific papereality is not only internally contradictory but also dangerous to the country's long-term social integration efforts, especially when considering how paperealities often generate symbolic boundaries and

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<sup>24</sup> (Lee, C., 2010; Chong, 2004; Park, 2007; Lee L., 2010; Kim, 2012)

<sup>25</sup> "Papereality" is a concept coined by David Dery to describe the "world of symbols or written representations that take precedence over the things and events represented" (Dery, 1998, pp. 677-689). It is addressed further in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

institutional classifications of identity that are widely used.<sup>26</sup> I thus propose that the RRS and its specific papereality confines Korea's boundaries of belonging, and that the RSS maintains symbolic boundaries and classifications that deter migrant integration.

Finally, I recommend a way forward for mainstream policies that currently exclude migrants, such as the RRS, by referring to the concept of mainstreaming migrant integration policy. I examine South Korea's transition from the *hojuk* (호적, old family registrar) registration system, that once fringed women, to the mainstreamed Family Registrar System (FRS). Particularly, I try to demonstrate how the *hojuk* system and its transition to the FRS can serve as a useful domestic example for policymakers seeking a way to integrate migrant integration into mainstream policies such as the RRS.

A natural question the reader may ask at this point is why I chose to focus on an example that is a domestic "non-migrant" policy rather than an international policy that has undergone similar migrant fringing challenges. Although there is much value in comparative international analysis, the tendency of Korean migrant policy analysts to look to international examples have caused a lack of attention to possible domestic precedents.<sup>27</sup> This is unfortunate as domestic policy transitions may provide insights that may not appear in international comparative policy analysis. As such, I sought to explore domestic policy transfer. After determining the comparability between battles over gender boundaries and migrant belonging, I argue how the *Hojukjedo*-FRS transition can be a valuable study for policymakers seeking to address fringed

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<sup>26</sup> (Bowker & Star, 1999)

<sup>27</sup> (Shin, 2010, p. 51)

policies that maintain the integration policy gap. I suggest this strategy in part to go beyond the usual limitations of policy analysis, which often offers criticism without a way forward.

In summary, my goals for this thesis include:

- (1) to demonstrate how the fringing of migrants outside of mainstream policy contributes to the integration policy gap by preventing the expansion of boundaries of belonging;
- (2) to demonstrate how the RRS is problematic and unnecessarily excludes migrants which has dire implications for Korea's social integration efforts; and
- (3) to demonstrate how the *hojuk* system and its transition to the FRS can serve as a domestic policy model for the RRS.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

Therefore, the research questions that dictate the direction of this thesis can be reduced to the following:

- (1) How does fringing migrants outside of mainstream policy contribute to the integration policy gap and delay the expansion of belonging in Korea?
- (2) How does the RRS specifically prescribe and preserve boundaries of belonging that deter migrant integration, and what are its implications?
- (3) How has the Korean government negotiated institutionalized boundaries of belonging in the past in the *hojuk*-to-FRS case, and can this serve as a useful model for the RRS?

### **1.4 Conceptual Framework and Roadmap**

My conceptual framework is built through a review of literature written in English and Korean by migration and policy scholars, while my analytical framework builds on

comparative policy analysis. I ground the theoretical foundation that justifies my arguments for the impact of the RRS in the concepts of belonging and its importance in the current and potential impact of its papereality, and in the impact of symbolic boundaries and classification systems on social integration. This thesis is a primarily theoretical piece that makes use of newspaper articles and government publications when possible and aims to be a building block for subsequent quantitative and qualitative studies.

In the following chapters, I establish some of the context and assumptions upon which this thesis stands, as well the conceptual framework of my inquiry (Chapters 2 and 3). I then present a study of the migrant context in Korea along with the history and overview of the mechanics of the RRS (Chapter 4). Using the frameworks mentioned above, I determine the parameters of belonging that are prescribed by the RRS as well as how it deters migrant integration efforts (Chapter 5). Finally, I present policy recommendations for the RRS that draw from the literature on mainstreaming as well as from the *Hojukjedo*-FRS transition (Chapter 6).

## Chapter 2: Setting the Context: The Age of Migration and (dis)Integration

No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, [the world] is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.<sup>28</sup>

### 2.1 The Age of Migration – Focus on Migrant Integration

It would be very difficult for any man or country to be an island today. While international migration<sup>29</sup> is not a new phenomenon,<sup>30</sup> the current breadth and rapid growth of its scope, complexity, and impact has marked this era as the age of migration.<sup>31</sup> With the increasing ease of global mobility and multiplying push-and-pull factors, virtually no country is immune from the processes and consequences of migration today—whether by choice or not.<sup>32</sup>

A particularly critical policy area for migrant-receiving countries is the integration of migrants in their host communities.<sup>33</sup> This is partially because the integration policies of receiving countries intersect with many other policy areas that are crucial for overall migration management such as “human rights protection and non-discrimination, employment policy, public security, social stability, public health, education, foreign affairs, citizenship and development.”<sup>34</sup> In addition, migrant integration helps the host society strengthen its resiliency during economic and demographic instability, while helping migrants accumulate important

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<sup>28</sup> “Europe” replaced with “[the world]” for context (Donne, 1841, p.195).

<sup>29</sup> International migration is defined as the movement of people across international borders. Hereafter, in the context of this thesis, I will refer to international migration simply as migration unless specified otherwise (e.g., internal migration).

<sup>30</sup> According to Douglas Massey (2003) in his essay *Patterns and Processes of International Migration in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, there are four general historical periods of international migration previous to the current wave (1990-present).

<sup>31</sup> (Ban, 2012; Castles & Miller, 2009)

<sup>32</sup> (Massey, 2003)

<sup>33</sup> (International Organization for Migration, 2006)

<sup>34</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. 1)

human, social, and cultural capital—all of which are crucial elements for comprehensive migration governance.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, facilitating migrant integration is crucial to managing the period of reduced social cohesion and trust, as well as potential consequences such as xenophobia, nativist populism, public anxiety, polarization, and racism.<sup>36</sup>

### **2.1.1 *What is Migrant Integration?***

Before going further into how policymakers facilitate migrant integration, it is important to clarify a working definition of migrant integration. Keeping in mind that migrant integration is a concept that is interpreted variously, and arguably should be redefined constantly depending on the context, I have broadly defined the parameters of the term in its usage in this paper below.

First, integration tends to be defined and used differently in academic and policy discourses. In academic discourse, the term often refers to a social process, whereas in policy, the term usually refers to a desirable product.<sup>37</sup> Although this thesis is written with policy in mind, I have chosen to define integration as a process. This is partially because migrant integration as an achieved policy product is yet to be actualized and thus yet to be fully understood. In fact, integration may very well be a never-ending process with no final product.

Second, the three main and interrelated areas of migrant integration are “social (social relations within and between communities, levels of segregation, level of tolerance between groups, levels of prejudice), economic (income inequality levels, access to education and

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<sup>35</sup> (Mollenkopf & Pastor, 2013)

<sup>36</sup> There has been a tendency to use migration as a convenient lightning rod of blame for social disintegration. It is important to acknowledge that migration is one of innumerable causes, rather than the cause of societal disintegration (Putnam, 2007; Shipper, 2010, p.15; Portes & Vickstrom, 2011; Triadafilopoulos, 2011; Papademetriou, Hooper, & Benton, 2018).

<sup>37</sup> (Mollenkopf & Pastor, 2013)

education performance, access to the labor market), and political integration (antidiscrimination legal frameworks, access to citizenship rights, and others).”<sup>38</sup> In this thesis, I analyze how policymaking, an aspect of political integration, effects social integration.

Third, I have chosen to align with the International Organization for Migration’s (the “IOM”) position regarding on whom the responsibility of integration rests and who are the beneficiaries of integration. The IOM defines migrant integration as

*The two-way process of mutual adaptation* between migrants and the societies in which they live, whereby migrants are incorporated into the social, economic, cultural and political life of the receiving community. It entails a set of *joint responsibilities* for migrants and communities, and incorporates other related notions such as social inclusion and social cohesion. [Emphasis added]<sup>39</sup>

IOM further defined “successful” migrant integration as

a dynamic and *multi-directional process* that involves *mutual adaptation* of migrants and of the host society, based on principles of protection of fundamental rights, respect, tolerance and non-discrimination. It is a multi-dimensional issue that covers migrant’s [sic] inclusion in economic, psychological, social, linguistic, navigational, and civic spheres, as well as empowering host communities and other local actors to receive and engage with migrants. [Emphasis added]<sup>40</sup>

This definition aligns with Emile Durkheim’s description of social integration as

a desired social process that links the segments of a society (individuals, institutions, groups) by means of their particular awareness to a united societal whole, in which both similarities and unity on the one hand, and differences and conflict, on the other, are of importance.<sup>41</sup>

Applying this to the case of migrants, migrant integration then refers to the process of linking migrants and the receiving society “by means of their particular awareness to a united societal

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<sup>38</sup> (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, as cited in Cervan-Gil, 2016, p. 3)

<sup>39</sup> (International Organization for Migration, 2021a)

<sup>40</sup> (International Organization for Migration, 2021b)

<sup>41</sup> (Durkheim, as cited in Pottker, 2009, p.10)

whole, in which both similarities and unity on the one hand, and differences and conflict, on the other, are of importance.”<sup>42</sup>

The IOM’s definition also aligns with the works of various well-known migration scholars, including Rogers Brubaker, Robert Putnam, Apichai Shipper, Alejandro Portes, Erik Vickstrom, and Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos.<sup>43</sup> Despite differences in other matters, these scholars agree that migrant integration is a process that must go beyond mere acknowledgement and respect for differences between migrants and their host societies, requiring instead a social cohesion and stability built through a common identity and purpose, or a set of shared values and norms. This process requires a mutual (although the ratio of responsibilities is debated) negotiation and adaptation process between all stakeholders, which includes migrants and their family members, as well as the host society’s state, communities, and individuals.<sup>44</sup> As a result, I argue, the process of integration should help host societies become more socially inclusive through a negotiation and expansion of its pre-existing boundaries of belonging.

I want to acknowledge that migrant integration is now considered an outdated and contested term in the discourse of migration and ethnic studies.<sup>45</sup> I find myself agreeing with many of the criticisms, such as William Schinkel’s (2018) provocative criticisms of integration becoming a “matter of individual responsibility” (p. 3), the immeasurability of the “society” that migrants are expected to integrate into (p. 7), that measuring migrant integration is a “thoroughly neocolonial practice” (p. 12), and that the term presumes that migrants are “not yet ‘members of

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<sup>42</sup> (Pottker, 2009, p.10)

<sup>43</sup> (Brubaker, 2001; Putnam, 2007; Shipper, 2010, p.15; Portes & Vickstrom, 2011; Triadafilopoulos, 2011)

<sup>44</sup> (*Ibid.*)

<sup>45</sup> (Schinkel, 2018; Meissner & Heil, 2020)

society”” (p. 15). Nevertheless, I have made the painful decision to maintain the usage of this term for several reasons.<sup>46</sup>

First, I believe my vision of integration, as detailed here, does not fall into the pitfalls Schinkel criticizes. I do not presume that integration is a matter of the individual migrant’s responsibility, nor do I presume that migrants are not yet members of society. In fact, I put those burdens and blame on the state and its policies. Second, I do not perceive integration as a product, but a malleable process that can be defined differently and constantly based on its context. For instance, integration as a “neocolonial practice” (p. 12) can be acknowledged and consciously avoided when integration is perceived as a process.<sup>47</sup> Third, integration is still the term that is preferred and used in policy discourse (for instance, the term integration remains heavily used by major policy bodies such as the Migration Policy Institute and the International Organization of Migration<sup>48</sup>).

### ***2.1.2 Why is Migrant Integration Difficult to Facilitate?***

Despite increasing pressure for states to create “good” integration policy—that is, policies that intend to process or achieve integration as defined by the relevant state—there is much uncertainty around how to achieve it. Indeed, integration has been described as a policy “mess” (p. 36) due to the amount of confusion and lack of consensus surrounding its objectives, flaws, and solutions.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> (Schinkel, 2018)

<sup>47</sup> (*Ibid.*)

<sup>48</sup> (Migration Policy Institute, 2021; International Organization of Migration, 2021)

<sup>49</sup> Policy “messes are characterised by no clear agreement about exactly what the problem is and by uncertainty and ambiguity as to how improvements might be made, and they are unbounded in terms of the time and resources they

This is partially because the definition and nature of integration (as was mentioned earlier in this chapter) is various, dynamic, and ever-changing, even within one context. Integration in whatever form is an extremely complex process that involves all layers (political, economic, social, and cultural) and sectors (state, labor market, education, and others) of society that are themselves ever-changing. Moreover, a multitude of factors, such as the colonial past of the host society or a society's historical attitude towards foreigners and towards citizenship, influence the process of integration and thus make it difficult to predict or prescribe a particular integration path. For example, Zolberg observed that if given an "equal challenge" (p. 16), a country that has experienced high levels of migration or that has been formed through migration, such as Canada, would employ an integration policy with a higher level of tolerance than a country with a much more homogenous history which may have a lower level of tolerance.<sup>50</sup>

Other factors known to dictate or confuse the direction of a state's integration strategy include political and economic interests, civil society, international pressures, national identity, and the society's accepted boundaries of belonging. Furthermore, due to the politically sensitive nature of migration, there are few global standards or United Nations (the "UN") institutions to which states can look to for guidance. As such, migration control and migrant integration policies differ from other trans-boundary issues in that they are largely developed at the national level.<sup>51</sup>

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could absorb, the scope of enquiry needed to understand and resolve them and the number of people that may need to be involved" (Chapman, 2002, p.36).

<sup>50</sup> (Zolberg, 1981)

<sup>51</sup> Wimmer and Glick Schiller show how academia has contributed to reproducing integration as a national issue (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002).

The remainder of this thesis focuses on the following three obstacles to facilitating migrant integration. First, the demographic and cultural diversity brought by migrants seemingly frustrate crucial components of integration such as social cohesion and trust. As Putnam observed, diversity apparently “bring[s] out the turtle in all of us,”<sup>52</sup> and disrupts social cohesion by causing the “hunker[ing] down” of individuals.<sup>53</sup> Accordingly, ethnic and national diversification of society tends not to expand but to narrow a community’s sense of collective belonging.<sup>54</sup>

Second, host societies have tended to be hyper-sensitive and resistant to the prospect of change—particularly changes that may affect and transform deep levels of culture and society such as shared values and power structures. Although, as Portes argues, the power of migration to cause deep social change is relatively weak, many receiving countries choose to remain guarded. This is demonstrated in the case of North America and Western Europe where fundamental values and social structures have stayed relatively intact.<sup>55</sup> As a result, regardless of the promised potential of migrant integration, many states, communities, and individuals have opted for harsher and more discriminatory membership policies.<sup>56</sup> Despite the proliferation of transnational linkages and blurring economic and political boundaries, many receiving states and individuals have chosen to maintain and even sanctify the borders of their imagined communities instead of expanding boundaries.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> (Putnam, 2007, p. 151)

<sup>53</sup> (Putnam, 2007, p. 164; Portes & Vickstrom, 2011; Triadafilopoulos, 2011)

<sup>54</sup> (Shipper, 2010, p.15)

<sup>55</sup> (Portes, 2010)

<sup>56</sup> (Massey, 2003)

<sup>57</sup> (Strath, 2008; Anderson, 2006; Creese, 2005)

Third, migrants are often expected to bear the burden of their disruption, albeit with some assistance from the host government.<sup>58</sup> In a context in which international mobility is portrayed as the anomaly and the bearer of change, host societies have tended to perceive themselves as the patrons—and victims—of migration. Harald Bauder offers the German term *Bringschuld* to describe the inherent debt that newcomers to Germany are perceived to owe and accrue with their entrance and settlement.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, migrant integration policies in many new receiving societies have tended to develop as a stand-alone, independent policy area that produce guidelines directed almost exclusively at migrants and their families. In this thesis I call such standalone policies “fringed” policies.

However, integration as a one-way street—an approach that demands non-reciprocal assimilation from migrants to the host society—ignores the vital role that the institution and members of receiving societies inevitably play in the integration or disintegration process. In other words, integration as a one-way street forgets or ignores that integration is a process that involves and impacts all stakeholders. As such, overlooking the responsibilities of the receiving society and its members can contribute to the integration policy gap, can prolong discrimination, can encouraged the development of xenophobic unrest and dangerous ethnocentrism, and can deny a community the benefits of thriving from its newly found diversity.<sup>60</sup> It can also promote the unfair notion that the fault of failed integration lies with migrants alone. While the approach of addressing migrant integration in policy as a two-way street—an approach that requires effort

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<sup>58</sup> (Bauder, 2011, p. 172-181)

<sup>59</sup> (*Ibid.*)

<sup>60</sup> (Rudiger & Spencer, 2003; Putnam, 2007)

and change from both migrants and receiving society—is increasingly popular, it often must face the legacy of one-way street integration governance.<sup>61</sup>

### **2.1.3 A Two-Pronged Approach to Migrant Integration Governance**

Robert Putnam, Alejandro Portes, and Erik Vickstrom present two seemingly different approaches to address the obstacles to migrant integration.<sup>62</sup> According to Putnam, cohesion, measured by mutual trust, must be developed through narrowing the social distance between ethnically diverse groups. He argues that

the challenge is best met not by making ‘them’ like ‘us’, but [by constructing a] new, more capacious sense of ‘we’, a reconstruction of diversity that does not bleach out ethnic specificities, but creates overarching identities that ensure that those specificities do not trigger the allergic, ‘hunker down’ reaction.<sup>63</sup>

In short, Putnam argues that the importance of creating “social solidarity and more encompassing identities” (p. 137) that include migrants and their diversity through the reconstruction of boundaries of belonging (e.g., “we” or national identity) to prevent otherwise unavoidable allergic hunkering-down reactions to the other.<sup>64</sup>

Portes and Vickstrom, on the other hand, argue that increasing trust and decreasing negative effects of diversity are not dependent on “interpersonal networks or mutual expressions of trust” (p. 476) as suggested by Putnam, but rather on “universalistic rules and the capacity of institutions to compel their observance.”<sup>65</sup> They argued that cohesion is facilitated through

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<sup>61</sup> (OCASI & COSTI, 1999). Although there is debate on exactly how the integration burden should be divided between the various stakeholders, I will not address this issue as it is outside the scope of this thesis.

<sup>62</sup> (Putnam, 2007; Portes & Vickstrom, 2011)

<sup>63</sup> (Putnam, 2007, pp.163-164)

<sup>64</sup> (*Ibid.*)

<sup>65</sup> (Portes & Vickstrom, 2011, p. 476)

organic solidarity based on “shared values and the recognition of a common normative order required for the fulfillment of individual goals.”<sup>66</sup> In short, Portes and Vickstrom chastise Putnam for preoccupying policymakers with the fear of decreasing social trust amidst increasing diversity when in fact, focusing on good governance can eliminate such negative effects of diversity and create cohesion,

I would like to suggest that these two perspectives do not necessarily oppose each other.<sup>67</sup> The seeming separation is a consequence of perceiving state and society as two separate entities. Yet, in a democratic state, institutions are set up to be influenced by the perspective of its people as much as its people are affected by their institutions. Since one of these can positively advance or negatively hinder the integration efforts of the other in a continuous cycle, the mutual efforts of both institutions and its people are prerequisites for social integration. Moreover, if the effects of one of the two were foregone, integration would be difficult to achieve. Therefore, policymakers striving to facilitate migrant integration must recognize the symbiotic relationship between state institutions and the nation’s people. Such policymakers must take a two-pronged approach to migrant integration governance: focusing on advancing the capacity of institutions to facilitate migrant integration governance *as well as* acknowledging their participation in defining the boundaries of belonging within their societies. In the following chapters, I will expand on the importance of the latter for the former, that is, the importance of policymakers acknowledging

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<sup>66</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. 473)

<sup>67</sup> However, I acknowledge and appreciate that Portes and Vickstrom were reacting to the deep effect Putnam’s theory has had over academics and policymakers and were likely writing with the view to draw their audience’s head out of the sand to focus on the tools, such as institutions and good governance, society has to decrease the negative effects of diversity.

and participating in defining boundaries of belonging in order to build the capacity of institutions in migrant integration governance.

In this chapter, I strove to establish some of the context and assumptions upon which this paper stands on: the current context of international migration and its implications; the need for management, particularly in the area of migrant integration; and the questions of what migrant integration is and why it is so difficult to facilitate. I argue that a two-pronged approach to migrant integration governance can facilitate migrant integration. In the following chapter, I will demonstrate why belonging and the expansion of its boundaries is relevant and important for policymakers striving to facilitate migrant integration.

## Chapter 3: The Importance of Belonging

### 3.1 Conflict with the Bordered World

Policymakers striving to facilitate migrant integration cannot ignore their roles in the negotiation and expansion of belonging within their societies. But they face this challenge in a time when the boundaries of imagined communities may seem difficult to compromise on. Despite the proliferation of transnational linkages and blurring boundaries, the efforts to maintain and even sanctify existing walls have increased in recent years.<sup>68</sup> As the hypocrisy of the one-world-one-village imagination is exposed, the persisting reality of the bordered world is revealed. For instance, the divisive nation-state paradigm continues to reign in the political sphere, albeit in modified roles. Regardless of increasing interdependencies, many states have opted to adopt harsh and discriminatory migration policies.<sup>69</sup> As a result, there are on-going internal disputes within the interconnected-yet-bordered world today.

However, one should not assume an inherent immortality of these boundaries.<sup>70</sup> While these borders have passed the test of essentialization, they have been fundamentally part of national imaginations. In this way, they are social constructions and thereby negotiable by nature. In the context of blurring lines between territories and peoples, past binders and divisors may seem to have grown fragile.<sup>71</sup> Yet, for all social actors, “what remains strong is the affirmation of a social context”<sup>72</sup>—people still desire and need a way to connect with their society. As a result, concepts that address the manipulation of these desires and needs, such as

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<sup>68</sup> (Strath, 2008)

<sup>69</sup> (Massey, 2003)

<sup>70</sup> (Wagner, 2001)

<sup>71</sup> (Strath, 2008, pp. 23-24)

<sup>72</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. 23)

citizenship, identity, and belonging, have become important and prevalent topics in the migrant integration discourse of today.

I should clarify here that I acknowledge how prevailing the contemporary paradigm of the nation-state is. The border I seek to negotiate and expand is not the sovereignty of the nation-state's institutional or political order, but the relationship between individuals and society. In short, what I am choosing to battle is not the differentiating lines between nation-states, but elective ideas and feelings that dictate one's membership within a society. The following sections outline why I have chosen to focus on the concept of belonging (rather than citizenship, identity, or othering), its definition in accordance with its usage, and its importance to policymakers striving for migrant integration.

Earlier I discussed fringing, which could easily be confused with the concept of belonging that I turn to in this chapter. I refrain from discussing fringing here as this chapter focuses on the *experience* of belonging and why it should serve as a lens for evaluating integration policy. Fringing, in contrast, is a *policy practice* that I delve into heavily in Chapter 5 to demonstrate how policy practices impact and impose boundaries of belonging.

## **3.2 Why Focus on Belonging?**

### **3.2.1 Why Not Citizenship?**

Of the three concepts of citizenship, identity, and belonging, I have chosen to look through the lens of belonging to discuss policy implications in a context where migrant social integration is a declared policy objective. While it is true that “debates about citizenship, in the age of the nation-state, are debates about nationhood – about what it means, and what it ought to

mean, to belong to a nation-state,”<sup>73</sup> I have selected belonging rather than citizenship because of the latter’s entanglement with the nation-state paradigm. The commonly assumed understanding of citizenship today is what Rogers Brubaker coined as “formal citizenship.”<sup>74</sup> Formal citizenship essentially refers to the membership of a political community.<sup>75</sup> Even with the inclusion of “substantive citizenship,”<sup>76</sup> citizenship is often defined in the broad sense as full and equal, or in the narrow sense as legal membership with entailed civil, political, and social rights and obligations within a political community.<sup>77</sup> As demonstrated, citizenship is a term that is tightly intertwined with the political borders designated by nation-states. Therefore, it is the wrong “sized”<sup>78</sup> concept to deal with boundaries that are not limited to that of the nation-state.<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, citizenship necessitates inevitable othering in accordance with nation-state boundaries. As a component of the administrations of the nation-state, it is used to designate who falls or does not fall under the jurisdiction of the state. As Brubaker describes it, citizenship is an “instrument and object of social closure.”<sup>80</sup> Citizenship is not one that can be freely given to all people, lest it lose its purpose. While belonging also requires differentiation from those who do not belong, it is not limited by national boundaries. In all, citizenship is a term that is limited to addressing the political relationship between individuals and society.

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<sup>73</sup> (Brubaker, 1990, p. 380)

<sup>74</sup> (Brubaker, 1992)

<sup>75</sup> (Brubaker, 1992; Shipper, 2010, p. 13)

<sup>76</sup> Scholars such as Marshall have sought to complicate the concept by pointing out the necessary inclusion of one’s civil, political, and social rights and obligations (“substantive citizenship”): (Marshall, 1950).

<sup>77</sup> (Bauböck, 2002, p. 5)

<sup>78</sup> Paul Jones and Michal Krzyzanowski use the term “wrong ‘sized’” to argue how the concept of identity is incapable of explaining complex processes and is thereby inappropriately used by social scientists (Jones & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 40).

<sup>79</sup> (Shipper, 2010)

<sup>80</sup> (Brubaker, 1992, p. 3)

To be clear, I am not denying that there are intersections of belonging with citizenship. Nor am I arguing that belonging is an alternative or mutually exclusive term for citizenship.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, I would regard citizenship as the legal expression of a *kind* of belonging. I have taken pains to distinguish the concept of belonging from citizenship here because of the literature's tendency to use the term synonymously. I also specifically want to explore belonging beyond how it is defined by nation-state borders. Finally, I wanted to argue how a nation-state's understanding of its membership must grow before expanded legal citizenship can retain meaning in society.

### **3.2.2 *Why Not Identity?***

Identity is another concept that is often considered a necessary building-block in the construction of community imaginaries. I have chosen to focus on belonging rather than identity because of the over-usage and frequently ill-directed applications of the latter term.<sup>82</sup> However, the greater reason is the concept's inability to concentrate on the relation between an individual or group with the collective they seek to associate with.<sup>83</sup> Identity refers to a quality that an individual or group assigns to their self. One is represented through a compilation of multiple identities to recognize the full complexities of one's being. Examples of classes of identities include gender, territory, social class, religion, and ethnicity. In this way, claiming membership to collective identities merely provides a piece or component of one's identity. Furthermore, a collective identity does not equate with the identity of an individual. To illustrate this point, let

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<sup>81</sup> (Yuval-Davis, 2006, pp. 204-209)

<sup>82</sup> (Crowley, 1999)

<sup>83</sup> (Jones & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 38)

us briefly look at one's national identity, which can be broadly defined as the multi-dimensional identity found amongst various components of a political community. While national identity is considered a "powerful means of defining and locating"<sup>84</sup> oneself within the world, it in itself is not sufficient to make up the full identity of an individual.<sup>85</sup> The focus of the term is on the individual, not their relationship with the collective.

While belonging encompasses both the concept of citizenship and identity, it is not limited to them at the same time. I have sought to demonstrate their relationship by using the analogy of a tree (

). Belonging (or belongings) within a collective, along with individual attributes, comprise the roots upon which individual identities are formed. As in the case of trees, the strength of the identity is determined by the depth and health of its roots. Citizenship (along with other identity documents which will be addressed in the following chapters) is often one of the showiest aspects of the tree. It is frequently used to identify the tree. However, the actual meaning it carries is dependent on the strength of the tree's roots and trunk. While it is not a perfect metaphor, it serves to illustrate the distinction I make between these terms as I go forward.

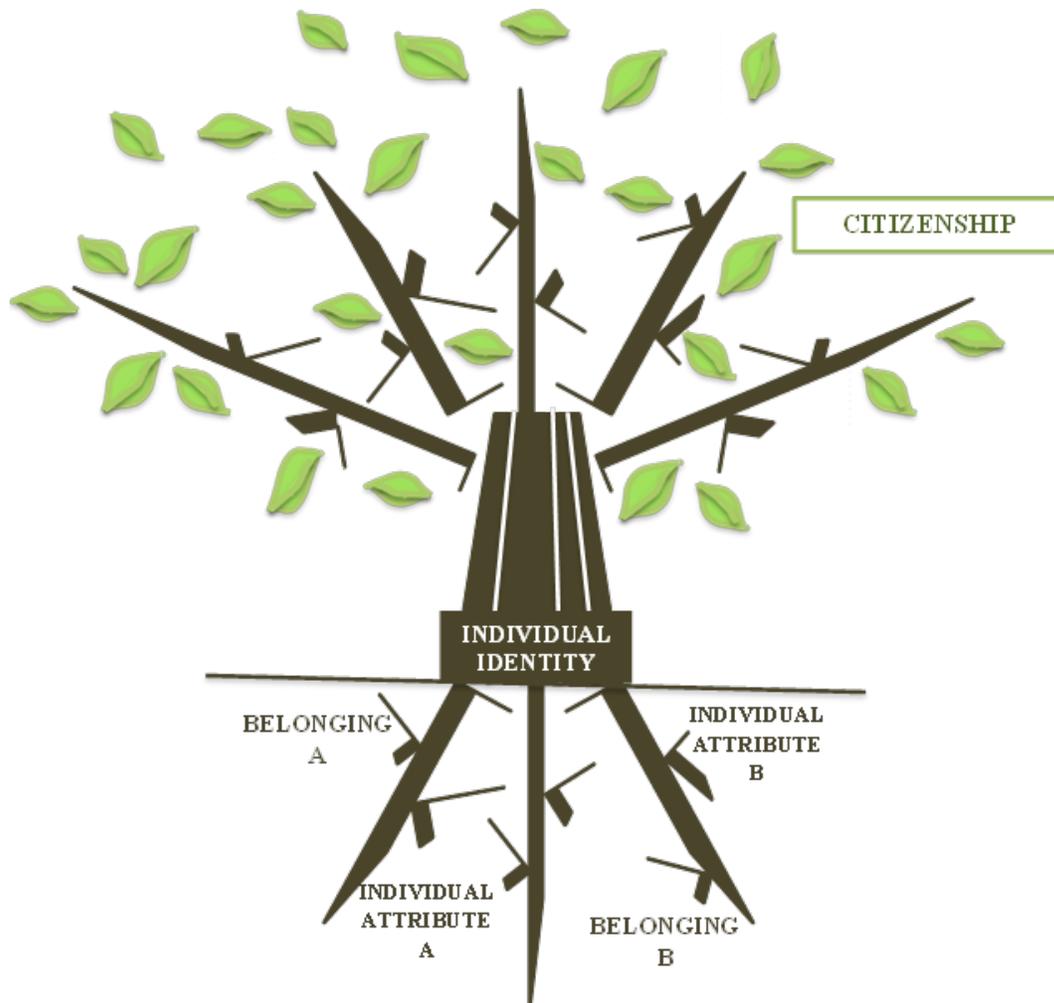
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<sup>84</sup> (Smith, 1991, p. 17)

<sup>85</sup> (*Ibid.*, pp. 3-17)

**Figure 1**

*Relationship Between Belonging, Individual Identity, and Citizenship*



### **3.2.3 Why Not Othering?**

It is also imperative to distinguish between belonging and othering, especially considering that “belonging is not necessarily based on a distinction from a clearly defined ‘other,’ as is the case to a greater degree with collective identities: on the contrary, individuals often express a sense of belonging with an ‘other,’ while remaining outside the bounds of the

group.”<sup>86</sup> I have chosen to focus on the concept of belonging rather than othering because the study of othering, while also valuable, often limits one to the task of criticism. I follow Paul Jones and Michael Krzyzanowski in supporting the argument of Ian Hackings that the responsibility of the social scientist is not to merely point out the socially constructed reality, but to reveal *how* the construction has come to be. Concentrating on boundaries of belonging will allow a more comprehensive exploration of the causes of othering, as it will reveal the persons and purposes that decide who belongs.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, studying belonging and its current limitations can also provide clearer direction for the arrangements necessary for future development.

### 3.3 What is Belonging?

Although used frequently in the literature of migration and social integration, the concept of belonging is often under-defined.<sup>88</sup> Understanding belonging simply as *being* or *feeling at home* begs for further clarification and should not be considered sufficient.<sup>89</sup> As Raymond Williams would agree, belonging is a value-loaded term that fluctuates according to its socio-political and historical context.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, it is important to approach this term with an “extra edge of consciousness.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> (Jones & Krzyzanowski, 2008, pp. 45-46)

<sup>87</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. 41)

<sup>88</sup> (Aitchison, Hopkins, & Kwan, 2007; Gilmartin, 2008)

<sup>89</sup> (Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran, & Vieten, 2006, pp. 2-4)

<sup>90</sup> (Williams, 1976, p. 24)

<sup>91</sup> (*Ibid.*)

### **3.3.1 *Belonging as a Psychological Need***

There are several ways in which belonging is important and relevant. The literature in psychology and sociology have played a large part in emphasizing the feeling or an emotional state of belonging by exploring human fears of separation and exclusion, as well as the need to love and belong.<sup>92</sup> Alfred Adler for instance, stressed that belonging was the primary human drive.<sup>93</sup> According to the hierarchical theory proposed by Abraham Maslow, the need to belong is placed only lower than physiological and safety needs.<sup>94</sup> In addition, according to Susan Fiske, belonging, as “the motive that makes us emphatically social beings, underlies the other four [core social motives]” (p. 25), that is “understanding, controlling, self-enhancing, and trusting” (p. 21), and thereby “aids our social survival” (p. 25).<sup>95</sup> In short, belonging from an individualist psychological perspective is an essential human need required for self-realization and dynamic social participation.

### **3.3.2 *Belonging as Feeling at Home***

As a *feeling* of being at home, belonging is an affective concept that embraces the “sentimental, cultural, and symbolic dimension”<sup>96</sup> of being part of a collective.<sup>97</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis describes belonging as a desire, a wanting, or a yearning for attachment.<sup>98</sup> Accordingly, the term takes account of the emotional ties that are sometimes needed to connect an individual

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<sup>92</sup> (Yuval-Davis, 2006)

<sup>93</sup> (Adler, 1946)

<sup>94</sup> (Maslow, 1943)

<sup>95</sup> (Fiske, 2009)

<sup>96</sup> (Sicakkan, & Lithman, 2005, p. 8)

<sup>97</sup> (Yuval-Davis, 2006)

<sup>98</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. 202)

to a collective. Yet, it is important to note that the emotive factor is not always required. One can still belong by being a member, without necessarily feeling membership. This distinction can be better understood by further analyzing what it means to be at home.

Although home was once considered a sedentary and closed place, scholars have begun to acknowledge its fluid, transient, and almost messy nature.<sup>99</sup> According to Magdalena Nowicka, home is a social process of connecting with both human and material surroundings.<sup>100</sup> Adding Michael Ignatieff's point that it is also a context in which one feels safe, the home can be defined as a fluid and transient space that is constructed through processes of connecting with human and material surroundings that also provide a sense of security.<sup>101</sup>

The process of being or feeling at home can be elective, selective, or both.<sup>102</sup> To electively chose to be or feel at home refers to an individual's or group's self-classification, while to be selected means that there was a process of classification by another individual or group. As argued by Floya Anthias, to belong means to enter the imagining of another individual or collectivity.<sup>103</sup> Consequently, one can both be and feel at home, but one can also be but not feel (or feel but not be) at home. An example of the former could be an individual with ownership to legal citizenship in a country she or he has no emotional ties to, whereas an example of the latter could be an individual who can claim no formal membership to a country, despite a strong sense of belonging. Whether one must both choose and be chosen to belong to a collective is debatable.

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<sup>99</sup> (Chu, 2006, p. 397; Nowicka, 2007)

<sup>100</sup> (Nowicka, 2007)

<sup>101</sup> (Ignatieff, Gutmann, & Appiah, 2001)

<sup>102</sup> (Jones & Krzyzanowski, 2008, pp. 47-48; Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 199)

<sup>103</sup> (Anthias, 2002, p. 277)

This distinction highlights the active role played by both the individual and the collective or context, as well as introduces the inclusive/exclusive aspect of the concept. The divide between individual and collective is necessary because belonging essentially refers to their relationship.<sup>104</sup> According to the work of Nira Yuval-Davis, Kalpana Kannabiran, and Ulrike Vieten, belonging refers to “the ways individual people and groupings relate to and are being treated by both state and society” (p. 1) within a specific temporal and spatial context.<sup>105</sup> The strength of belonging depends on the strength of an inclusive or exclusive relationship between the individual and collective.

### ***3.3.3 Belonging as a Social Construct***

Lastly, belonging is a social construct.<sup>106</sup> As explained by Gillian Creese, belonging is “negotiated in everyday material practices and cultural imaginations, bordered diasporic spaces where otherness and difference is often simultaneously transcended and recreated.”<sup>107</sup> Although the boundaries of imagined communities have a tendency to be essentialized, recognizing their roots in human decisions and negotiations grants back the malleability of these borders.<sup>108</sup> The social construction of belonging reminds one to question the persons and conditions that dictated its present formation. Who decided who belongs and who does not, and why? How are these boundaries introduced to a society, and how are they implemented, maintained, or challenged?<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> (Jones & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 44)

<sup>105</sup> (Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran, & Vieten, 2006, p.1)

<sup>106</sup> (Darity, 2008, p. 580; Strath, 2008, p. 24)

<sup>107</sup> (Creese, 2005)

<sup>108</sup> (Yuval-Davis, 2006)

<sup>109</sup> (Jones & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 41)

The reader may observe that, like the fluid and messy nature of home, belonging is a multi-faceted concept. Yuval-Davis provides a helpful model that dissects the concept into three analytical levels for clarity: social locations (i.e., particular groups), identification and emotional attachments (i.e., identity and attachments), and ethical and political values (i.e., values and judgments). While distinct from each other, the three levels are tightly connected.<sup>110</sup> My analysis touches on social locations in discussing groups made by policy, on identification with these groups and emotional attachment to these groups, and on judgements only in so far as they relate to out-group members.

To be clear, I am not arguing that anyone who feels attachment, belonging, or a desire to belong to Korea should be accorded policy measures that create belonging. I am rather arguing that since Korean policy actors have the objective of creating social integration, belonging is a useful lens with which to discuss policy implications.

### **3.4 Boundaries of Belonging**

How then do *boundaries* of belonging form? Michele Lamont and Virag Molnár provide a social sciences-based exposé on the development of boundaries.<sup>111</sup> Symbolic resources<sup>112</sup> and their role in “creating, maintaining, contesting, or even dissolving institutionalized social differences (e.g., class, gender, race, territorial inequality)” were found to form the roots of much of the discourse on boundaries.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> (Yuval-Davis, 2006, pp. 199-204)

<sup>111</sup> (Lamont, & Molnár, 2002)

<sup>112</sup> Such as “conceptual distinctions, interpretive strategies, cultural traditions” (*Ibid.*, p. 168).

<sup>113</sup> (*Ibid.*)

Boundaries is a concept better understood when one distinguishes between symbolic and social boundaries. Symbolic boundaries are “conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space.”<sup>114</sup> They are boundaries negotiated and expanded by the members of a society to help understand their relation to each other and to the larger world. Boundaries of belonging can be considered as a kind of symbolic boundary through which one’s membership in society is produced through a series of social negotiations. Social boundaries of belonging, on the other hand, are “objectified forms of social difference”<sup>115</sup>; they are the material and nonmaterial consequences of symbolic boundaries.

While it may seem like adding the concept of boundaries is redundant considering our discussion of belonging, I argue that the concept of boundaries adds a focus on the exclusionary possibilities of belonging and yet is compatible with both the social construction of and the emotionally laden content of the belonging phenomenon.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

While there is disagreement on what exactly belonging comprises and how it can be measured, there is increasing consensus in the literature that belonging is a crucial ingredient to facilitating migrant integration.<sup>116</sup> After all, deciding who belongs and who does not belong has been fundamental to the process of building communities and states. As such, when migration challenges the boundaries of belonging set by a state, it confronts the foundational imaginaries that constructed the state’s space. However, as presented earlier, migration and integration of

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<sup>114</sup> (*Ibid.*)

<sup>115</sup> (*Ibid.*)

<sup>116</sup> (Bilodeau et al., 2020)

migrants are realities of great relevance in the world we live in today. Ignoring these realities will enable instability and disable us from reaping their benefits.

Belonging, as defined in this chapter, is a concept that meets the needs of the migrant integration discourse in a way that citizenship, identity, and othering cannot. In addition to being an important ingredient of self-realization, dynamic social participation, and a sense of security, I argue in this chapter that belonging is the *best sized* social construct concept for negotiating and expanding existing boundaries of membership that become disrupted in the migrant integration process. And yet, belonging and its boundaries are seldom openly debated among policymakers and political decision-makers.<sup>117</sup>

In the next chapter, I will begin to lay out my analysis of the resident registration system in South Korea. I will demonstrate why belonging and its boundaries are important to migrant integration policy and discourse. I will argue that policymakers striving to facilitate migrant integration cannot afford to neglect belonging, not only as they are able to participate in the expansion of belonging within their societies, but also as they are in a position to facilitate spaces for this conversation.

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<sup>117</sup> (Orton, 2014, p. 42)

## Chapter 4: Belonging in Korea and an Introduction to the Resident Registration System

### 4.1 Hermit Kingdom Korea to Global Korea

By the time of Taehanjegyuk [Empire of Korea] the phrase “20 million people, a territory of 3,000 ri, and a history of 4,000 years” had become a popular idiom expressing the national self-perception.<sup>118</sup>

Depending on who one talks to, South Korea’s self-perception today may be quite different from perceptions of itself as a closed-off nation in 1910. In the first section of this chapter I will present, in broad strokes, the history of Korea’s evolving boundaries of belonging and its current dilemma.

#### 4.1.1 *A Simple History of Korea’s Boundaries of Belonging*

Although the hermit kingdom walls of South Korea were compromised in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the country’s stubborn nationalism and persistent mythic claims to pure-blood lineage earned the country a reputation of ethnic and cultural homogeneity.<sup>119</sup> Reminiscent of Adam Smith’s ethnic model of nationhood, membership in contemporary Korean society purportedly depended heavily on *hyeol-tong* (bloodline, 혈통).<sup>120</sup> The parameters of Korea as a *dan-il-min-jog gug-ga* (single-race nation, 단일민족 국가) are said to have been set since the founding of *Go-jo-seon* (Korea’s first nation, 고조선) 5,000 years ago. This event marked the establishment of Korea as a “homogeneous nation . . . [that] inherited the same blood and culture consistently

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<sup>118</sup> (Lee, C., 2010, p. 234).

<sup>119</sup> (Cumings, 2005; Oh, 2007, p. 31)

<sup>120</sup> (Smith, 1991, pp. 11-12)

down through history.”<sup>121</sup> Boundaries of belonging defined by *hyeol-tong* were maintained throughout the modern history of Korea, peaking during periods of conflict and disorder such as the Japanese occupation and military regime. The boundaries of belonging that developed during this golden age of Korean nationalism acted as a force for strong social cohesion amidst national turmoil.<sup>122</sup>

In the following decades, the discourse of expanding belonging became one of high relevance to Korea. For instance, the boundaries of belonging based on *hyeol-tong* were tested during the division of South and North Korea. During this time, belonging based on adherence to a particular political system, such as anticommunism, became more prevalent.<sup>123</sup> By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the boundaries of belonging in South Korea had been defined, and redefined, by various factors including: a historically defined territory; imagined ethnic homogeneity; shared history, traditions, and culture; and domesticized sociopolitical constructs of liberal democracy and capitalist economy. The most current discussions regarding boundaries of belonging have been instigated by the increasing influence of international migration and settlement of foreigners in Korea.<sup>124</sup>

#### ***4.1.2 New Challenges to Boundaries of Belonging in Korea***

South Korea is now considered both an emigration and immigration state. Its first significant emigration flow occurred during the Japanese threat in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Continued emigration to countries such as Germany and the United States after achieving independence in

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<sup>121</sup> (Cumings, 2005, p. 24)

<sup>122</sup> (Geertz, 1973, p. 14)

<sup>123</sup> (Oh, 2007, p. 62)

<sup>124</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. 33)

1945 further confirmed its status as a sending country.<sup>125</sup> Ten percent of the Korean peninsula's population resided outside of Korea in 2011.<sup>126</sup> Korea was initiated as a receiving country in the late 1980s when its rapid economic development attracted temporary migrant workers from abroad. The 1990s introduced a popular inflow of marriage migrants (which was quickly followed by an increasing number of children born of mixed nationalities and ethnicities), an influx of North Korean defectors, and ethnic Koreans from China, the former Soviet Union, and elsewhere. Refugees from South and Southeast Asia also contributed to the increasing foreign population.<sup>127</sup> In 2011, registered long-term foreign residents<sup>128</sup> amounted to roughly 2.5% of the population in Korea.<sup>129</sup> This number has steadily increased, and as of 2019, registered foreign residents reportedly consists 4.87% of the national population.<sup>130</sup>

One might expect an instinctive resistance to such demographic change from the Korean state as it is one that built its modern national identity upon assumptions of cultural and ethnic homogeneity. However, instead of stonewalling the flows of migration, the Korean state began to respond by implementing a series of policies that seemed to accept its migrant reality. In fact, incoming migrants were increasingly advertised as solutions to many of the state's concerns: the rapidly aging population,<sup>131</sup> the domestic labor shortage, and the maintenance of international competitiveness.<sup>132</sup> The growing number of marriage migrants and their families also convinced the state to employ an attitude of tolerance and acceptance. In 2006, the Roh Administration

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<sup>125</sup> (Chung, 2011, pp. 24-31)

<sup>126</sup> (Lee, J., 2011a, p. 2)

<sup>127</sup> (Oh, 2007; Yoon, 2010; Chung, 2011)

<sup>128</sup> A foreign resident refers to non-citizens who have resided in Korea for 91 days or longer (although with occasional exceptions).

<sup>129</sup> (Korean Immigration Service, 2011, p. 252)

<sup>130</sup> (Korea Ministry of Justice, 2021)

<sup>131</sup> (Lim, 2010, p. 55; Chosun Ilbo, 2011; Watson, 2012; Chosun Ilbo, 2010)

<sup>132</sup> (Yoon, Song, Kim, Song, & Song, 2009)

introduced a pivotal policy, known as the Grand Plan, under which the construction of a more migrant-friendly *damunhwa* (다문화, multicultural) society was declared to be vital for Korea's economic and social development.<sup>133</sup> Since then, the Korean government has made many laudable efforts to introduce and encourage integration through its policies. Such efforts included an explosion of various *sahoetonghap*<sup>134</sup> and *damunhwa* policies,<sup>135</sup> supports for labor market mobility, protections for migrant workers from exploitation and abuse, promotions of *damunhwa-juui* (다문화주의, multiculturalism) and, astonishingly, the granting of local voting rights to foreign residents.<sup>136</sup> To some, it appeared as if homogeneous Korea was no more, and the question posed by the government was no longer *whether* migrants belong, but rather *how* they belong.

Unfortunately, as illustrated in the introduction, despite the government's enthusiastic implementation of *sahoetonghap* and *damunhwa* policies, Korea has not been immune to the integration gap. For instance, in 2014, UN Special Rapporteur M. Mutuma Ruteere stated that there is no denying that Korea continues to struggle with crucial aspects of migrant integration

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<sup>133</sup> (Lim, 2010, p. 69; Presidential Committee on Social Inclusion, 2006)

<sup>134</sup> *Sahoetonghap* policy (사회통합 정책) refer to policies the Korean government has implemented to increase social harmony between native and migrant residents in Korea (Kang, 2020, pp. 292-293).

<sup>135</sup> *Damunhwa* policy (다문화정책) is difficult to define. This is largely due to the fact that there has been a lack of unified usage of the term. I have chosen to use *damunhwa*, rather than its most commonly used English translation "multiculturalism" in this thesis because of the unique evolution and understanding of this concept within South Korea. I have designated the scope of this term as it is used in this thesis through Jong-Nam Seo's (2010) meticulous study on the usage of this term by government ministries and agencies. According to Seo, the restlessness of the term was caused by its hurried emergence. The sudden realization of the country's inadequate preparation for a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society pressured the government to quickly produce policies and solutions without adequate theoretical debate or social discussion. The confusion was added to by the piecemeal formation of policies by the separate government ministries all under the title of "*damunhwa* policies." From his study, Seo discovered that the government's official usage of "*damunhwa* policies" referred to policies related to migrant workers, their family, and children; marriage migrants, their family, and children; and *saeteomin* (North Korean defectors, 새터민), their family, and children. Thus, *damunhwa* policies are policies that seek to eradicate discrimination and provide equal treatment to the migrant populations indicated above.

<sup>136</sup> (Niessen, 2014)

despite the *damunhwa* efforts. Migrants remain the subjects of serious discrimination and xenophobia.<sup>137</sup> In Seoul—known as the international metropolis of Korea—75.7% of the 410,000 foreign residents<sup>138</sup> reportedly experienced discrimination, while 83% of its *damunhwa* families found integration difficult.<sup>139</sup> Even as expat numbers have tripled over the past decade—numbers that are forecasted to inevitably rise—44.2% of Koreans expressed discomfort in having migrants as neighbors in 2016.<sup>140</sup> These examples of discrimination illustrate the presence of the discrepancy between the objectives of Korea’s integration policy and its outcome. Below, I address how institutionalized remnants of Korea’s homogenous past in mainstream policy have contributed to this integration gap.

With the following case of South Korea’s resident registration system from 1962 to 2019, I seek to illustrate how a mainstream policy in Korea encouraged the status quo and discouraged the expansion of established boundaries of belonging which then contributed to social disintegration and the othering of migrants. To do so, I will begin by describing what the resident registration system is for the remainder of this chapter.

## 4.2 The Resident Registration System, 1962-2019

The reader is advised that there have been recent changes to the resident registration system (RRS) in Korea. For instance, as of October, 2020, the card holder’s region of issuance is

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<sup>137</sup> (Ruteere, 2014)

<sup>138</sup> This thesis defines “foreign residents” as registered aliens without Korean citizenship (such as migrant workers, marriage migrants, and foreign students), overseas Koreans without Korean citizenship, naturalized Koreans, and children with an immigrant background.

<sup>139</sup> According to the Seoul Metropolitan government, 75.7% of local foreign residents have indicated that they have experienced discrimination, while 83% of *damunhwa* families indicated that it has been difficult adapting to Korean society (The Korea Times, 2014).

<sup>140</sup> (Institute for Comparative Survey Research, 2016, pp. 72-73)

no longer identifiable in newly issued resident registration number—a policy decision made to, among other reasons, prevent discriminatory treatment of people from certain areas of Korea (for example, as a result of old regional prejudices and rivalries).<sup>141</sup> In June 2020, the Ministry of Justice of Korea announced the removal of the term “alien” from what was previously known as the Alien Registration Card in response to criticisms of the term’s “negative connotation toward foreigners” (para. 4).<sup>142</sup> While these changes are noted briefly throughout the following chapters, my analysis of the RRS will focus on the period *prior* to these changes in 2020.

#### **4.2.1 What is the Resident Registration System?**

According to the Resident Registration Act, the RRS of South Korea aspires to

promote convenience in the livelihoods of residents and to properly process administrative affairs by clearly ascertaining the residential status of residents and the movement of the population through the registration of residents residing in each [municipality, county, and borough].<sup>143</sup>

Similarly, the Ministry of the Interior stated that the purpose of having residents register in respective areas of jurisdiction is so that

the administrative agency may understand the residence status as well as the population movements, which can increase the convenience of citizens’ lives and help process administrative tasks properly.<sup>144</sup>

Essentially, the RRS is advertised as a tool conceived to enhance the welfare of residents by allowing administrative organizations to collect and supervise the residence-related information of residents.

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<sup>141</sup> (The Korea Herald, 2020a)

<sup>142</sup> (The Korea Herald, 2020b)

<sup>143</sup> (Resident Registration Act, Article 1)

<sup>144</sup> (Ministry of the Interior, 2016, p. 65)

Prior to October, 2020, the system collected birth date, sex, place of initial registration,<sup>145</sup> and biometric data such as fingerprints alongside current and permanent residence information. With this information, the RRS assigns each registered person a resident registration number (RRN), which is published and distributed in the form of a resident registration card (RRC) when an individual resident turns 17 years old. Due to the unique and permanent nature of the number assigned by the system (see Figure 2), the RRC retains the ability to identify and represent individuals. As a result, the RRS and RRCs have been widely used in the everyday state and private transaction activities that go beyond merely determining the residential status of residents.<sup>146</sup> Within state institutions, the RRS is vital for the prompt and transparent administration of many services, such as welfare, pension, tax collection, school enrollment, and the issuance of passports.<sup>147</sup> The RRS also helps with information sharing between the various government departments. Outside state institutions, the RRC is, or once was, required for estate and car purchases, access to buildings and services, bank and online transactions, website membership, and even the purchase of movie tickets.

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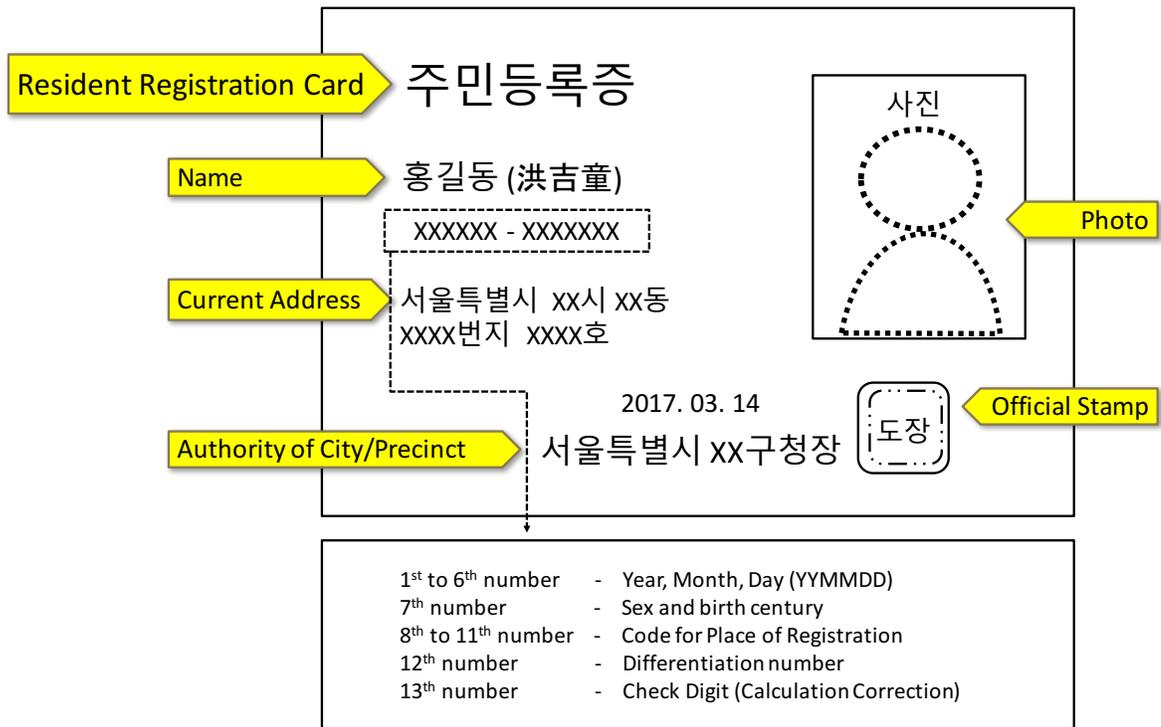
<sup>145</sup> As of October 2020, the card holder's region of issuance is no longer identifiable in newly issued resident registration numbers (The Korea Herald, 2020a).

<sup>146</sup> (Koh, 2012)

<sup>147</sup> The perceived success and benefits of the RRS has prompted Korea to share its knowledge and experience with other Asian countries such as Laos, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar (Yoon, 2006).

**Figure 2**

*Resident Registration Card Template<sup>148</sup>*



In fact, the RRS is commonly referred to as “the national identification system” in general discourse. For instance, in a government publication supervised by the Ministry of Strategy and Finance in 2015, the RRS was described as

the national identification system that collects a citizen’s biometric data ... to provide a wide range of public services. Data are saved in the RRS with the resident registration numbers (RRNs) assigned to each citizen for identification purposes.<sup>149</sup>

The RRC is perceived as the national identification card, loaded with the symbolic weight of one’s proof of legitimate belonging. Applying for and receiving an RRC for the first time is a rite of

<sup>148</sup> I based this drawing on the illustration provided in an article by Chamyeoyeondae (2005).

<sup>149</sup> (Yoon, Lee, & Chu, 2015, p.11)

passage for young Koreans entering adulthood. The RRC's significance as a state-validated symbol of belonging was also evident in the honorary presentation of RRCs to the classic Korean animation characters Dooli and Hani in 2003 and 2008 respectively (Figures 3 and 4).<sup>150</sup>

**Figure 3**

*Dooli and Hani's Resident Registration Card*



*Note.* <https://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/201408071117195773> accessed on September 03, 2021

*Note.* <https://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/201408071117195773> accessed on September 03, 2021

#### **4.2.2 The History of the Resident Registration System, 1962-2019**

The history of the RRS shines light to how a registration system, whose legislated purpose is to record and manage citizens in residential units, became the country's main identification system and proof of belonging. While Korea can boast a long and complicated history of the registration of persons, I will focus below on the history of the existing resident registration system, that is, the system that was legalized, maintained, and remains active today.<sup>151</sup>

<sup>150</sup> (Donga News, 2003; Hanguk Ilbo, 2014)

<sup>151</sup> (Kim, 2007)

In 1962, the Resident Registration Act legislation (the “Act”) and associated system were put in place under then-President Park Chung-Hee’s junta against the backdrop of North Korea presenting a significant security threat. The RRS was set up to help the government, particularly the military administration, identify and monitor Korean citizens and their movement. Initially, there was much opposition towards the establishment of the Act. Members of both the opposition and ruling parties argued that the system infringed upon citizens’ freedom in the name of national security. As such, the Act was provisionally deferred.<sup>152</sup>

However, six years later, the Blue House Raid, which was an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate President Park Chung-Hee by North Korean special forces on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1968, and the Pueblo Incident, in which a US Navy ship was captured by North Korea on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1968, spurred a renewed interest in the surveillance of North Korean spies and the stalled Act. As a result, the Act was passed by the National Assembly on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1968. At the time, its objective was to thoroughly monitor the movement of its residents as well as track down North Korean spies. Although opposition towards the RRS persisted, the insistence of the security-oriented state prevailed and an amendment that required the issuance of a permanent RRN and RRC for every citizen over 18 years old soon followed on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1968.<sup>153</sup> On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1970, the issuance of RRCs became compulsory, and on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1975, the Act was amended to lower the required age to 17 years old, as well as to introduce the current 13-digit RRNs.

As 2022 will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the system. Over the past fifty-nine years, with the exception of various small revisions and the recent major decision to stop displaying the

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<sup>152</sup> (*Ibid.*)

<sup>153</sup> (*Ibid.*)

card holder's region of issuance,<sup>154</sup> Korea's resident registration system has maintained most of its original form since 1962 (see Table 1).<sup>155</sup> This is in contrast to the replacement that its cousin, the *hojeok* (family registrar, 호적) system, also known as the other national status identification system, experienced in 2008 by being replaced by the FRS. While the abolition of the *hojeok* system reaffirms the fluid nature of national registration systems and the system's responsibility to reflect its socio-political context, and in spite of Korea's dynamic transformations over the past five decades, changes to the resident registration system have remained relatively conservative.

**Table 1**<sup>156</sup>

*History of the Resident Registration System*

1962	Established and enacted the Resident Registration Act
1968	Issued resident registration card (18 or older), assigned resident registration number (12 digits)  System begins to segregate foreign residents and overseas Koreans (Korean citizens abroad) from resident citizens
1975	Lowered the age for issuing resident registration cards (17 or older), assigned a thirteen-digit resident registration number
1978	Created individual resident registration cards
1991	Placed limitations on processing resident registration work and issuing certified copies via a computer data processing organization  Excluded foreign residents and overseas Koreans entirely from the RRS
1994	Abolished mandatory report for moving out of residence

<sup>154</sup> According to The Korea Herald, this is the “first time the country is implementing a major change to its resident registration number system in 45 years since 1975 when the current [13-digit] system was introduced” (The Korea Herald, 2020a).

<sup>155</sup> (Han & Lee, 2012)

<sup>156</sup> This table is quoted from the Ministry of the Interior (2016, p. 65) with minor additions from Chong (2004).

1998	Established Issuing Center for RRCs
1999	Renewed resident registration cards, changed to plastic cards
2001	Introduced utilization of civil document issuance machine
2004	Implemented a backup system for resident registration data
2007	Localization of law
2011	Issued resident registration cards for the visually impaired
2015	Issued resident registration cards for overseas Koreans

### 4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I set the stage for why belonging and its boundaries are important for migrant integration policy and discourse in Korea. I do this by laying out a simple history of Korea's boundaries of belonging and the new challenges the country now faces due to its growing migrant (emigrant and immigrant) population. I then narrow the focus to the RRS, a policy I select to explore how institutionalized remnants of Korea's homogenous past in mainstream policy have contributed to the integration gap.

This exploration will continue in the next chapter in which I introduce the Alien Registration Card (ARC) which is the foreign residents' equivalent to the RRS, as well as outline the nature of the RRS' boundaries of belonging and its implications for a society seeking to integrate its migrants.

## Chapter 5: Criticizing the RRS

### 5.1 The Various Boundaries of the RRS

The boundaries of belonging insisted on by the RRS are neither uniform nor definite. Instead, they are indicative of piecemeal policymaking amid changing perceptions of who belongs in Korea.

#### 5.1.1 *The Historical Boundaries of the RRS*

Surprisingly, the original resident registration system law in 1962 initially included foreign residents in its scope, although it was not without various discriminatory processes. It was the 1968 amendment that began to further segregate foreign residents and overseas Koreans (Korean citizens abroad), and the 1991 revision that solidified their exclusion from the system altogether.<sup>157</sup> Long-term resident foreigners<sup>158</sup> have since been required to register for a separate Alien Registration Card (ARC) that is supposed to substitute for the RRC.<sup>159</sup>

Currently, migrants have been excluded from the RRS in a variety of ways. Non-citizens who do not remain in the country for more than 90 days, as well as non-citizen residents with undocumented status are intentionally excluded from the system by default. Individuals and their families put under special status by the Ministry of Justice due to their diplomatic, industrial, or other duties related to national security have also experienced unintended discrimination because of their exception from registration.

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<sup>157</sup> This table is quoted from the Ministry of the Interior (2016, p. 65) with minor additions from Chong (2004).  
quoted from the Ministry of the Interior (2016, p. 65) with minor additions from Chong (2004).  
h occasional exceptions.

<sup>159</sup> Act on the Immigration and Legal Status of Overseas Koreans (Amended 2013); Immigration Control Act (Amended 2013)

In the following sections, I explore the various kinds of belonging that have been implemented by the RRS. To be clear, my aim here is to highlight the RRS' systemic separation of migrants and native citizen residents, which solidify boundaries of belonging that conflict with successful migrant integration.<sup>160</sup>

### ***5.1.2 Clearly Othered by the RRS: Long-term Foreign Residents***

As mentioned above, long-term resident foreigners are not registered under the RRS but rather the separate Alien Registration system. While the ARC is meant to essentially fulfill the same functions as the RRC, long-term resident foreigners constantly find themselves living in limbo. Resident foreigners with an ARC have constantly faced inconveniences that RRC holders do not, such as having to fill out forms that require resident identification but do not recognize ARC holders as residents. The widespread usage of the RRC and ARC have in the past caused obstacles in daily transactions as small as reserving movie tickets online (though such usage of the RRCs is now outlawed) and cell phone subscriptions.<sup>161</sup>

More significant than the inconveniences, however, is how the public expression of the exclusion from the RRS, through the physically different identity cards of the RRC versus the ARC, symbolically alienates foreign residents. Such a public, symbolic separation ultimately leads to different statuses in daily conversations, which then re-inscribe boundaries of belonging. In this way, the RRS, as a tool that others foreign residents, is a source of various intended and unintended discriminations and unintended systemic microinvalidations<sup>162</sup> The RRS' systemic

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<sup>160</sup> As defined in section 2.1.1 of this thesis.

<sup>161</sup> (Piao, 2017)

<sup>162</sup> (Sue et al., 2007)

othering of long-term foreign residents not only conflicts with the Korean government's declared goals of migrant integration and social harmony but also can negatively impact the effectiveness of other policies that are seeking to facilitate migrant integration.

### ***5.1.3 Flexible Belonging and Othering by the RRS: North Korean Defectors***

North Korean defectors are a unique category of resident citizens that often face different challenges from other migrant groups in Korea, including in their interaction with the RRS. For example, while being recognized as Korean citizens and receiving an RRC, for some time North Korean defectors were identifiable as North Korean defectors through their RRN. The eighth-to-tenth digit of the thirteen-digit code, usually signifying place of birth or of first registration, is the same for almost all North Korean defectors (i.e., 125) because of their registration during their mandatory orientation at the *Hanawon* (하나원) facility on entering South Korea. As a result, North Korean defectors became vulnerable to prejudice, such as by Chinese visa authorities.<sup>163</sup> In 2009, a special amendment was passed to provide North Korean defectors with the ability to change their RRN.<sup>164</sup>

The RRS' treatment of North Korean defectors adds to our understanding of the system's boundaries of belonging in several ways. First, it reflects the RRS' acceptance of North Korean defectors as legally the same as South Korean residents. Second, it reflects the RRS' ability to intentionally or unintentionally discriminate a group of migrant-but-resident citizens. Lastly, it demonstrates the RRS' capacity to change when needed.

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<sup>163</sup> (Hankyoreh, 2007)

<sup>164</sup> (Yonhap News, 2009)

#### 5.1.4 *Recently Belonged by the RRS: Overseas Koreans*

The most interesting and perhaps most major change in the recent history of the RRS is its latest attitude towards overseas Koreans which demonstrates the RRS' fluid boundaries. The term overseas Koreans refers to all Korean citizens who have established a legal residence or are abroad for the purpose of gaining residency outside of Korea. Prior to 2015, the resident registration was cancelled for those who became overseas Koreans. This caused overseas Koreans much grief when they subsequently engaged in financial or real estate transactions in Korea.<sup>165</sup>

However, starting January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, the government decided to allow the maintenance and issuance of resident registration cards for overseas Koreans.<sup>166</sup> The reasoning behind this change can be found in the following explanation published by the Ministry of the Interior:

According to the current law, resident registration of Koreans who moved to other countries will become cancelled. For this reason, overseas Koreans face many difficulties in making financial transactions and engaging in real estate dealings in Korea. To resolve these difficulties and *improve their sense of unity as Koreans*, cancellation of overseas Koreans' resident registration is scrapped, and a separate issuance system for overseas Koreans was introduced. [emphasis added]<sup>167</sup>

One could speculate widely on how the convenience of the RRCs issued to overseas Koreans benefited the state's political interests as well as its purse. However, to keep within the scope of this thesis, my interest in the Ministry's explanation is focused on how the issuance of RRCs to overseas Koreans was intended to "improve their sense of unity as Koreans."<sup>168</sup> This is a particularly meaningful statement for several reasons.

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<sup>165</sup> (Korea Ministry of the Interior, 2016, p. 66)

<sup>166</sup> (The Korea Times, 2015)

<sup>167</sup> (Ministry of the Interior, 2016, p. 66)

<sup>168</sup> (*Ibid.*)

First, it is the first time, within the reach of my research, that the government openly acknowledges the RRS' capacity as a boundary marker. Second, this embrace of overseas Koreans starkly contrasts with the RRS' continuing treatment of long-term resident foreigners. Third, the government is using the RRS as a tool not only to mark boundaries of belonging, but also to *erase and redraw* boundaries to include a previously othered group of people. Lastly, this policy decision is a useful illustration of how Korea's pure-blood ideology continues to impact systemic boundaries of belonging.

Thus, we find that the RRS' boundaries are, to some extent of the malleable kind. This has certainly been the case for some groups of ethnic Koreans, such as North Korea defectors and overseas Koreans in the recent years. Yet those same boundaries have remained static for other foreign resident categories. Furthermore, altering the boundaries of belonging for select group of those perceived as ethnically Korean such as North Korea defectors (since the concept of Korean ethnicity predates the Korean war) and overseas Koreans may seem like an accommodation in policy, when in fact it is not a truly radical expansion of boundaries for outsiders as these groups have effectively always been insiders as ethnic Koreans.

The reality of inscribed boundaries arising from the RRS within Korean society conflicts with the recent changes in local election laws that were made to expand Korea's boundaries of belonging. Not only are foreign residents now allowed to vote and be elected to local governments, but non-resident overseas Koreans are also allowed to participate in elections. These changes that were made to advance social integration are unfortunately being mitigated by the persistent exclusion of foreign residents by the resident registration system.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> (Lee, J., 2011b)

In the following section of this chapter, I will expand on my theoretical criticism of the RRS' prejudiced practice of excluding foreign residents. I will also elucidate the potentially harmful consequences of bureaucratic categorizations that refuse to learn from the reality they assume they are based on.

## 5.2 Criticizing the RRS

### 5.2.1 *In Terms of Boundaries of Belonging*

Although, to my knowledge, no studies nor surveys have been conducted on this topic, I argue that social and symbolic factors help us understand how the mechanics of the resident registration system have led to non-material or qualitative consequences that have impeded social integration. These socio-cultural factors, such as ethnic-nationalism and ties to a locality, that are often cited as the causes of boundaries of belonging, can be understood as symbolic resources. The social negotiation of these symbolic resources, in the case of Korea, has been mediated heavily by the state, and has solidified the boundaries that are manifested in the current structure of the resident registration system.<sup>170</sup> In this way, the state acted as “a producer of differences and as an internal homogenizer of populations.”<sup>171</sup> The discriminatory effects of the sorting function of the resident registration system on the foreign resident community can be understood as comprising the resulting social boundaries. This also leads to the realization that the penalties of symbolic and social boundaries go beyond material inequality. The construction of negative racial and ethnic identities that can seriously deter the social integration of a

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<sup>170</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. 174)

<sup>171</sup> (Verdery, 1994; Starr, 1992 as cited in Lamont & Molnár, 2002, p.174)

community are qualitative consequences that should be considered seriously by those in the policy sector.<sup>172</sup>

One must keep in mind that boundaries by nature are not exclusively about separation and disunity. Boundaries can also act as a condition for inclusion.<sup>173</sup> In this way, boundaries are like classification — “To classify is human;”<sup>174</sup> it is what allows us to make sense of the world surrounding us. Classification, in turn, has the effect of influencing beliefs and behaviors.<sup>175</sup> The important thing is to be aware of how and why particular classifications exist and to be unafraid of challenging them. Problems occur when classifications become less fluid or become invisible.<sup>176</sup> This is what often happens when prejudicial classifications become enshrined in a bureaucratic system, such as the RRS—they become static and habitual. When its malleable nature becomes un-malleable, and this system becomes oblivious to the compromises asked of it by its socio-political context, classifications and their systems can lead to horrendous atrocities such as the Holocaust.<sup>177</sup>

There are two common themes that thread through the theories of symbolic boundaries and classifications. Both are existentially necessary and assist our understanding of the world and of our interrelations with other people. Neither are necessarily problematic, until they become unwilling to, incapable of, blind to, oblivious of, or biased towards compromises and change. Where does the resident registration system fall within this spectrum? Is it truly open for expansion, and if so, for the acceptable some, or for all? Or has it become incapable of

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<sup>172</sup> (Starr, 1992, p. 175)

<sup>173</sup> (*Ibid.*, p.181)

<sup>174</sup> (Bowker & Star, 1999, p. 1)

<sup>175</sup> (*Ibid.*, pp. 53-55)

<sup>176</sup> (*Ibid.*, pp. 2-5)

<sup>177</sup> (*Ibid.*, pp. 195-196)

flexibility? My stance reflects that of Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Star, who compiled their argument into one concise sentence, stating that “the only good classification is a living classification!”<sup>178</sup> In turn, according to Ingram and Schneider, “policy designs structure opportunities and send varying messages to differently constructed target groups about how government behaves and how they are likely to be treated by government.”<sup>179</sup>

### 5.2.2 *In Terms of Papereality*

Like the rules of chess, . . . [paperealities do] not merely govern preexisting behavior . . . but create behavior.<sup>180</sup>

The additional concept of papereality helps inform how I problematize the current structure of the resident registration system. Papereality, as defined by David Dery, is a reality that is created and maintained by organizations.<sup>181</sup> It essentially points to a “world of symbols or written representations that take precedence over the things and events represented.”<sup>182</sup> With the confidence given to it by its members, organizations are given the capacity to define and order the world through paper records or electronic textual records.

For many societies today, the written word defines reality. Paper records have taken precedence over speech in most transactions of trust and goods, and even sufficiently substitutes for the value of things they represent. In this way, eventual dependency on papereality is inevitable for organizations, as they are “systems of interpersonal relations . . . that [often] harbor

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<sup>178</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. 326)

<sup>179</sup> (Ingram & Schneider, 2006, pp. 98-101)

<sup>180</sup> (Dery, 1998, p. 681)

<sup>181</sup> (*Ibid.*)

<sup>182</sup> (*Ibid.*, pp. 677-689)

and manage distrust.”<sup>183</sup> Consequently, bureaucratic organizations thrive in papereality.

Papereality’s ability to act as both “a binding picture of reality and a constraint on updating or learning behavior,”<sup>184</sup> provides the state with the capability to “control on the basis of knowledge.”<sup>185</sup>

Registering oneself into a state’s system allows the state to create a reality through which one’s identity is validated through official documentations. As a result, one’s identity becomes dependent on government records.<sup>186</sup> Being denied a resident registration number, only to be provided with the option of being registered as an alien is no small thing in the world of papereality. Papereality affects the definition of a person in relationship to their state, to their community, and to their own self. At a larger level, registration is a state mechanism that impacts the construction and maintenance of a society’s identity, and therefore its boundaries of belonging.

The danger of papereality is that it can hinder organizational learning. Because of its dependence on records and routine, the organization can become oblivious to its changing context.<sup>187</sup> For Korea, the routine of the prejudicially unchanging system could not accommodate its transitioning demography. According to the current RRS, foreign residents, as non-citizens, could not be classed as residents, nor could they be seen as belonging to their communities in Korea. In this way, papereality allowed the resident registration system’s definition of its

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<sup>183</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. 678)

<sup>184</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. 678)

<sup>185</sup> (Weber, 1975, p. 339)

<sup>186</sup> (Lee, C., 2010, p. 233)

<sup>187</sup> (Dery, 1998, p. 687)

population to take precedence over what was, and is, happening with the actual population.<sup>188</sup> As such, I argue that the papereality of the RRS prevents the expansion of belonging.<sup>189</sup>

Ideally, all existing representations would be adjusted through a bout of social negotiations at the crux of each change in reality. The new representations would then be recorded and used until the next crossroads. However, considering the conservative nature of bureaucratic administration, this is a tall order. What is needed, then, are people and other organizations that can keep the organization accountable. The manipulation of words and beliefs made by organizations need to be studied with a critical eye.<sup>190</sup> This is the reason why a study of the papereality created by the resident registration system is crucial to advancing the discourse of belonging in Korea today.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I laid out the current boundary structures of the RRS, demonstrating how the RRS and its papereality restrain Korea's boundaries of belonging, as well as how its preservation of existing symbolic boundaries and classification systems deter migrant integration. By doing so, I illustrated how Korea's mainstream policies, such as the RRS, currently encourage the maintenance of the status quo and discourage flexibility in established boundaries of belonging for marginalized groups. This examination also shows why the debates around belonging and its boundaries are important to migrant integration policy and discourse generally.

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<sup>188</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. 682)

<sup>189</sup> Further empirical work could investigate this claim.

<sup>190</sup> (Dery, 1998, p. 681; Edelman, 1977)

The next chapter will suggest a way forward. To demonstrate how mainstream policies such as the RRS could undergo the process of modifying its boundaries of belonging to include marginalized groups such as foreign residents, the chapter will explore the notion of mainstreaming integration policy. I will test this by examining the case of Korea's family registrar system. The chapter shows how policymakers, by mainstreaming migrant integration in policy, and by paying attention to boundaries of belonging they help create and maintain, can close the integration policy gap.

## Chapter 6: A Way Forward for the RRS

### 6.1 Mainstreaming as a Way Forward

#### 6.1.1 *What is Mainstreaming?*

Challenging and opening boundaries of belonging that are ingrained within the public policies of a society may seem like a staggering task at first glance. However, the systematic incorporation of a marginalized group's representation in public policy is neither novel nor impossible. Consider the notion of gender mainstreaming, a term that gained momentum in 1995 during the global strategy for gender equality policy discussions at the 4<sup>th</sup> UN World Conference on Women in Beijing.<sup>191</sup> Mainstreaming, as was defined in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Agreed Conclusions, refers to the

the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.<sup>192</sup>

Mainstreaming gender equality pressed governments and other actors to analyze the implication of any “planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes”<sup>193</sup> for both men and women. In short, gender mainstreaming required policymakers to put on the lens of gender equality when evaluating and or reconstructing all existing or prospective policies.

Mainstreaming can be contrasted with the opposite term, fringing, which I use to describe policy practices (e.g., policymaking or discourses around a policy) that attempt to address broad societal issues (e.g., migrant integration) through standalone policies (e.g., *sahoetonghap* and

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<sup>191</sup> (UN Women, 1995)

<sup>192</sup> (Economic and Social Council, 1997, p. 3)

<sup>193</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. 3)

*damunhwa* policies) directed at an identified “problem-causing” group (e.g., migrants) instead of the general members of a jurisdiction. These two terms then represent the opposite poles of a single concept of inclusion in civil society. This bipolar concept also then has two different senses. The first is the general sense of reduction of intentional or unintentional discrimination and barriers to participation in civil society and within policy, and advocates for expanded boundaries of belonging (or the opposite). The second sense is more specific, denoting the specific aim of building these objectives for inclusion in society into policy by avoiding the creation of stand-alone policies exclusively for marginalized populations such as migrants, and instead building considerations for these issues into mainstream policy development. Together these two senses of civil inclusion—reduction of discrimination in policy and inclusion of all people within central policies—combine to inform the dichotomy of mainstreaming versus fringing that enables a critical evaluation of policy.

To reiterate, fringing, for the present purpose, can be seen as the opposite of mainstreaming as defined above. Fringing, then, denotes policy practices which neglect different groups or address relegated groups’ needs with standalone policy that serves to re-inscribe exclusion. Mainstreaming, in contrast, also involves a shift of focus from policies that are directed at a specific group (e.g., migrants) toward policies directed at the general population. Likewise, mainstreaming migrant integration policy will require policymakers to put on a new set of lenses when evaluating and reconstructing existing or prospective policies, shifting from policies that target migrants as a specific group toward policies that are directed to the general population.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> (Scholten, Collett, Petrovic, 2017)

### 6.1.2 *Mainstreaming Migrant Integration Policy*

Mainstreaming as a concept has attracted much interest, within both policy and academic discourses, on a variety of specific policy topics such as gender, disability, environment, and migrant integration.<sup>195</sup> In recent years, a vibrant dialogue on mainstreaming migrant integration in policy has been emerging in European countries seeking a way forward from the failure of multiculturalism.<sup>196</sup> Contributing to the surfacing discourse, the growing super-diversity—increased diversity not only between but also within migrant groups—of migrants and their descendants in Europe, has made it increasingly difficult to target and implement migrant-specific policies. In this context, mainstreaming migrant integration through policy has referred to “reforms or adaptations of general policies that incorporate integration priorities [which then help] create public services that are attuned to the needs of the whole population regardless of background.”<sup>197</sup> In short, mainstreaming migrant integration policy is the act of assuming responsibility for migrant integration within mainstream policy so that governments can service the whole of its society by need, not by migrant background, and regardless of the confusion caused by changing migrant realities, such as super-diversity.

Mainstreaming migrant integration policy is not an easy task. Transitioning specific integration policies to mainstream policies takes time and active coordination between stakeholders. According to the Global Migration Group, successful mainstreaming will require conditions such as robust political support, strong leadership by the government, and the “early involvement of key stakeholders [such as academics and] migrant community groups” (p. 22).<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> (*Ibid.*)

<sup>196</sup> (Weaver, 2010)

<sup>197</sup> (Collett & Petrovic, 2014, p. 2)

<sup>198</sup> (Global Migration Group, 2010)

There will also likely be some resistance from members of the population who feel threatened by the transition. For instance, disagreement might result from consultations where some migrants would not want origins to be easily divulged, while others might want to celebrate their origins. It may be that consultations may not produce a clear answer. In addition, mainstreaming will complicate the collection and evaluation of policy outcomes. Nevertheless, expert practitioners have put forward evidence that seem to agree that there is value in the mainstreaming approach.<sup>199</sup>

### **6.1.3 Benefits of Mainstreaming Migrant Integration Policy**

One of the benefits of, mainstreaming is that it helps reframe integration as the responsibility of the whole society. Governments will be able to promote a shared sense of belonging and a shared ownership of society's migrant reality, allowing a bi-directional recognition between migrants and hosts of subsequent needs, and of processes of leveraging benefits.<sup>200</sup> In this way, mainstreaming can allow policymakers to make a “radical break with the often centrally coordinated multiculturalist or assimilationist policies of the past.”<sup>201</sup>

In addition, mainstreaming migrant integration policy catches individuals and integration issues that fall through the gaps of existing integration policies due to changing migrant realities such as super-diversity, or the fragmentation of the migration portfolio. As discussed earlier, mainstreaming also prevents the formalization and effects of exclusionary social constructions of target groups.<sup>202</sup> Mainstreaming can thus help policymakers avoid harmfully identifying

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<sup>199</sup> (OPM Group, 2014)

<sup>200</sup> (Scholten, Collett, & Petrovic, 2017)

<sup>201</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. 285)

<sup>202</sup> (Scholten, Collett, Petrovic, 2017; Pierce et al., 2014)

migrants and saddling them with the entire burden of integration. It can help erase the lines of belonging that prompt a government to inadvertently and unnecessarily disempower migrant groups.

In this way, mainstreaming can help challenge and broaden boundaries of belonging that are ingrained in mainstream policies. It is important to note here that mainstreaming will realistically continue to target specific groups that demonstrate specific needs in specific areas. However, by avoiding the migrant categorization of fringed policy and service provision, mainstreaming will allow a departure from unnecessary boundaries of belonging prescribed by a government's papereality derived from this paradigm.<sup>203</sup>

It is important to note that mainstreaming is a strategy that must be applied critically and thoughtfully. Mainstreaming is neither a panacea, nor a solution that fits all problems. It can cause the harm of erasing necessary awareness of real and diverse migrant-specific needs and issues within both public and policy discourses.<sup>204</sup> It can have the effect of abandoning migrant-specific programs and thus creating new policy cracks. Failing to consider migrant-specific needs can also put the burden of integration squarely back onto the shoulders of migrants.<sup>205</sup> Nevertheless, the advantages of mainstreaming remain worthwhile in the following analysis.

In the remaining sections of this chapter, I seek to demonstrate how mainstreaming offers a way forward for cases such as the RRS. While there are various ways to approach this, I have selected policy transfer, a process in which “knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political setting (past or present) is used in the

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<sup>203</sup> (Scholten, Collett, Petrovic, 2017)

<sup>204</sup> (*Ibid.*)

<sup>205</sup> (Galardini, Mulvey, & Lessard-Phillips, 2019)

development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political setting.”<sup>206</sup> I will begin with an explanation of why I choose a domestic (rather than international) policy transfer for the RRS.

## **6.2 Merits of Policy Transfer for a Way Forward: International versus Domestic**

Many of Korea’s policies, including those related to migrants, are constructed, and controlled by the federal government. As a result, one of the main criticisms of Korea’s migration and social integration policies is its highly conservative and nationalistic character due to strict government control. To break out of this pattern, we need to look to examples that demonstrate response strategies that successfully led to changes in policy in such a federal context in Korea.<sup>207</sup>

### **6.2.1 Merits of International Policy Transfer**

Many countries in the world today are dealing with issues of migration-induced diversity, expanding boundaries of belonging, and unjust discrimination. According to James Hollifield, effectively managing and integrating migrants is one of the greatest functions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century migrant state.<sup>208</sup> International policy transfer allows domestic policymakers to access and make use of the rich insight and know-how of countries that have battled with the concept of building an integrated society for a longer period of time.<sup>209</sup> Because of Korea’s short history of migrant

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<sup>206</sup> (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000, p. 5)

<sup>207</sup> (Choi, Kim, & Park, 2011)

<sup>208</sup> (Hollifield, 2004)

<sup>209</sup> (Cyr & deLeon, 1975; Rose, 1993)

policy, the tendency for Korean policy analysts and scholars has been to look to cases in more experienced countries.

Both traditional immigration countries, with strong foundations of migration and social integration in their national ethos, and historically non-immigration countries, that only recently accepted migration as a consequence of globalization and share similar nation-based characteristics with Korea, are useful resources for migrant integration policy transfer.<sup>210</sup> Many of both types of countries have had to deal with systemic contradictions within their social structure, as well as conflicts that followed migration-related changes. Consequently, their social discourses and policies are helpful in informing Korea's migrant policy direction. The New Haven's Elm City Resident Card system in the United States, for instance, would have served as an excellent international example for policy transfer.<sup>211</sup>

### **6.2.2 *Merits of Domestic Policy Transfer***

Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the fact that all policies are developed within their own specific sociopolitical and cultural contexts. The difference in the sociopolitical contexts of policies considerably limits those seeking solutions and applications to their own policy problems. Therefore, it is essential to contemplate policies in close proximity to the soil in which they were cultivated. For example, there are restrictions as to how the policies of a traditional immigrant country such as the United States could be transferred and applied in the ethnic-nation-based Korean context. This disjuncture was acknowledged by the Korean Ministry of

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<sup>210</sup> (Shin, 2010; Kim, 2009)

<sup>211</sup> (Redman, 2008; Immigration Bureau of Japan, 2012)

Gender Equality and Family, one of the leading government bureaus in social integration policy, who firmly stated that despite the large number of studies on the social integration policies of other countries, they have no intention of engaging in policy borrowing in this area. Therefore, the significantly distinct Korean context and circumstances will require the building of its own brand of integration policies.<sup>212</sup>

In this case, it is worth examining comparable resources and tools the Korean context that could offer an alternative source of insight and experience for emerging integration-related policies—in this case, expanding the boundaries of belonging of the RRS to include migrants in Korea. My intention in this chapter is to explore the possibility of using Korean gender equity policy to serve this aim. This is an approach that was supported by Dong-Hoon Seol, John Skrentny, and Catherine Lee in their article on the “comparison of migrant workers and women’s rights in South Korea.”<sup>213</sup> In their paper, they encouraged the comparison and transfer of various domestic rights policies in future research. They argue that this type of policy transfer enhances sensitivity to the powerful influences of domestic socio-political factors.

In the following section, I will argue that the evolution of Korea’s Family Registration System (FRS) is a valuable resource for policy transfer for the RRS. Lessons for policymakers seeking to expand the boundaries of belonging in the RRS for migrants can be found in the FRS’s history—a history that was made possible by gender mainstreaming.

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<sup>212</sup> (Chung, 2011)

<sup>213</sup> (Seoul, Skrentny, & Lee, 2002, p. 139)

### 6.3 The Case of the Family Registration System

The *Gajokgwangyedeungnokjedo* (가족관계등록제도; family relations registration system), also known as the Family Registration System (FRS), is the other of Korea's two national identification systems. Along with the RRS, the FRS monitors its citizens, and by extension, its non-citizens, through identification. However, unlike the RRS, which records the residential status of its citizens, the FRS collects its citizens' family status (according to the current legal definition of family).

The FRS is a relatively new system which came into force in 2008 after the abolishment of its predecessor, the *Hojeokjedo* (호적제도; family-head registration system), in 2005. In the following sections, I outline the change Korea's family registration system experienced as it transitioned from the *Hojeokjedo* to the FRS. After presenting the factors that facilitated the change, I will demonstrate how the case of the FRS' transition from the *Hojeokjedo* can serve as a precedent for policymakers seeking a way forward from the RRS's constricted boundaries of belonging.

#### 6.3.1 *Hojeokjedo – Before the Family Registration System*

The *Hojeokjedo* was put in place in 1909 while Korea was under Japanese rule and was also legislated into Korean family law in 1957 after liberation. Under this system, all individuals were assumed to be part of a family unit and were identified as either the *hoju* (호주; male family head) or a member of a family unit represented by a *hoju*.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> (Yang, 2006; Yang, 2013)

Within the *Hojeokjedo*, the *hoju* was considered the most crucial member of the family. All family members were defined by their legal relation to the *hoju*. As the legal representative of the family to the government, the *hoju* held authority over, and was responsible for, his family members with respect to facilitating administrative tasks (such as collecting information or taxes) and in determining the legal relations of family members (and often by extension, general family affairs). For instance, any registered information of non-head family members, such as marriage and births, as well as any information changes, were dictated by their *hoju*. This information would then be required when family members engaged in any administrative or legal tasks, such as receiving social benefits or entering school. The *hoju*'s approval and signature was also required for most paperwork submitted by a member, such as the application for a passport.<sup>215</sup> In this sense, the status of each family member was not only determined by their relationship with the *hoju* but was also secondary to that of the *hoju*.

The status of women was particularly vulnerable within the *Hojeokjedo*, as they were systemically inferior to the *hoju*. For instance, upon marriage, a woman was obligated to remove herself from her father's *hojeok* (호적; register) to that of her husband's, only reversing upon divorce. Any children born between a married couple were automatically registered under the husband's *hojeok*. In addition, if a married couple divorced, permission from the husband was required for the children to change their registration to that of their mother's new husband, even if the mother was awarded child custody. In fact, an infant boy could be named as *hoju* and thus given more authority than his mother or grandmother.<sup>216</sup> As such, it is to no surprise that in 1999,

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<sup>215</sup> (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2007; Yang, 2013, p. 57)

<sup>216</sup> (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2007; United Nations, 2005; Korea Assembly, 2005; Korea Women's Associations United [KWAU], 2005a; KWAU, 2005b)

the United Nations Human Rights Commission recommended the abolishment of the *Hojeokjedo*, stating that

the family headship system reflects and at the same time strengthens a patriarchal society in which women are [relegated] to playing a subjugated role to men. It is feared that the system leads to the discernment of fetus gender, unbalanced ratio of sons among children born as second and third children, and high mortality rates for women caused by dangerous abortions.<sup>217</sup>

### **6.3.2 The Tumultuous Transition Towards the Family Registration System**

Advocates of the *Hojeokjedo* insisted that the system was crucial to the maintenance of family order, tradition, and, by extension, societal order in Korea. The political climate of was also largely favorable to the preservation of the system's patriarchal ideology as it helped maintain the status quo and promote state-guided industrialization.<sup>218</sup> However, the introduction of individualistic thought and the development of the feminist movement began to challenge these claims in the 1960s. Although the system's disregard for human rights and women's rights was brought into the spotlight during this time, subsequent requests to repeal the *Hojeokjedo* were denied. It would take several additional decades, increased interest in, and support for, the feminist movement and anti-*Hojeokjedo* sentiment among both elite and ordinary citizens, international pressures, and other factors to finally abolish the *Hojeokjedo*.<sup>219</sup>

Throughout the 1960s to the 1990s, while the feminist movement's determination in Korea was successful in generating various legal reforms in the country's family law, it continued to face difficulty in revising laws of status such as the *Hojeokjedo*. As noted by Yang,

overall, gender equality was proceeded in the area of property [such as the] elimination of gender discrimination against women in the legal portion of the succession of the property . . . Whereas the skeleton of the laws of status, that is, family-head system and boundary of exogamy of same

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<sup>217</sup> (Lee, 2001)

<sup>218</sup> (*Ibid.*)

<sup>219</sup> (Kim & Lee, 2009; Nam, 2010; Yang, 2008)

surname/ancestral seat, have remained. *This predication of the law represented as the result of negotiation between reformists and Confucians, state and civil society, and even different generations of feminists [sic]. [emphasis added]*<sup>220</sup>

The traditionalists, namely the Confucians (유림; 儒林; *Yulim*), strongly resisted the advocated changes to Korea's family law, and particularly the eradication of the *Hojeokjedo*. Despite their appeal to tradition, the Confucians rarely backed their claims with concrete historical facts, nor with a valid argument as to the relevance of traditions to current family law. Nevertheless, their position remained strengthened by the default position of existing policies and laws which reflected their patriarchal ideology, the propensity of the state and its officials to discount that the argument of gender inequality warranted legal changes, and the silence of ordinary women to the feminist efforts of their elite peers.<sup>221</sup>

However, the reformists who sought to eradicate the *Hojeokjedo* saw an opportunity to turn the tide in the 1990s. The increased access to, and usage of, the internet allowed ordinary women to raise awareness about the day-to-day failures and discriminatory character of the *Hojeokjedo*. Change in political leadership and international pressures (such as the UN Convention—CEDAW) also increased government sympathy for gender equality and the abolition of the *Hojeokjedo*. Finally, on March 2, 2005, the *Hojeokjedo* was declared unconstitutional for violating the rights of gender equality and human dignity by the Constitutional Court in Korea.

The current law governing the family registration system is the FRS, which was enacted in 2007 and came into force January 1, 2008. According to the Supreme Court, “the spirit of the

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<sup>220</sup> (Yang, 2008, p. 84)

<sup>221</sup> (Yang, 2008; Kim & Lee, 2009)

new law [sought] to materialize the constitutional philosophies of individual dignity and gender equality.”<sup>222</sup> To implement this policy, everyone, regardless of gender and family status, was granted their own register. Under this new law, information regarding the person’s birth, death, marriage, adoption, and basic information of parents, spouse, and children were recorded into individual registers and into no others.<sup>223</sup>

The FRS is considered a monumental victory for gender equality in Korea. It was a legal dismantling of the prevailing ideology that women needed to be under the guardianship of men. The boundaries of belonging that once excluded and marginalized women within the family were widened through the FRS. It also demonstrated Korea’s commitment to gender equality. As Hyunah Yang stated, the *Hojukjedo* and its demise in Korea “reminds us of how the law can be a miniature of the socio-historical landscape, and thus how legal change can be a cornerstone of a new society.”<sup>224</sup>

### **6.3.3 Lesson-Drawing from the FRS to the RRS**

I argue that the FRS’ transition from the *Hojukjedo* serves as a useful paradigm for policymakers seeking ways to expand migrant boundaries of belonging within the RRS. Six points arise that demonstrate this proposition.

First, as mentioned earlier, the *Hojukjedo* and the RRS are national identification systems that ascribed categories to individuals, establishing boundaries of belonging, for the purpose of monitoring and providing administrative services to the country’s population.

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<sup>222</sup> (Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center, 2008, para, 3; Court of Korea, 2007)

<sup>223</sup> (The Law Office of Jeremy D. Morley, 2018)

<sup>224</sup> (Yang, 2013, p. 59)

Second, the construction of these boundaries was significantly influenced by antiquated and deeply rooted ideologies, such as patriarchy and pure-blood ideology.<sup>225</sup> As a result, these boundaries intentionally and unintentionally advantaged historically privileged groups over others. In short, the *Hojukjedo* and the RRS not only share similarities in their origin stories, but also in that they were the state’s vehicle for ideologies that persisted to diminish marginalized groups.

Third, domestic and international attitudes toward ideologies such as patriarchy and pure-blood ideology have significantly changed since the enactments of the *Hojukjedo* and the RRS. Korea’s subscription to economic globalization and membership in the greater global community was particularly groundbreaking, as Korea became accountable to internationally affirmed values that differed from domestically dominant values. Just as any changes to a garden’s soil requires adaptation (or else death) of its dependent flora, globalization was a soil-changer to Korea—politically, economically, socially, and culturally. In terms of policy, globalization exposed Korea to the international discourse on gender equity and migrant integration, and thus had the effect of bringing, or forcing, Korean policies up to global standards.<sup>226</sup> In fact, international pressure was attributed as one of the major factors that brought about the abolishment of the *Hojukjedo*.<sup>227</sup> International pressures had already contributed to changes in the Korean government’s attitude towards migrant integration as well.

However, it is important to note that there are limits to the effect of such pressures, as “preexisting contexts of policy decisions and the social legacies of each national government”

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<sup>225</sup> (Kim, 2011; Shin, 2006)

<sup>226</sup> (Kim, 2000; Kim, 2006; Ri, 2008)

<sup>227</sup> (Kim, 2000)

can overrule international human rights regimes.<sup>228</sup> Thus, domestic pressures for change were just as crucial. Increased education and awareness of universal human rights are also considered to be factors that helped change domestic attitudes on gender equality and migrant integration.

Fourth, the *Hojukjedo*-FRS case demonstrates that policymakers seeking to challenge the boundaries of the RRS will need the partnership of all key stakeholders. In the case of the *Hojukjedo*-FRS, stakeholders came from inside and outside the government, and included both elite and ordinary women, academics, educators, lawmakers, community leaders, among many others. These stakeholders not only legally challenged the *Hojukjedo*, but they also greatly advanced the existing literature on and literacy of gender equality. As a result, despite active opposition by traditionalists and an initial lack of support from the state and ordinary citizens, the *Hojukjedo* was demolished.

Fifth, the *Hojukjedo*-FRS case confirms the possibility of expanding, and indeed even the need to expand, boundaries of belonging that are based on problematic ideology and embedded in policy. Like the imaginary boundaries inscribed between migrants and citizens, the imaginary boundaries of gender are “fertile terrain for the study of boundary crossing and boundary shifting as well as the institutionalization and diffusion of boundaries,”<sup>229</sup> due to their long history of contestation. Those who study boundaries in gender are richly experienced in dealing with concepts of belonging, symbolic boundaries, classification systems, and papereality, and I drew the *Hojukjedo*-FRS case from this literature. These discourses demonstrate that it is crucial to accept the fluidity of real-world contexts, and thus crucial to maintain the courage to challenge

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<sup>228</sup> (Hwang, 2016, p. 719)

<sup>229</sup> (Lamont, & Molnár, 2002, p. 177)

existing paperealities and boundaries of belonging. With the abolishment of the *Hojukjedo*, boundaries that once dictated the status and capabilities of men and women in Korea were challenged and symbolically overturned. Modifying the RRS may have a similar effect on the status and capabilities of migrants and non-migrants in Korea.

Sixth, status identification based on gender was eliminated in the FRS. This is largely because this practice was judged to be antithetical to gender equality and individual dignity. In this way, Korea was able to make a policy that represented the government's more contemporary stance on gender equality. Mainstreaming migrant integration in the RRS may have a similar effect. Local suffrage, for instance, was offered with little political and social resistance to permanent foreign residents as a way to symbolically acknowledge their participation and belonging in Korea.<sup>230</sup> Once foreign residents are entitled to the same public rights and benefits that a citizen receives, there may be no more need for the practice of dividing resident identification between the migrant residents and citizen residents. Moreover, the unification of resident identification may have the effect of validating the migrant's rights to equality, dignity, and belonging in Korea. This in turn may contribute positively to Korea's facilitation of migrant integration.

Mainstreaming, as opposed to fringing, takes on two slightly different meanings in these two contexts. With respect to the *Hojukjedo*, mainstreaming meant reifying equality of gender in opposition to a universal policy that repressed women. On the other hand, with respect to the RRS, mainstreaming indicates creating policy which spans all groups of residents in opposition to current policy which is bifurcated into special legislation and practices assigned differentially

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<sup>230</sup> (Brubaker, 2010)

to different groups, that is, migrants versus older Koreans. In both these cases, mainstreaming indicates a promotion of recognition of belonging as enshrined in policy—the *Hojukjedo* subordinated women with a universal policy whereas the RRS subordinates migrants under special legislation. The same issues of subordination and paperealities, with their social effects, exist in both senses of mainstreaming. This allowed a productive policy transfer between them to become evident. The six demonstrations above substantiate the utility of this policy transfer for mainstreaming migrant integration policy within the RRS in Korea.

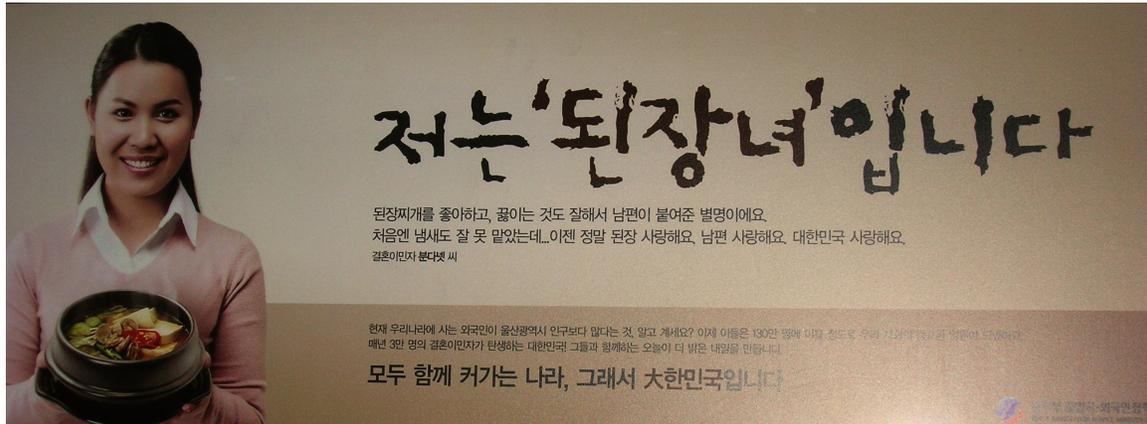
#### **6.4 Conclusion**

In Chapter 5, I argued that the current structure of the RRS, despite its malleability, encourages the maintenance of the status quo and discourages the negotiation of established boundaries of belonging. This chapter presented a potential way forward for the RRS, and particularly how the policy could take on the role of challenging the status quo and existing boundaries of belonging in Korea. Specifically, I argued that the concept of mainstreaming could help the RRS negotiate a place of belonging. The family registration system (FRS) and its transition from the *Hojukjedo*—a registration system that once excluded women from mainstream policy—is a domestic paradigm for policymakers seeking a way to expand boundaries of belonging within the RRS for migrant residents in Korea—another registration system that excludes people from mainstream policy.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

Figure 4

"I am a Doenjang [Soybean Paste] Woman" Advertisement  
(photograph of advertisement taken by author at a subway station in Korea, summer of 2011).



*Note.* The photo above reads: “My husband gave me this nickname because of how much I adore doenjang stew and make it well. At first, I couldn’t even stand the smell of it. . . —but now I love doenjang. I love my husband. I love the Republic of Korea . . . A country where everyone can all grow together, that is why it is the Republic of the Great Han nation [author’s own translation].”

I took a picture of the Ministry of Justice-Korea Immigration Service’s subway advertisement in the summer of 2011 (Figure 5). The paradox of this advertisement that compelled me to release the shutter was that it juxtaposed a blatantly assimilatory message, gaining identity through accepting the tastes of the dominant Korean Han ethnic group’s cuisine, with the statement “a country where *everyone* can all grow together [emphasis added].” This is a paradox that is also found in the gulf between mainstream policies and migrant-integration-specific policies in Korea. For instance, permanent foreign residents who are given local suffrage rights for symbolic inclusion were, until recently, literally labeled as aliens within the RRS. Mainstream policies that intentionally or unintentionally discriminate migrants from the native population, such as the resident registration system in Korea, have contributed to the continued

othering of the country's immigrant residents, despite the Korean government's dynamic efforts to integrate migrants into its society.

I argue that if Korea seeks to achieve successful migrant integration, which was defined in Chapter 2 as “the process of linking migrants and the receiving society by means of their particular awareness to a united societal whole, in which both similarities and unity, and differences and conflict, are of importance,”<sup>231</sup> it will be required to challenge and expand the socio-cultural and political boundaries of belonging.

According to Scholten & van Breugel, “the policy designs ‘structure opportunities and send varying messages to differently constructed target groups about how government behaves and how they are likely to be treated by government. . . .’ (Ingram et al. 2007: 98).”<sup>232</sup> This has certainly been the case with gender equality and the case of the *Hojukjedo*-FRS transition, and I have argued that this is also the case for the RRS. If South Korea truly seeks to facilitate migrant integration as well as eliminate the second-class treatment and othering of its migrant residents, it must be willing to re-evaluate its existing policies and ask: what messages do existing policies send to migrant residents, and what do they say about the government and how migrants are treated by the government. Asking such questions and challenging existing policies' maintenance of static boundaries of belonging and outdated paperealities will be crucial steps toward addressing the migrant integration gap in Korea.

The current policy practice of fringing as a way of addressing migrant issues and integration has had significant ramifications for the migrant life of friends, for family members,

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<sup>231</sup> Chapter 2, p. 5

<sup>232</sup> (Scholten & van Breugel, 2017, p. 8)

and for myself. This thesis has been a part of a journey I have taken to understand the rationale and limitations of such policies.

I have also sought to spotlight those who are crudely pushed into the cracks between policy and reality. Throughout the entire writing process, I remembered and reflected often on Moktan Minod, or Minu-shi [미누씨] as I called him. In 2008, Minu-shi warmly welcomed me in fluent Korean to the Migrant Workers TV (MWTV), a non-profit organization that advocates for the rights of migrant workers in Korea through media and education. Later, when I had an opportunity to ask him about his migrant background, he answered, “I’m from Nepal, though really, I am also from Korea.” “What do you mean?” “Well, I’ve been here for over 16 years. Since 1992.”

Minu-shi was a migrant rights advocate, the lead singer of migrant band Stop Crackdown, a teacher of anti-discrimination and anti-xenophobia, and a beloved friend to many in Korea. He was an undocumented migrant worker who refused to be silent and worked tirelessly because he loved Korea and knew Korea could be better. He was suddenly and forcefully deported from Korea on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009. He was never allowed to return, and he passed away in Nepal on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

As I was completing the last edits for this thesis, I received word that Maung Aung Tinhtun, or Tinhtun [틴툰] as I called him, another colleague from MWTV and long-time friend, had passed away. Tinhtun arrived in Korea from Myanmar in 1994 as an industrial trainee and worked as a migrant worker for many years. After making ties with migrant rights activists, he jumped into the world of human rights and migrant advocacy in Korea. He later helped organized the Burma Action Korea project, through which he criticized human rights abuses by Myanmar’s government and military.

Tinhtun was often teased for being too chatty, loved for his warmth, and respected for his genuine passion and diligence. He traveled to Myanmar in 2019 to “give back” to his homeland and was unable to return to Korea due to passport issues the following year when the COVID-19 pandemic began. He passed away suddenly on August 20, 2021, presumably from COVID-19.

Minu-shi and Tinhtun were both effected by the exclusionary boundaries of belonging embedded in Korean policy. I dedicate this exploration of migrant belonging to you, Minu-shi and Tinhtun.

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