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Yoon Young Kim [α] & Shi-Eun Yu [σ]

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I. Introduction

North Korea has faced extreme economic decline and acute famine since the 1990s, following the collapse of their East European socialist ally countries, and natural disasters. It eventually provoked the mass exodus of North Korean border crossers leaving for China to escape death from starvation. On the other hand, North Korea had officially allowed some citizens to visit China to see their relatives since the 1980s, but in 2009 North Korea refused all permission to visit China except for public affairs, because some of those who left with official permission did not return even after they were long overdue. Furthermore, the economic deterioration and subsequent collapse of social systems have been getting worse after the currency reform of 2009, and this led to widespread corruption. Finally, the State Security Agency of North Korea permitted North Koreans to visit China after paying 250 to 300 U.S. dollars.[1]

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The number of North Korean visitors to China began to increase rapidly from 2010. According to statistic data from the national tourism policy organization of China for 2011, a total of 152,300 North Koreans visited China. In terms of the purpose of their visit, 40% of them were for employment, 31% on business and the rest for sightseeing or visiting relatives, and so on. 34% of these visitors were from 45 to 64 years old and 30% between 25 to 44 years. Among them, the number of males was six times more than females.[2] Additionally, the number of North Korean visitors to China in 2012 reached 180,600, which shows a rapid increase of 20% compared with the number in 2011. 44% of these visited for employment and 31% for business, 2.5% for sightseeing and 0.1% for seeing relatives.[3] In the first half of 2014, the number of visitors decreased by 7% compared with the previous year .[4]

The influx of North Korean workers to China provides considerable advantages to both North Korea and China. It has become the primary means of earning foreign exchange from North Korea's point of view, and that of solving the shortage of labor due to the inflation in wages from China's point of view.[4] In particular, the shortage of skilled labor in Northeast China and then the official request of the Chinese government to North Korea have aggravated an even more rapid increase of North Korean immigrant workers in China.

This paper[1)] focuses on North Korean female migrant workers staying in China with official permission from North Korea. This research examines what experiences North Korean female workers have in China, and how these experiences dimensionally influence the individual, the North Korean people, and North Korea. It ultimately shed light on ways to reduce the cultural gap between North and South Korea and to achieve national unification in the future through the strategic acts of the North Korean migrant workers who straddle both China and North Korea, leading to dimensional changes among the people and society within North Korea.

II. Literature Review

Migrants are those who have left their home country, whether they did it on their own or something or someone made them do it. However, they continually

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endeavor to connect to their home country and have interaction with their families and friends, even though they may have already settled down and hadthe routine of their daily lives in the new and unfamiliar circumstances. Thus, these immigrants give and take diverse and dynamic influences through multiple linkages between the home and their host countries.[5]

Previous literature has focused on the characteristics of and the effects on female migrants.[6-10] These studies analyzed how female migrants suffer discrimination on account of power equations in social and cultural contexts from gender perspectives, and especially their limitations in getting jobs in the labor market. Huang[9] and Fan's[10] studies demonstrated the constraints in the occupational attainment of female migrants in China, who experience several changes on account of the transition of a market economy. Female migrants in China are in the low-paid, low-prestige and gender-segregated jobs such as care givers, babysitters, and cleaners, which do not need high educational qualifications. This reason can be traced to two social and institutional contexts entrenched in China; first is the patriarchal culture that considers women as inferior to and less educated than men, and the second is the household system (hukou), which records the place of birth, entitles people at hukou location to employment opportunities and welfare, and consequently hinders people from moving upward, considering the distinction between rural and urban job recruitment. Itfinally has created the segregation of rural and urban labor, insider and outsider and male and female. In this context, female migrant workers have been positioned at the marginalized areas in the labor market due to their rural identity, outsider status, and female sex. North Korean female migrant workers dealt with in this paper also can be understood in this social and cultural background in China. Kim[11] pointed out that "a number of Korean–Chinese women, have migrated either to cities in China or South Korea since the mid-1990s, which has produced rapid demand for women in marriage and care industries, and North Korean women are very much needed to fill in the positions left by migrating Korean–Chinese women."

In most previous studies, North Korean women in China have received limited attention only as the people crossing the border illegally due to starvation in North Korea. Then those lives have been analyzed only from the viewpoint of human rights issues based on their terrible and traumatic experiences in China, such as the threat of deportation and human trafficking.[12] However, it is necessary to consider the issue of the legality of North Korean border crossers and their lives in China, even though North Korean government limits the mobility of North Koreans. According to Kim's study[11], there are three ways to visit China legally. The first is by getting permits (pangmun jung in Korean) from the North Korean government to "visit China for up to 90 days to see relatives legally in China." Second is the visa from China that they apply for through the North Korean government, and the last is a travel pass (Tonghangjung in Korean) for residents of the borderland only, with which they can stay out of borderland for up to 90 days.

Importantly, Kim's study demonstrated that the issue of legality of North Korean border crossers can be blurred, considering that North Korean females in China can be understood not only as illegal North Korean defectors but also as border crossers, who hold a legal permission from the government in the beginning and then "extended their stays in China with the absence of legal status".[11] Also, she noted that North Korean female border crossers in China "gain agency rather than passively remaining in a subordinate gendered position"[11] through diverse experiences involving marriage, family, and migration in a gender perspective. According to Kim's point of view, this paper attempts to delineate North Korean female border crossers as the strategic agents who construct their lives actively by themselves, transcending the legality or illegality of their status.

The case of North Korean females in China can be different from other cases of trans-migrants, but as regards the changes in their behaviors and awareness, it has a pattern similar to those who have immigrated into a market economic society from a communist or socialist country.[13-16] In particular, according to Hatziprokopiou's study on the immigrants from Albania, one of the Russian satellite countries, Albanian immigrants watching TV in Italy had a yearning for other countries before their emigration.[17] Their economic activities in the job market have usually caused the changes in behavior and awareness among Albanian immigrants. This case is similar to that of the North Korean female workers in China delineated in this paper. They changed their behaviors and awareness through watching TV and involving themselves in economic activities in China. The mass media, in particular, can play a significant role in bringing about the changes among North Korean people as well as in North Korea.

To analyze the changes in North Korean female workers who had been familiar with a communist economic system and experienced a new market system in China, we can find other such cases in previous studies. First of all, we can pay attention to the transition of the East German people after unification. East German people living in West Germany after unification felt betrayed by East Germany, one of the Soviet satellite countries in the past. Also, they felt disappointed and had doubts about the political ideology that they had believed in for such a long time.[18] On the contrary, they began to have a strong desire for social and economic success, anticipating a future full of hope and diversity, and experiencing the freedom of

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religion. Their sense of community was reduced, but that of individualism developed.[19]

Secondly, we need to understand the lives of North Korean immigrants living in South Korea. Thanks to the powerful anti-capitalism indoctrination prevalent in North Korea, North Korean immigrants had considered South Korea as a colony of U.S. imperialism, one of the countries where the brutal capitalists exploited poor workers and made their personal lives miserable. However, their awareness has been changed after settling down in South Korea for over three years since they immigrated into South Korea.[20] After settling down in South Korea, female immigrants became the influential agents in the family and society to express their opinion actively through their economic activities and the influences of South Korean culture.[21]As they began to harbor dreams of enjoying the freedom to make their lives successful, their negative view of the capitalist society in South Korea changed to a positive one.[22] According to Cho Jeong-ah's study[23], adapting into South Korea, they realized that South Korea is a country where workers can receive income depending on individual abilities and skill, the amount of labor and the principle of competition, rather than a place where capitalists exploit workers.

Most previous researchers above have focused on only North Korean border crossers considered as defectors and asylum seekers. These previous studies, therefore, had several limitations. These include the limitations in analyzing the current lives of people and current changes happening in North Korea. It has brought about lots of change in North Korea internally, following the emergence and development of North Korea's black markets after the death of Kim Il-sung in 1995 and the succession to power of Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un. Externally, the influx of materials, capitals, and information from China or the rest of the world also caused changes among the North Korean people and North Korea. These current changes happening in North Korea can be analyzed easily through people living within North Korea or those who are legally traveling back and forth between North Korea and China, rather than the illegal North Korean border crossers who stay in China or other countries for a long time and cannot go back home.

The other limitation is of analyzing North Korean female migrant workers in China, who have reconstructed their lives by themselves as active agents. Most of the previous researches focusing on North Korean female border-crossers in China have described only their miserable life, such as sexual abuse or trafficking and human rights, which cause psychological disorders. It is rare to see them delineated as subjective agents who construct their own lives actively as North Korean female workers, who are visiting China for earning money with official permission. This study attempts to fill these gaps in North Korean migration studies in the academic field.

Therefore, this study has several points of difference with the previous studies. First of all, the research objects are North Koreans who have not abandoned their citizenship and are living legally in China as workers with economic activities. Secondly, as migrant workers in China, they can influence the personal lives of North Koreans as well as North Korean society as a result of their ability to cross the border between North Korea and China freely. Ultimately, we examine how the economic activities of North Korean female workers in China can bring about change in personal views, awareness, and lives in North Korean society.

III. Research Method

This research analyzes data of North Korean female migrant workers in China through structured and semi-structured interviews in qualitative methods. Narrative analysis is an effective way to understand how an individual interprets his/her experiences and lives. Narrative analysis must consider not only what the narrator says, but also in what context, to whom and with what gestures, and the attitudes they represent, to interpret their experiences and lives. [24-25] This research can understand the viewpoints, the way of thinking and interpretation of North Korean female migrant workers through the analysis of narrative data.

To collect interview data, the researchers visited the border area of North Korea in China twice, from February 27 to March 2 and from July 3 to July 18 in 2013. Especially during the first visit implemented as the pilot study, the researchers could find means of contacting the interviewees, North Korean female migrant workers, through the assistance of international NGOs' staffs, who as overseas Koreans have played a role in educating the migrants about the market economy system of China.

Six female North Korean migrant workers in China and five NGO staffs participated in structured or semi-structured interviews from three to five times per person, with permission to make voice recordings. The length of structured interviews was from one to one and a half hours and implemented at a comfortable and quiet place. The contents of the questionnaire for the interviews were as follows, table 1.

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Table 1: The interview contents

Interviewees	Contents
Female North Korean migrant workers	1. Experience of Market economy in North Korea 2. The reason and process of the visit to China 3. Individual life and experience in China 4. Experience of Market economy in China 5. Personal Change before and after the experience of the market economy and education on the market economy in China 6. Change of perception on North Korea, South Korea and overseas after staying in China
NGO staffs	1. Activities for female North Korean migrant workers 2. The reasons for female North Korean migrant workers' visits to China 3. The process of female North Korean migrant workers' visits to China 4. The life and economic activities of female North Korean migrant workers 5. The experiences and changes in female North Korean migrant workers in China 6. The life of female North Korean migrant workers after going back to North Korea

All interviewees understood the purpose and contents of the research and permitted voice recording under a confidentiality agreement executed before participating in this research. Not only interview data, I analyzed the notes on the process of education, discussions, and meetings, and the journals for research data.

I divided interviewees into two groups; one is North Korean female migrant workers and the other NGO staffs. North Korean female migrant workers live in China with a visa issued for the purpose of working or visiting relatives. They all were staying in China for over six months and currently plan to go back to North Korea. Five of them, in particular, have taken education on the market economy and small businesses from overseas Koreans living in North-East China. Overseas Koreans living in North-East China have continually maintained a relationship with North Koreans including their relatives or friends for a long time, and almost ten years ago under the aegis of an international NGO, they voluntarily began to instruct North Korean immigrant workers about engaging with the market economic system in China.[2)] This NGO's education effort has been maintained with the acknowledgment of both China and North Korea currently, and this NGO has recruited the research objects.

All interviewees want to work on small business in North Korea in the future. As regards their age, one of them is in the thirties, two each are in the forties and fifties, and one is in the sixties. Four are from North Hamgyeong Province, and the rest are from Pyongyang and Yanggang-do in North Korea. In terms of the previous job in North Korea, four have been sellers, and one a doctor and the other a researcher. The average length of stay in China is 3.83 years, and long term stayers are extending their visas once a year. Two of them are staying with expired visas. Three of them are caregivers, and the rest are babysitters. Their average income is 2,333 yuan (about 410,000 KRW). I show below the information of the interviewees as follows table 2.

Table 2: Social background of female North Korean migrant interviewees

Case	Age	North Korea			China				
		Area	Edu-Cation	Job	Date of Immigration	Length of Stay	Issue Date of Visa	Job	Income (Yuan)
F1	50s	Hamgyeo-ngbuk-do	Univ.	researcher	2011.9	3 years	2012.8	babysitter	2,000
F2	40s	Pyongyang	Univ.	doctor	2012.11	1 year	2015.4.	caregiver	3,000
F3	60s	Hamgyeo-ngbuk-do	Univ.	business	2006.6	7 years	expired	caregiver	2,000
F4	50s	Yanggang-do	Univ.	business	2013.6	6 months	2014.1.	caregiver	2,000

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F5	30s	Hamgyeo-ngbuk-do	Univ.	business	2012.4	1 year	2013.4.	babysitter	2,000
F6	40s	Hamgyeo-ngbuk-do	High school	business	2008.10	5 years	expired	babysitter/ cleaner	3,000

Table 3: Social background of NGO staffs or volunteer interviewees

Care	Gender	Age	Nationality	Religion	Length of Activities	Length of Stay
V1	M	50s	overseas Korean	Christian	2 years	4 months
V2	F	50s	Chinese	none	3 years	living in China
V3	M	60s	Chinese	none	3 years	living in China
V4	F	50s	overseas Korean	Christian	2 years	4 months
V5	F	40s	overseas Korean	Christian	2 years	4 months

Three of the NGO staffs or volunteers participating in this research are overseas Koreans, and two are Korean Chinese. Two of them are males, and the rest are females. In terms of age, one is in the forties; three are in their fifties and one in the sixties. Three of them are Christians, and the rest do not have any religion. They visited the border area between China and North Korea and educated female North Korean migrant workers about the market economy system of China. Their average tenure in these activities is two and a half years.

IV. Results

a) Economic activities and lives of North Korean female migrant workers

The North Korean female migrant workers stay in North-East China, the area along the border between China and North Korea. They are actively involved in economic activities. They immigrated into China officially with a visiting visa from their home country, North Korea, and their purpose of immigration is only to earn money. Most of them work as babysitters, cleaners, caregivers, and waitresses in restaurants and so on. They remit most of their income to their families living in their homes in North Korea.

> You can find the job such as a babysitter if you go and ask the jobs in an employment agency. These days Korean Chinese no longer work these kinds of jobs. In the past, North Koreans could not get these kinds of jobs legally. But now, it is ok. (V3)

As mentioned in Kim's study[11], the positions vacated by Korean-Chinese women, who left for South Korea or other countries importing cheap labor, have been filled by North Korean women. Most of them have experience of visiting China several times. During the first visit, they received help from their Korean-Chinese relatives for getting a job, but from the second visit onwards they began to find employment by themselves and had independent economic activities.

> Before, I did not think about working even though I came here with a visa. I thought about getting help from my relatives, Korean-Chinese. But I work now and make money with visa by myself without getting the help from them.(V2)

The longer their economic activities can be continued, the more their stay becomes illegal. There are several reasons for their stay becoming longer, even though the permitted length of stays has expired. The first reason is that their families in North Korea still expect money and materials and they continue to have the responsibility of supporting their families financially.

> My mother was sick. I have to send many pills and medicines. I have to buy watches for my brother and sister - also …shoes for my brother. I have to take care of my mother in law…I do not have money for me because I have to take care of my families (F6).

The second reason is that they foresee that the economic situation of North Korea is no longer improving. They know that it would be difficult for them to get jobs in North Korea or to have any guarantee that their economic situation in North Korea would ever get better.

> I came here before currency reform. I do not know what situation in North Korea is after currency reform now. I heard that it is not getting better. I think I have to go back to North Korea after making lots of money. But…leaving here is like leaving behind gold. (F6)

The interviewee, F6 expressed that returning to North Korea is like leaving behind gold. That means China is considered a place in which capital and

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materials exist in plenty, and where they can acquire as much of these as they can. Thus, they do not want to go back home, leaving behind this material richness.

Lastly, the life experiences obtained from their long stay makes it impossible for them to return to North Korea. As the tenure of their stay gets longer, they become illegal immigrants. Then they begin to get psychological stress. They live in China with the feeling of anxiety and fear of the penalties they might get in North Korea. Finally, according to interviewees, some of them have physical health problems, and this leads to limitations in accumulating money. Others experience the risk of family dissolution. The husband in North Korea has other women and is finally separated or divorced. This family dissolution renders it no longer necessary for them to go back to North Korea.

b) Learning from economic activities and education in China

Most North Korean female migrant workers, except F6, have participated in an education program at an NGO, organized by the group of overseas Koreans in China. This program was implemented as a means of self-learning to help them understand the market economic system, through which they shared, discussed and reflected on their own experiences of economic activities in China. In this process, they began to learn something new about the market system and this learning gave new impetus to personal change as well as social change in North Korea.

i. *From political slogans to diverse advertisements*

First of all, North Korean female migrant workers face commodity advertising slogans and learn their significance in the market economic system of China. North Koreans are unfamiliar with many kinds of commodity advertisements. The only slogans that they have seen in North Korea were about political propaganda. They began to learn how to read diverse advertisements on commodities or employment and to utilize that information for their survival in China. They realized that they could be independent agents in choosing from among the information, considering its usefulness and advantages for their lives.

> Wherever you go, you can see political slogans in North Korea. (Slogans are on) the worship of the leader and the North's 'military first' policy (*Sŏn'gun*) and (There are) So many political slogans in North Korea. Here (China) are also lots of slogans. But those are different from what I have seen (in North Korea). Those are commodity advertisements. Anywhere …here you can see lots of commodity advertisements. Some of them are about boasting company or employment because here is the market economy system (V2)
>
> As soon as I settled down again, I turned on the radio or TV and heard advertisements because I already knew that China's economy was developed by advertisements. I already knew the Chinese language and advertisements. (F1)
>
> I noticed the advertisements in Arirang broadcasting. …Many North Korean people who planned to visit and stay at China with visa, had come to me and asked how to get a job and make money in China because I already had had the experience of staying in China. Then I said, "Listen to the radio and get advertisements. You can get the information on what you want to do." I said, "Do you have a small radio? Don't worry. Turn on the radio, and you can listen to the advertisement." I instructed them (F1).

Job advertisements are the most preferred and helpful among them for getting jobs in China. At the time of their first visit to China, they needed to obtain assistance from their Korean Chinese relatives for getting a job, but from the second visit, they no longer needed any help because they knew how to get jobs through the advertisements.

Interestingly, the way of utilizing job advertisements and the significance of information was delivered and instructed to North Koreans, who have plans of leaving for China without any experience of living there. This instruction could be powerful and effective in changing the awareness of North Koreans and North Korean society. I will explain later how their learning from China can influence change among North Korean people and North Korea.

ii. *Value of labor and employment: wage negotiation*

Staying in China, they have learned the fact that their labor in itself can be an important means of obtaining and maximizing wealth in the employment system. Before staying in China, they sold their goods in the black market, and they thought that they could transform only goods into money, as in North Korea. However, in China, they encountered the employment system and realized that they could make money through their labor, not only by disposing of goods.

> I made money by selling something goods in the black market in North Korea. There is no employment in North Korea. I had no idea about 'employment.' There is no place to sell my labor in North Korea. It is the difference between China and North Korea. Here (China) is I can make money if I have the energy and power to work. But I can't …in North Korea. I learn this is one of the characters of the market economy system. (F1)
>
> I can have income as much as I work here (China). If I am diligent and work hard, I can make more money with my labor (in China). Of course, there is the wage in North Korea as well. But the income was worth little. It is hard to live with this income. But

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here, the value of income and wage is reasonable to live my own life. (V3)

They began to develop a relationship with their employers in China and to sell their labor actively. In the end, they attempted wage negotiation with employers, and it was the first trial that they had never experienced at all after their past in North Korea.

I crossed the border in 2008, and I requested 1,000 or 1,200 won (Chinese) for the wage per month. I confidently asked for a raise because I noticed that Chinese workers received 1,200 won for income. I have an official visa and passport. I am a North Korean immigrant worker, not a North Korean illegal defector. So I said, "Why do you discriminate me against Chinese workers? Please increase wages. If not, I will quit". Then the employer increased wages. So I received 1,200 won two months later since I had said. It is the kind of struggle. (F5)

F5 attempted to make a complaint about the lower wages she was receiving compared to the Chinese coworkers and to negotiate the wages with her employer. As for them, they can negotiate confidently for wages because their status is legal as economic immigrant workers with an official visa, unlike North Korean defectors. Through these experiences, they became familiar with the value of labor and the employment system.

iii. *Credit, trust, and contract: making the horizontal relationship in the society*

North Korean female immigrant workers experienced 'contract,' the legal agreement between employer and employee involving the common issues of work. The act of contracting can be called as a social, official and maybe ritual of making a relationship with others in an equal position. From this experience, they learned to arrive at agreements based on personal engagement, duty and right in the process of compromising and negotiating with others. Also, they realized that any personal commitment in the contract should be honored. This act of making horizontal relationships was one of the unfamiliar experiences for them.

They (North Koreans) can make the relationship with friends or neighbors, but they do not know how to make a social and official relationship with others. That means they are not good for unity. They do not know. Why? Without law or social rule, the act of contract is impossible. North Korea,this society has no law or social rule for the contract. There is only law for making the hierarchical relationship with the great leaders, Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un. There is only the law in this vertical relationship. Even personal relationship is also made by the great leaders. They swear by great leader that they will keep the promise or implement this commitment even though it is constructed between two individuals. (V1)

According to the script above, in North Korean society there is hardly place for acts evidencing the agreements of duty and commitment among people in horizontal relations. The rule, norm, and discipline exists and is preserved only for the legitimization and maintenance of the political ideology, the leader's power and the hierarchical relation between the great leader and the people. Thus, for them, this act of contract between an employer and themselves becomes a very unfamiliar experience. Then they learn the significance of 'trust' and 'credit' as the elements for making relations with others by undergoing trial and error in China.

Before staying in China, I thought that the capitalistic market did work with only money. But I realized that I was wrong. Trust and credit is important, I realized. I had made the phone call to an employer and had an appointment with him for a meeting. But I could not make it (because of the urgent). I could not keep this engagement. Then I was fired. I do not forget this experience. It was a good lesson for me. In the market economic system, no one gives me the money for free. Something operated by a firm principle and orders that were stronger than that of North Korea that seems to be a capitalistic market system.(F3)

F3 failed to get a job because she broke the engagement. She got the lesson that keeping a promise is very significant for receiving trust from others and for getting a job in relation to another, an employer in China. She learned that the rigid principles and order based on trust and credit among people maintained the flow of money in the market economic system. This trust and credit were different from those formed in the endless respect and worship toward the three Kim leaders.

c) *Consequences and influences of their economic activities*

The economic experiences of North Korean female immigrants in China influence change among persons and society, North Korea. In particular, personal changes show the differences between the learners and non-learners of education on the economic system from the NGOs' staffin six interviewees. Let me explain what influences they have on persons and society, North Korea.

i. *The development of personal competence and the change of perspective*

North Korean female immigrant workers acquired professional skills and built human relation networks in the fields of work inChina. Through these experiences, first of all, their knowledge and competence have improved gradually. They began to

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make plans for a better life in the future by utilizing their knowledge and competence after returning to North Korea. Interestingly, the learners of education on market economic system in China among the six interviewees began to think of how they could transform the technology and skills they acquired in China into capital and wealth in North Korea, whereas the non-learners thought only of how they would sell the materials gotten in China. The learners of education on market economic system among North Korean female immigrant workers began to think about how their experiences in China could be applied and utilized in the context of North Korea for obtaining and maximizing the capital and assets.

> I learned a professional skill. Here (in China) I realized those who have professional skill could earn money surely. I am surely convinced that I can earn money with the skill. (F2)

> What should I do? How should I solve several financial problems? These questions are what I am concerned with, not just earning lots of money here in China. How should I live well? If I go back to North Korea, what should I do and how should I apply my knowledge and skill that I have learned in China? (These were what I thought.) (V4)

> I realized that my competences became improved. For example, when I worked at a small restaurant, I observed how owner has run this restaurant. I saw how to get food sources, how to set up the prices of foods and provide salaries to employees and so on. Then I imagine if I were an owner of this restaurant. Now I think about what I can do it as an owner. (F6)

Their lives in China provided them with the opportunities of free-will and choice, the desire for learning, the ability to search for alternative solutions to financial problems and the achievement of an independent life and so on. Applying these experiences in China, they dream of the better life that they can have after returning to North Korea, not only earning money.

Secondly, they changed the perspective of gender through their lives in China. In North Korea, the women had been often treated contemptuously like possessions of men, but it had been taken for granted among North Korean people. It was not until their stay in China that they realized that the discrimination and disregard received from their husbands or other men were unreasonable. North Korean female migrant workers were surprised to see other women in China who have received fair treatment from men. They began to insist on the improvement of women's social status after returning to North Korea.

> For example, when I waited for a taxi, I saw a man said "Ladies first" and then a woman got on the taxi first. When I had a meal and drank with my relatives (Korean Chinese). (I saw that) Here (China) a husband did call his wife *'Dongmu'(a name meaning a companion)* respectfully. In North Korea, the husband calls his wife just '*Ya*!(Hey!)' (*an echoic word to use when somebody calls other disrespectfully and rudely*). I thought 'Wow that couples are so weird.' We (North Koreans) look down on women. Wife is treated as one of the possessions of husband in North Korea. But here (China) women are treated fairly with men. That gives birth to a serious conflict with my husband after returning to North Korea. I changed my perspective on women. My attitudes were also changed. I requested that men and women are equal and my husband disliked my thought and this request. He scored, "You are influenced by capitalism in China!" So I argued with my husband. (F6)

The change in their perception of the gender problem in China caused conflict among their family members after their return home. Husband or the rest family members disparaged the perspective on the value of improving the status of women, saying "You have become too much of a capitalist" and finally they have separated or divorced.

Finally, they also changed the perception of the capitalistic society, South Korea, and communist North Korea. North Koreans consider China a capitalistic society and express the feeling that capitalistic societies such as China and South Korea might be the places where 'money falls from the sky.'

> My thought at the second visit was very different from that at first visit. When I visited China first, I thought that money was just on the street in a capitalistic society. But as earning money with working hard, I realized that people could obtain capitals with their efforts. Without personal efforts, we cannot get the capitals, money. I learned the fact that capitalistic society in itself never gives me money. (F6)

Their perception of South Korea as one of the hostile countries began to change gradually, living in China. Under the government-controlled education and mass media constructed powerful propaganda and strict censorship imposed by political ideology, they entertained fears of the capitalistic nation, South Korea and South Koreans. However, as their stay in China went by, this fear gradually began to disappear, and they became concerned with South Korea. They enjoyed the South Korean culture and were addicted to Korean broadcast programs such as Korean Drama. Also, they acquired lots of information on the lives of South Koreans from Korean-Chinese who had immigrated into South Korea for making money.

The positive change of their perception of South Korea also led them to reflect on their home country, North Korea. Comparing the good quality products from

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diverse countries including South Korea and having come into contact directly or indirectly with South Korean cultures, they finally began to feel skeptical about the North Korean social and economic system and sensed the superiority of the capitalistic market system.

ii. *The changes in the black market in North Korea*

Human beings continually connect with their home even if they have left for a new place. Thus, the transnational migration can change the people and cultures of the home country as well, not only those of the new country where the migrants settle.[26] Their lives constructed after returning to North Korea are quite different from those before their stay in China. These returnees became significant agents, who could change North Korean people and North Korean society with their new knowledge and perceptions gained in China.

> I influenced a lot. First, I used the advertisement (in North Korea). I made the advertisement when I sell the bread. I wrote the price of bread and "wholesale" on the paper and posted it. There had been no marker in North Korea before. I brought sets of markers from China. (After that, other merchants began to give the advertisements like me) … Because of me, the black market was changed. When I went to the black market for selling goods, I took the markers and papers. I wrote the price in the morning, and at the close of the market, I wrote the price again in the paper and posted it. The price was changed frequently. Then other people (North Koreans) saw my deed and asked me to borrow a marker. They wanted to buy this marker from me. So I began to sell it. Also, there were gloves that I used when I cooked or touched something edible in China. There had been no theses in North Korea at all. I also brought these gloves from China. I also used these gloves in the black market in North Korea. North Koreans were very curious. They came to me to see these gloves and asked to give these. *Haha*. They (North Koreans) followed what I did in the black market and what I learned from China. Before that, they touched foods to sell without gloves. Because of me, the black market was changed. (F6)

Those changes in the black market appeared obviously and visibly. They traded on the new products brought from China in the black market in North Korea, and also formed the new service sector as well.

> I was supposed to buy the rice, but it is too heavy to carry this to my home. I could not say "please move this rice to my home." … But one of seller said, "I will take this rice to your home." Then, I was surprised. It was a delivery service. From this event, all merchants began to have a delivery service to take the rice to the buyer's home if he/she would buy over 10kg rice. The delivery service was the one formed newly in the black market. (F3)
>
> The merchants are selling peaches in the black market. But in North Korea, there is no way to dish up. No plastic bag. If you want to buy, you have to bring your bowl. But at some point, many merchants began to dish peaches up to the buyers. From that time, some merchants who sell the plastic bag began toemerge. Seepackaging service was formed and developed in the black market in North Korea. (F3)

These people who had experience of living in China have led the emergence of new commodities and a service sector. Thus, North Korean people gradually began to have a strong desire to leave for China, seeing that these North Korean returnees from China had become wealthy. Some North Korean returnees began to find irrationalism in North Korean society and criticize it. During the first visit to China, they still showed the attitude of worshipping the Great leader, Kim Jong-Un, but since the second visit to China, they have criticized North Korea in a roundabout way without displaying emotion, like, "A big fish in a small pond." They advised the children, like saying "Go out of North Korea and see the world if possible" and sometimes criticized indirectly that "the dictatorship of Kim Jong-Un is like the unseen blade of the knife." They possess a strong desire for reform of the North Korean economic system to better the lives of their children.

v. Conclusion

This study examines what experiences North Korean female migrant workers have in China and how these experiences have influenced the persons as well as their home, North Korean society. Through their economic activities in China, they learned actively the function and effect of information obtained from advertisements on commodities. They also learned the fact that their labors could become the means of earning money, and that credit and trust could be very significant to forge personal relationships of employers and employees, and others. These experiences brought changes in the awareness on the capitalist society, gender issues and about North Korean society.

This paper has the limitation that it generalizes the lives of six North Korean migrant workers staying in China. Nonetheless, this is a case study to show how the economic experience and education of North Korean migrant workers in China can create a synergy effect. It will become the ignition point to bring about eventual national unification of North and South Korea based on mutual understanding.

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Endnotes

1. This paper is the translated version of the manuscript that has already been published in Korean [27].
2. This paper does not reveal the name of this NGO following the request of those who have been involved at this institution.

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