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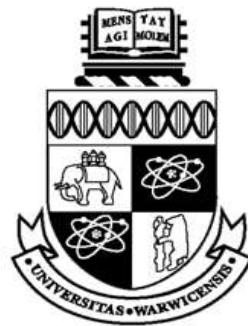
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Talking culture, silencing ‘race’, enriching the nation
: The politics of multiculturalism in South Korea

by

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Policy Studies

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is the result of my own individual research. I have followed the Guide to Examinations for Higher Degrees by Research, established by the Graduate School at the University of Warwick. I confirm that the thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Notes on the usage of Korean language

1. This thesis basically uses the ‘McCune-Reischauer’ Romanization system, a system widely accepted among scholars of Korean studies. Key concepts which beg Korean translation are romanized in this way. However, for Korean authors who have their own way of romanizing their names, and when an English title of their works was available, I did not change them according to the McCune-Reischauer Romanization rules.
2. In particular, the names of Korean intellectual and historic figures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, have been romanized using the McCune-Reischauer system.
3. For some Korean names such as that of Korean Presidents and intellectual figures of the early twentieth century, this thesis uses the Korean convention of placing the surname before the given name. For example, the name of the previous Korean president, Park Chung Hee, is written as such so that ‘Park’, his surname, precedes his given name ‘Chung Hee’. The names of Korean Presidents are not romanized according to the McCune-Reischauer rules, but written in the most conventional way.
4. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from Korean to English are my own.

Abstract

In South Korea, believed to be one of the most racially and culturally homogeneous nation-states, ‘multiculturalism’ has emerged, since the mid-2000s, as a discursive space within which migrant incorporation and racial/cultural diversity are discussed. Despite the proliferation of multicultural discourses and policy developments, issues of racism have not come to the fore in Korea, not only in the practices of policy-making but also in scholarly work. This thesis problematises this absence and interrogates the contingent configuration of contemporary multiculturalism and racialised nationalism. To achieve this, it starts out by questioning the entrenched idea of Korea’s ‘racial irrelevance’ and the persistent decoupling of nationalism and racism. The thesis employs open-ended, semi-structured in-depth interviews as its key method. A total of forty-five interviews were conducted with various social actors, who actively respond to the multiculturalisation of Korean society, in their role as migrant rights activists, government agencies, media personnel, (far-right) anti-multiculturalists, and migrants. By drawing on the analysis of these interviews and other complementary sources (historical documents, white papers, media reports, and anti-multiculturalists’ online communities), the thesis particularly focuses on the following three aspects of the Korean application of multiculturalism. Firstly, how multiculturalism works as a *euphemism for race* – emblematic in the employment of the term ‘multicultural’ as a pseudo-racial category – and how this euphemistic development works reciprocally with the disavowal of racism. Secondly, it reflects on how ‘culture’, in this tendency of multicultural politics, is utilised in constructing differences, constituting the dynamics of in/exclusion, and accumulating individual and national capital. Lastly, the thesis demonstrates the fragility and contradictions of celebratory multicultural discourses, imbricated with neoliberal subjectivity and strongly inflected by a social Darwinist ethos. In conceptualising multiculturalism as the *politics of hush* in South Korea, this project not only carves out a new research space for the critical analysis of ‘race’ and racism in Korean academia but also contributes to expanding our understanding of the politics of multiculturalism particularly in relation to the global discourse of ‘post-racial’ society.

Introduction

As for current national political systems, I especially admire the Japanese, South Korean and Taiwanese system. These three countries reject multiculturalism outright and have instead focused on maintaining and protecting their monoculture. They have managed to copy and implement the most advantageous mechanics from Europe and the US (in terms of educational, scientific, technological and economical mechanics) but have at the same time rejected cultural Marxism to a large degree. There is still room for improvement but they have managed to adapt quite well in the world and should be viewed as an inspiration for future cultural conservative governments. (Breivik 2011)

Norwegian mass killer Anders Behring Breivik, in his manifesto, praises ‘monocultural’, ‘racially/ethnically pure’ South Korean society as a ‘role model’ for the ‘European conservative movement’ in order to save Europe from, what he insists is the poison of multiculturalism (*ibid.*). At the same time, he charges European politicians, journalists and public figures (including British ones such as Gordon Brown and Tony Blair) with allowing mass immigration, facilitating the ‘Islamization of Europe’ and supporting multiculturalism which, from his perspective, amounts to a ‘crime against humanity’ (*ibid.*). By beginning my thesis with a reference to Breivik’s manifesto, I do not intend to give credit to what he says about the ‘South Korean system’ or the purported pro-multicultural European society nor do I intend to make this manifesto or the horrific event itself the object of my analysis. In fact, I am still repelled by simply recollecting the moments I heard the news and read his lengthy extremist political rant. Besides the sheer amount of violence that he actually conducted and preached, and his disturbing White supremacist sub-humanisation of immigrants, particularly of Muslims, the eulogy

given to Northeast Asian countries, such as South Korea, deeply irritated me with its Orientalist inflection. This is obvious in Breivik's framing of these Asian societies as the *good old homogenous past* of European societies, which I argue, mirrors the old nostalgic colonial idea of the *primitive Orient as Europe's past*.

Yet Breivik might not be completely amiss about the popular belief in the supposed ethnic homogeneity and strong 'monocultural' ethos in South Korea (Hussain 2011). Empirically, the number of migrants has been very small compared to most European countries, Korea often being regarded as one of the most racially homogenous countries in the world (Hobsbawm 1990, 66). Ideologically, the belief that Koreans share the same blood and culture has hardly been challenged until recent times, as will be further explored throughout this thesis. And as a person who grew up within this culture, I remember my school days from the 1980s–1990s when it was mandatory for students in primary and secondary education to recite the *Charter of National Education* [Kor. *Kungmin Kyoyuk Hōnjang*] that took the ethnic homogeneity of the Korean nation for granted and emphasised the duty of every Korean citizen to commit oneself to this ethnic nation. However, it seems that Breivik was not updated on the fact that South Korea has been witnessing, since the mid-2000s, the proliferation of multicultural discourses and policy development. Such growing interest in multiculturalism partially reflects the drastic demographic change within Korean society triggered by a recent influx of migrant workers and marriage migrants. According to the statistics compiled by the Ministry of Justice, the total number of foreign residents in 2011 has increased about threefold from that

of 2000 and twenty-eight times from that of 1990 (KIS 2007, 335; KIS 2011b, 252)¹.

Though the number of migrants may be considered relatively small, reaching approximately 1.5 million – 2.8 per cent of the total population (according to the data of January 2013) – it is growing dramatically, for instance, increasing over 20 per cent every year between 2006 and 2009, and 11 per cent each in 2011 and 2012 (MSPA 2013a)².

Indeed, this empirical reality of increasing ethnic and cultural diversity has opened up a discursive space where Korea's strong notion of being a homogenous nation is being put to the test. Then, can such emerging multicultural discourses simply be understood as a natural consequence of a demographic change happening just temporally later than many Western countries such as the UK? It is misleading to assume that the surge of multicultural discourses was naturally prompted by such a rapid demographic change. Rather, the term 'multicultural' has circulated widely since the mid-2000 when the Korean state started to frame its policies for the social inclusion of migrants (particularly, female marriage migrants) as policies for a 'multicultural' society or the 'multicultural family'. Though the term 'multiculturalism' has been newly imported to Korea, influenced by what Kymlicka (2007) calls 'the global diffusion of multiculturalism', this does not mean that it is

¹ Here, Korea Immigration Service (KIS) Statistics provided by the Ministry of Justice include the statistics of both short-term residents staying in Korea for less than 90 days and long-term residents staying more than 90 days. In 2011, the number of long-term foreign residents makes up over 80 per cent of the total number of foreign residents. According to the statistics in *Korean Social Trend 2012*, a statistical yearbook, the increase in the total number of foreign residents from 2002 to 2011 is caused by the increase in the number of long-term residents (Statistics Korea 2013, 6). In fact, the number of short-term foreign residents has decreased by 22.3 per cent during the same period (*ibid.*).

² The statistical data, here, published by the Ministry of Security and Public Administration (MSPA) are based on the annual survey on foreign residents within the jurisdiction of relevant local governments. The survey is conducted between May and July each year. Differently from the aforementioned KIS statistics, MSPA's statistics refer to the number of foreign residents staying in Korea for more than 90 days (excluding short-term residents), naturalised residents (based on marriage and other grounds), and children from immigrant backgrounds (MSPA 2013b).

principally understood with reference to orthodox liberal multicultural theories. Indeed, the common usage of the term ‘multicultural’ or the rationales and practices of multicultural policies in Korea seem significantly distanced from socio-political theories of liberal multiculturalism, while at times coming close to an assimilationist approach (see Chapter one for a detailed discussion of this point). In this context, multiculturalism began to be understood in a number of different ways, while sharing only the common denominator of referring to something related to ‘migrants’ or, in a broader sense, to ‘living together with migrants’. Here, I have no intention to imply that ‘multiculturalism’ is received more coherently in other countries than it is in South Korea, or that the discrepancy between the lay understanding of multiculturalism and multiculturalism as a political philosophy exists only in Korea. On the contrary, the discrepancies between theories and practices, and also different understandings of multiculturalism are almost always found in other societies as well. What initially looked strange to me with respect to emerging multicultural discourses in Korea was the fact that ‘multiculturalism’ quickly came to signify something politically progressive despite the fact that, in reality it seemed to blatantly contradict not only theoretical ideas of multiculturalism but also its own policy rhetoric. Interrogating the multicultural boom in Korea lead me to look into the various ideas that have been attached to the discursive formation of multiculturalism, rather than to simply identify Korea’s multicultural discourse as ‘false’ in light of the normative theories of multiculturalism.

Having had unresolved questions in my mind, I came to the UK to study first as a master’s student in 2008. I remember a conversation I had with one of my colleagues just before I left for the UK. After I said that I would be soon travelling to the UK to

study further and that multiculturalism was one of the topics I was hoping to delve into more deeply, he responded: “Good! It’s selling well in Korea! And in Britain, they are doing it properly, aren’t they? You can learn a lot from them and make good use of it here!” Indeed, this type of logic – learning from others’ experiences (here, ‘others’ usually mean ‘Western’, ‘developed’ countries) – is prevalent in the Korean field of multiculturalism research (but certainly not only in this field), as will be elaborated in Chapter one. Honestly, that I might be able to learn from Britain’s experience of multiculturalism was not the reason I chose the UK as my destination to study. Yet, it became evident soon after I settled in the UK that, contrary to my colleague’s expectation, the M-word was being much condemned in the UK (and across Europe), being pinned down as a failed approach and a cause for all sorts of social ills such as ‘self’ segregation. I had been informed, mostly from books and newspapers, of criticisms to multiculturalism both from the left and the right, which in fact had always existed from the beginning of the rise of multicultural discourses. During my time in the UK I could actually *feel* growing suspicion on multiculturalism in institutions and in the broader political atmosphere.

Since 2010, the media has reported that German chancellor Angela Merkel, British Prime Minister David Cameron and French President Nicholas Sarkozy all proclaimed the failure of the multicultural approach to integrating migrants and building a cohesive society. As already mentioned, the attack on multiculturalism might not be a new phenomenon since for example, in Britain, it has been often disparaged as a celebration of the so-called ‘3S’ (saris, samosas, and steel drums) in mocking reference to its perceived apolitical endorsement of cultural diversity as part of box-ticking (Yuk 2011, 337). Yet, it seems that the current political backlash

against multiculturalism makes a distinctively rightward shift in creating a ‘master narrative’ of a ‘post-multicultural’ era (Kymlicka 2010, 32). The call to move on from a moribund multiculturalism and for the resurrection of what Cameron refers to as ‘muscular liberalism’ accompanies castigations of multiculturalism being dogmatic; repressing opposing views in the name of political correctness; fostering separateness between different cultures; deconstructing common values; denying social problems within migrants’ communities; endorsing illiberal, sexist, reprehensible practices; and failing in combating extremist Muslims (Vertovec & Wessendorf 2010).

Hence, while the UK, a country from which I was told to learn about its well-developed multicultural policies and ethos, seems in retreat from multiculturalism (having identified it as regressive identity politics), multiculturalism in South Korea is dominantly seen as a progressive ideal. These two ostensibly different phenomena seem to bring about comparative questions about multicultural discourses in Korea, such as what might cause such differences. Furthermore, the realisation of Europe’s retreat from multiculturalism seems to influence debates on multiculturalism in Korea mostly in a conservative way. For example, Korean (far-right) anti-multiculturalists whom I interviewed as part of the empirical research carried out for this project, were fully aware of the core idioms of the ‘death of multiculturalism’ argument, and insisted that Korea should immediately stop implementing a policy that had already proven to be flawed and detrimental in Europe. Also in academia and the media, cautious voices about multiculturalism have recently been on the rise as shown by mounting references to purported ‘European multicultural failures’ (cf. G-S Han 2012). Yet as will be elaborated in following chapters, I argue that a

perfunctory, mechanical, and more importantly, Eurocentric comparative perspective rather blinds us to the complexities of what is actually happening in the two different places. One may think that it is natural, particularly for Korean researchers and policy-makers, to take a comparative look at multiculturalism in other societies because multiculturalism is considered to be relatively new in Korea. Yet questions formed naively out of an obsession for comparison (or rather, compulsion for emulating what is going on in other more developed societies) often draw facile conclusions, such as either that Korea needs to learn from other countries' 'developed' multiculturalism, or that Korea should reconsider its adoption of multiculturalism because countries with experience attest to its impossibility and concomitant implementation problems. Also this type of comparative view sometimes results in an answer to policy problems that backs up the argument that Korea needs to simply drop the term 'multicultural', since what is developing in Korea is not de facto multiculturalism. By saying this, I, by no means, intend to cast doubt on the comparative methodology in general or insist that Korean multicultural development is not directly comparable to that of Britain. In fact, my initial questions were certainly influenced by a comparative perspective, which I think, is inevitable for researchers who deal with circulating terms, ideas and relevant practices, and more broadly, categories of knowledge. What looked more important to me was to examine what is said and silenced, what is legitimised and problematised behind the so-called growing anti-multiculturalism in the UK and the proliferation of multicultural discourses in Korea. From this perspective, turning the question of differences on its head seemed like a sounder option: are the seemingly different multicultural trajectories in these two countries, in fact, substantially different?

Various interpretations of the backlash against multiculturalism in Europe have been put forward, including a view which sees this rather as a rhetorical adjustment than substantial change in policies and practices (e.g. Vertovec & Wessendorf 2010). The approach I found most useful among them is to read the attack on multiculturalism as a conjunctural yet historically inflected mode of racial politics in a ‘post-racial’ era, in which the concept of ‘race’ becomes taboo and racism is thought to no longer exist. Lentin and Titley (2011), in *The Crises of Multiculturalism*, cogently argue that what is under attack now in Europe is not the multicultural policies which were previously implemented by the state with the purpose of de-radicalising growing anti-racist and other identity movements. Instead, the current renunciation of multiculturalism can be better understood as a rejection of ‘lived multiculture’ – the attack on the multicultural reality of life (*ibid.*). Under the guise of the death of state multiculturalism, the possible coexistence of people from different backgrounds is increasingly questioned and persistent racism sidelined by the problematisation of diversity. In analysing how the construction of negative images of multicultural orthodoxies recodes racism today, Lentin and Titley describe multiculturalism as ‘a discursive space for debating questions of race, culture, legitimacy, and belonging’ (*ibid.*, 3). Seen from this perspective, what seems more important to investigate in the Korean context is not what multiculturalism ‘is’ or ‘should be’, which often alludes to multiculturalism as some sort of coherent entity, but the ways in which different ideas of ‘race’, nation and culture are discussed, formulated, and practiced under the guise of the proliferation of multicultural discourses. In this sense, phenomena that are ostensibly different in Korea (multiculturalism becoming a buzzword) and Britain (dissemination of anti-multicultural narratives) may not be

quite as disparate as it may first seem, in that both signify similar (but not identical) and inter-related themes of a ‘post-racial’ era.

Indeed, what struck me in regards to the current multicultural fashioning of Korean society is that discussions about ‘race’ and racism are virtually non-existent both socially and academically, even in critical analyses of state policies³. This silence about ‘race’ and racism is in stark contrast to the fact that the circulation of multiculturalism as a buzzword was, from the outset, a response to an increased presence of racial others. Furthermore, such silence about ‘race’ and racism coexists with a distinctive tendency to use the term ‘multicultural’ itself as a means of differentiation and racialisation, as will be detailed throughout the thesis. Indeed, racism and the racial construction of Korean identity have been intellectually overlooked not only within Korea, but more broadly within global critical race studies, where Northeast Asia including Korea is significantly understudied. This seems mainly because the Northeast Asian region is often thought to be racially homogeneous (particularly Korea and Japan). This, I argue, needs to be critically rethought in relation to the specific racial construction of national identity. Also, the precarious status of Northeast Asians being *Yellow*, often unseen within the dominant model of a black-white dichotomy, contributes to making this group academically less attractive. Furthermore, this region was colonised by Japanese imperial power (from 1895 when Taiwan became the first Japanese overseas colony to 1945 when the WWII ended), so it is difficult to neatly fit this area into the map of critical race studies that mainly deal with the links between White supremacy,

³ This point will be discussed in detail and corroborated throughout the thesis particularly in Chapter one and Chapter four.

European colonialism, and post-colonial forms of racial hegemony, mostly in Western societies. However, it is of great importance to engage with the complexity and ambiguity of this region in order to truly deconstruct Eurocentric ideas and Orientalist structures existing not only within Europe (or the West) but also within non-Western societies in altered, variegated forms. In this vein, it is much needed to examine whether and how identity politics in this region have been racially inflected by the transferability of White racism. At the same time, as Stuart Hall (1996, 51) writes, ‘it is only as the different racisms are historically specified – in their difference – that they can be properly understood.’ From this perspective, this thesis is an attempt to take racism seriously as a historical and structural phenomenon and also as an analytically crucial concept in investigating the politics of multiculturalism in Korea. As such, this project inevitably involves tracing the trajectory of how ideas of ‘race’, nation, and culture have developed in Korea by marking its historical specificities such as the experience of Japanese colonialism. Although I limit the scope of my research to South Korea, the analysis throughout the thesis engages with the global discourse of migration and ‘race’.

With respect to contemporary discourses of multiculturalism, this project explores the South Korean context through the lens of what El-Tayeb calls ‘political racelessness’. She maintains;

“Political racelessness” does not equal experiential or social racelessness, that is, the absence of racial thinking. Rather, it creates a form of racialization that can be defined as specifically European both in its enforced silence and in its attempt to externalize race by explicitly categorizing as not European all those who violate Europe’s implicit but normative whiteness, thus allowing dominant society to

forever consider the “race question” as externally (and by implication temporarily) imposed from the outside. (El-Tayeb 2011, 232-233)

I concur that ‘political racelessness’ indeed plays a core role in the present dominant discourse of anti-multiculturalism in Europe, as already mentioned. However, I do not see this racelessness and the features of concomitant racialisation as ‘specifically European’, in the sense that it is only *within* and *of* Europe. Accordingly, what this project aims to do is to examine the construction of political racelessness and the reconfiguration of racism within the Korean context where not the rubbishing of multiculturalism, but the particular fashioning of multiculturalism is put to work. By taking this stance, I do not intend to insist on the uniqueness of Korea’s racial formation or the peculiarity of Korean multiculturalism. Nor do I plan to provide a general, totalising explanation for contemporary multiculturalism and racism that could be applied regardless of contexts. Rather, by raising the issue of political racelessness in the South Korean context where such voices are withheld, this project seeks to take a small step towards the decolonisation of knowledge and practices through my self-reflexive approach as a non-Western researcher. Indeed, as Ching (2010, 184) states, ‘even with the official end of colonialism and national independence, the modes of knowledge and cultural production in the formerly colonized territories remain trapped in colonial epistemology.’ As part of an attempt to operationalise epistemic decolonisation, this project traces the development of race thinking embedded in colonial epistemology throughout Korea’s modern history (see Chapter three). In particular, by examining the discursive construction of nationalisms in colonial and post-colonial Korea, the thesis focuses on exploring how it has been inflected with race thinking while obfuscating continuing and shifting racism. In a similar vein, Kuan-Hsing Chen (2010) suggests:

Refusing to duplicate existing power structures requires that third-world cultural studies not limit itself to critiquing Western imperialism and capitalism. It will also have to overcome its overinvestment in nationalism, so as to bring out the complexity of power relations within third-world spaces; make transparent its own internal hierarchical divisions; and counter the emerging third-world subimperialism. (Chen 2010, 24)

This thesis offers a response to the call for a reflexive practice to critically engage in the study of peripheral places, particularly by bringing latent racial issues of Korean nationalism to light. As such, my decolonising practice situates itself in the interrogation of the silence about racism in the contemporary politics of multiculturalism by linking it with the historical articulation of race thinking *in* and *through* the Korean nation. In so doing, this exploration of the Korean context attempts to add a new dimension to the global discourse of multiculturalism in this allegedly post-racial era. It also expands the scope of global critical race studies by opening up an examination of race thinking and its implications in an often neglected geographical area. With this aim, this thesis tackles the following sets of main questions:

- How can we explain the co-existence of the paucity of discussions about racism and the emergence of multiculturalism as ‘progressive’ discourse in South Korea? What are the understandings of ‘race’ and racism underpinning such silence and how are they shaped by discursive practices of multiculturalism? Can we identify a dominant interpretive schema of understanding self and others?

- How have the ideas of ‘race’, nation, and culture historically formed and transformed the dominant understanding of Korean identity? In what ways have these ideas changed or remained contiguous with past formulations?
- What type of national self is imagined and materialised through the dominant state discourse of multiculturalism? What provided the motivation for the state to pursue such a national renewal project? Who gains what benefits as a result of this discursive construction of multiculturalism and concurrent silencing of racism?

This thesis considers and attempts an answer to these questions in three different sections. The first section, composed of Chapter one and two, provides an explanation for my theoretical and methodological positioning. Chapter one maps the extant literature in the fields of multiculturalism and migration, a relatively young field of enquiry in Korea but nevertheless a fast growing one. I outline the specificities of Korean discussions of multiculturalism in relation to policy development and its framing, and explore different sets of scholarly discourses on citizenship, migration, and multiculturalism. By reflecting upon problems and weaknesses of the existing research, particularly with respect to the prevalent scholarly reticence on and dismissal of racism, the chapter aims to carve out a new theoretical space for the critical analysis of multiculturalism. In so doing, I also elucidate the ways in which I understand major concepts – ‘race’/racism, nation/nationalism, and culture – and how they will be employed throughout the thesis. Chapter two outlines the qualitative methods employed for this project, by addressing a number of methodological considerations for the chosen approaches, that are inseparable from my epistemological concerns discussed in Chapter one.

Instead of establishing a single rigid methodological framework, the aim of this chapter is to offer a reflexive analysis of my own research experience, particularly by focusing on methodological issues I encountered in the process of designing research and conducting my fieldwork.

The second section – Chapter three – attempts a genealogical undertaking of historical developments of the notions of nation and nationalism throughout Korea's modern history. By examining how this development has intersected with race thinking from the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, this section provides some historical background on the construction and interlacing of important concepts such as nation, 'race', and culture. In so doing, the main purpose of this section lies in teasing out the ways in which these ideas are transformed or remain contiguous with past formulations, and linking them up with the analysis of the politics of multiculturalism (discussed in the third section). In particular, by examining how the notions of 'race', nation, and culture developed in an entangled way and how they were evoked in specific historical conjunctures, this chapter focuses on the influence of social Darwinism, as a dominant epistemological prism through which racialised national identity has been constructed. Social Darwinism, an ideological backbone of Western imperial expansion and colonization, greatly influenced the East Asian region from the late nineteenth century, and was seized and transmuted to form Korean self-understanding. By looking into the internalisation of social Darwinist ideas and their manifestations, this chapter aims to deconstruct mythical yet dominant understandings of this nation's past and to historicise what is deemed as trans-historical truth.

The last section – Chapter four, five and six – seeks to analyse the ways in which the politics of multiculturalism operate, particularly in relation to the constitution of the self and others in the South Korean context. Chapter four provides a close look at how and why discussions of racism are hushed and how such silencing of ‘race’ and racism works reciprocally with the euphemistic construction of multiculturalism. In so doing, the chapter examines the various modes in which culture takes the place of ‘race’ as a tool for differentiation especially in operationalising the dynamics of in/exclusion. Chapter five takes otherising discourses of *Chosōnjok* (Korean Chinese) migrants as a case study in order to further interrogate causes and pitfalls of the silence about racism whilst also exploring the fragility of a seemingly all-embracing rhetoric of multiculturalism. In scrutinising the rationales behind in/excluding the *Chosōnjok* and also examining the practice of storytelling in relation to the criminalisation of the *Chosōnjok*, this chapter reveals the crucial role played by ‘culture’ in the process of racialisation. Whilst these two chapters deal with the construction of others in the politics of multiculturalism, Chapter six mainly involves an analysis of multiculturalism as a self-making project. The chapter examines what type of renewed national self is created in the ascendancy of neoliberal subjectivity and how such construction of the self is imbricated with contemporary multicultural discourses.

Conclusively, the thesis problematises the tacit knowledge of ‘Korea’s racial irrelevance’ and analyses the salience of ‘race’ as it is articulated through the silence about ‘race’, particularly within the politics of multiculturalism. In other words, the thesis unravels how and why racism is silenced and what kind of role multiculturalism plays in, what I call, this *politics of hush*. In exploring different

aspects of a new cultural politics of difference, the thesis interrogates the role of culture in constructing differences, constituting the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, and accumulating individual and national capital.

An important note needs to be made in relation to the potential contribution of this research to the field of cultural policy studies, which will be further elaborated in the Conclusion. Cultural policy is often commonly understood in close association with arts policy. Yet it must be clear by now that the idea of cultural policy that this thesis adopts is broader than that. Admittedly, cultural policy is an ‘unstable concept’ (McGuigan 2004, 34) which can be defined variously from different viewpoints. However, my concern here is not so much to assess the different views on cultural policy and by extension pin down the scope of this emerging area of enquiry. Rather, it seems to be sufficient to state that my use of cultural policy in this thesis denotes, as McGuigan writes:

[A] sub-set of policy in general, which is often called “public policy”. This refers to governance, not only its enactment of politics from inception to implementation and evaluation, but also contested terrain where campaigns are waged over issues, that is, the public sphere of rational-critical debate. Like policy in general, cultural policy can be viewed narrowly and/or broadly: narrowly, in the sense of what those in charge of it actually do and the consequences of their actions; and broadly, in the sense of disputation over cultural issues. (McGuigan 2004, 5)

With respect to the fact that this thesis examines the background, rationale, practices, and evaluations of state multicultural policy, but also takes a closer look at how the idea of ‘culture’ itself is debated and shaped in society at large under the rubric of multiculturalism, it takes both a narrow and broad approach to cultural policy research. In South Korea, the recent surge of multicultural discourses has started to

receive increasing attention by cultural policy researchers, resulting in the proliferation of research on issues of multiculturalism and cultural diversity in the field of public policy (Seo 2013, 265-7). This trend seems to develop in accord with recent attempts to broaden the concept of culture in cultural policy-making and cultural policy research beyond the prevalent approach of the past that limited culture to the Ministry of Culture's administrative classification of its cultural promotion task⁴ (D-Y Lee 2013). In this sense, diversity issues seem to have potential not only to enable cultural policy to branch out to new areas but to provide an opportunity to rethink the idea of cultural policy and the role of cultural analysis particularly in relation to culture, identity, and citizenship (see Conclusion for a detailed discussion).

However, the majority of research on diversity issues mainly focuses on affirming the normative value of cultural diversity and developing ways to incorporate multicultural perspectives into policy programmes of the Ministry of Culture. It is hard to disagree with the recognition of cultural rights and diversity in principle and also with the importance of the state's cultural policy programmes in this matter. Yet, what I think is more urgent and important is to critically explore the ambivalent workings of multiculturalism and rigorously investigate the insidious connection between culture and power. With that said, I do not intend to dismiss research practices that primarily aim for immediate administrative usefulness, though there

⁴ For example, in 2013, the bill for the 'Basic law on Culture' – the overarching piece of legislation that functions as a guiding principle for other Acts on cultural policy – was passed by the National Assembly and will be enforced from March 31, 2014. Assessing the discussions and considerations of the process of developing the bill from 2004 to 2013, Lee (2013) points out that the concept of culture is much extended in its 2013 version including the way of life, values, beliefs, and traditions among all members of society rather than confining it mainly to the production and consumption of the arts, preservation of heritage, and promotion of cultural industries (see also Y-C Kim 2013).

certainly is tension between critical cultural analysis and advocacy that deals with the technical aspects of policy making. Rather my concern here is in line with B-R Lee's (2007) argument that contemporary cultural policy studies in Korea often neglect, both consciously and unconsciously, the issues of power while prioritising 'practical analysis'. It is doubtful how 'practical' and 'useful' such an approach to cultural analysis can be in creating (or revamping) policy frameworks and programmes. Policies devised without taking account the wider operations of power in shaping the condition of culture have a good chance of distorting reality. As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, the allegedly practical and realistic approach to the multiculturalisation of Korean society often results in policy practices that do not confront and, at times, even mask real problems.

From this perspective, this thesis aspires to be an academic endeavour to invigorate the 'critical and reflexive' ethos of cultural policy studies where 'awkward questions about the conditions of culture and society in the world at large that go beyond the self-imposed limitations of management consultancy and policy-working' can be asked (McGuigan 2004, 19). The thesis attempts to achieve this by activating research that can generate 'substantive knowledge' needed for future policy development (Hong 2009). This is obtained through the examination of the racially patterned way of 'knowing and doing' (Goldberg 1993, 8), and the complex masking of race thinking and racist practices particularly under the rubric of the controversial buzzword, 'multiculturalism'. In so doing, this thesis seeks to lay the groundwork for further research in cultural policy studies with respect to changing meanings and functions of culture and the ways in which they are modulated by other ideas, such as 'race' and nation.

Chapter 1

The topography of multicultural discourses in Korea

This introductory chapter maps the literature of multiculturalism in Korea by exploring the specificities of Korean discussions of multiculturalism and positions the thesis within the extant literature in this field. Firstly, I will describe the ways in which the term ‘multiculturalism’ has gained currency and elaborate what is distinctive in the Korean use(s) of the term ‘multiculturalism’. Indeed, as in other countries, multiculturalism means many different things in Korea. In general, multiculturalism has always been caught in an oscillation between broadly two different understandings: one as a description of ethno-racial and cultural heterogeneity in a population and the other as a normative idea of valuing and supporting such diversity. To navigate our way through this muddled concept of multiculturalism, Stuart Hall draws a distinction between ‘multicultural’ and ‘multiculturalism’. According to him, while the term ‘multicultural’ is used as an adjective to describe ‘the social characteristics and problems of governance posed by any society in which different cultural communities live together’, multiculturalism ‘references the strategies and policies adopted to govern or manage the problems of diversity and multiplicity which multi-cultural societies throw up’ (Hall 2000, 209). However, as he acknowledges, the interdependence of the two terms virtually makes it ‘impossible to disentangle them’ (*ibid.*, 210).

This chapter is going to show how, in Korea, the government has played a major role in confusing the concept of multiculturalism even further by using it often in a

contradictory manner, thereby exploiting the malleability of the term to an extreme. That the term has multiple meanings creates more than just definitional difficulties. However, such definitional problems do not simply mean that the term is abused to the extent that any meaningful conversation using this term is impossible. Rather, this thesis will argue that the interrogation of such ‘multicultural confusion’ in Korea provides a fertile ground to explore what kind of ideas and practices are actually generated and circulated under the rubric of multiculturalism.

Building upon this illustration of ‘multicultural confusion’ mainly created in relation to the government’s policy development, I will look into academic responses to this multicultural confusion with a particular focus on critiques of current multicultural policies. Firstly, I introduce studies that criticise the discrepancy between the rhetoric of multiculturalism and actual policy practices. What I found interesting is that the majority of these studies, when criticising various aspects of current state multicultural policies, share a common framework – an assumption that Korean multiculturalism is an aberration from ‘multiculturalism proper’. After analysing main arguments of such critiques, I address the potential weakness and danger of the epistemological tendency of viewing Korean multiculturalism as an aberration. While academic research predominantly sees multiculturalism in a positive light as demonstrated by the exponential growth of writing in this area in less than a decade, scholarly disenchantment with multiculturalism can also be detected in recent contributions to the debate. Whilst the main questions widely debated have been ‘what is Korean multiculturalism like?’ or ‘what should Korean multiculturalism be like?’, an increasing number of sceptical scholars has started to ask why multiculturalism?’ Such disgruntled voices refute a general tendency to criticise

Korean multiculturalism from a normative perspective and often argue that Korean ‘particularities’ need not be judged by Western normative theories or policy models. Though I agree that the presupposition of the existence of ‘multiculturalism proper’ has its own drawbacks, I also problematise such simplistic accusation of normativity in multicultural discourses. The incipient backlash against multiculturalism will be expounded upon through the examination of not only the logical endpoint of this type of denouncement, but also its political implication.

This thesis seeks to move beyond both the simple juxtaposition of Korean multiculturalism and ‘multiculturalism proper’, and the simplistic claims that the political correctness of multiculturalism is a Western elitist imposition and is unsuitable for the Korean context. From this standpoint, I emphasise the need to bring politics back into the analysis of multiculturalism. Put differently, I explain the importance of doing research on what multiculturalism actually *does* particularly with respect to what it does to the ideas of ‘race’, nation, and culture. In this light, the fact that ‘race’ and racism have not been considered as a proper academic area of interest in Korea both historically and in the present day – as will be shown in later sections of this chapter – is seen as problematic, and I argue, it significantly hinders the critical investigation of contemporary multiculturalism. In addition, I note some common flaws in current multiculturalism research in Korea with respect to the ways in which nationalism is conceptualised. All these considerations, taken together, lead me to excavate the deep structure underlying the silence around ‘race’/racism

through the critical examination of the relationship between nationalism and racism as I draw on some propositions made in the tradition of race critical theories⁵.

Anchored in my theoretical space, which I have carved through the mapping of existing literature, I, lastly, elucidate the ways in which I examine the workings of multiculturalism in connection with racism and nationalism throughout the thesis. In so doing, I attempt to delineate the ways in which I work with the concept of multiculturalism. Furthermore, I provide some background on my relational understanding of major concepts such as ‘race’, culture, and nation whose fusion, rupture and transformations will be closely looked at throughout the thesis.

1.1. Multicultural confusion

From its independence from Japan in 1945 until the 1980s, South Korea was a labour-exporting country. But from the mid-1980s, particularly after the 1988 Seoul Olympics, Korea shifted to become a labour importer. Wages increased substantially due to economic growth and the active labour movement of the late 1980s. But the gap in wages and working conditions between big companies and small and medium-sized enterprises widened. This led to labour shortages in so-called 3D (difficult, dirty, and dangerous) sectors and this gap in Korea’s domestic labour

⁵ Here, I chose the term ‘race critical theories’ instead of a more commonly used term, critical race theory. To explain this, it might be useful to juxtapose CRT (critical race theory) with race critical theory, though I think they cannot be clearly differentiated, both having more in common than not. CRT which particularly has been applied to US law is a theoretical framework that focuses on the issues of ‘race’, racism and power, translating its perspective into practices of anti-subordination. On the other hand, race critical theory, according to Goldberg and Essed (2002), is a critical perspective put forward in order to challenge CRT’s tendency of restricting its application to socio-legal issues (mainly law) and widen its scope by acknowledging the historical tradition of race theorising across humanities and social sciences. In this sense, my theoretical references are more in line with the literature of race critical theorists, if such distinction needs to be made at all.

supply for low-skilled work started to be filled by migrant workers from other Asian countries (S-D Kang 1996, 265). ‘The magic of the foreign exchange rate’⁶ (Seol 2005, 71) also contributed to a rapid influx of migrant workers into Korea. All these migrant workers were undocumented before the Korean government launched *the Industrial Technical Training Programme* (ITTP) in November 1991. Yet, ironically, the legalisation of migrant workers through the ITTP caused a significant increase in the number of undocumented workers. The ITTP deprived *de facto* workers of basic labour rights by conveniently defining them as *trainees*. Because of low wages (in some cases, even less than that of undocumented workers) and poor working conditions, migrant workers barely saw any value in this legalisation and the majority chose to remain undocumented (Seol and Skrentny 2004, 495). Against this backdrop, migrant workers’ desperate outcry over exploitation, infringement of human rights and constant fear of deportation began to draw the attention of Korean NGO activists. Some NGOs started to preliminarily consider ‘multiculturalism’ as an idea to support the migrant worker advocacy movement in the 1990s⁷, but the term itself was rarely used then.

In contrast to migrant workers whose existence in Korea was (and still is) regarded only to be temporary, increasing international marriages, mainly between Korean men and foreign women, forced the Korean state to recognise an irrevocable (and continuing) change in its population. In the mid-2000s, the government accepted the fact that the presence of such racial others and their children could not just be

⁶ In the late 1980s, the value of the Korean won was much stronger compared to those of other South Asian countries. As a result, it became much more advantageous for migrant workers to come to Korea and earn their wages in won.

⁷ For example, the *Borderless Village project* started in 1999 with the aim of building a ‘multicultural’ community of migrant workers. This project was developed in the *City of Ansan* where in some wards the percentage of migrant workers reached 50 per cent of the population (Oh and Jung 2006, 76).

ignored, since they effectively became part of the ‘Korean family’ and would not leave Korea. Accordingly, NGOs’ demands for migrant rights and multicultural coexistence began to be reviewed and selectively co-opted by the state⁸. In 2006, the government announced a *Grand Plan for the Social Integration of Female Marriage Immigrants, Mixed-bloods⁹ and Migrants* whose overarching vision was stated as, ‘integrating female marriage immigrants and bringing about an open multicultural society’¹⁰. This signalled the official adoption of the term ‘multicultural’ as rhetoric for public policy concerning migrants. Since the Korean government has never explicitly defined what it means by ‘multicultural’ or ‘multiculturalism’, the term has been employed very loosely (and flexibly) even when it appears in policy documents.

However, as explained earlier, the oscillation between description and prescription with respect to the meaning of multiculturalism is not specific to Korea. The concept of multiculturalism is used both to *describe* a social reality of increasing racial, ethnic and cultural diversity, and to *prescribe* the ways in which such diversity should be dealt with, mainly based on the idea of recognising differences, endorsing their equal value and accommodating diversity. These two meanings are often conflated in Korea as well. Yet there is a distinctive tone in the Korean use of

⁸ H-K Lee (2007, 242) argues that the multicultural policies of the 2000s were the outcome of NGO-Government liaison. This liaison between the government and NGOs took the form of cooperation in the development and delivery of policies, and concomitant funding relations between the two were strengthened under the Roh Moo Hyun government (Feb. 2003 – Feb. 2008), coloured with his new political vision of ‘participatory democracy’ (S-O Lee 2007, 99). In this political atmosphere, many migrant rights NGOs were institutionalised by becoming major partners in government policy programmes (*ibid.*).

⁹ The term ‘mixed-blood’ is literally translated from the Korean word, *honhyōl*, and can be roughly understood as ‘mixed-race’. For detailed analysis of the genealogy of the term and also the contemporary dismissal of the term and its relationship with the emergence of the term ‘multicultural’, see Chapter two and four.

¹⁰ See H-K Lee 2008 for detailed information about the *Plan*.

‘multicultural’ that further complicates this double meaning. Even when ‘multicultural’ is used as an adjective, for example in the form of ‘multicultural society’, the connotation often goes beyond the indication of the current state of empirical diversity. ‘Multicultural society’ is deployed as a signifier for the *transition* of the Korean society. Perhaps one of the most used phrases these days is that ‘Korea *is becoming* a multicultural society.’ This is reflected in the results of the survey published by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in 2007. To the multiple choice question about whether one conceives Korea as a multicultural society and/or expects Korea to be a multicultural society, more than half of respondents answered that ‘it is not now, but will become a multicultural society’; this is over double the number of respondents who assume ‘it is now multicultural’ (cited in E-M Kim et al. 2009, 59). Hence, in the association between Korean society and the term ‘multicultural’, a subtle but significant emphasis is put on the word, *becoming*. It means Korea is *moving towards* a certain state of *being* ‘multicultural’. This use of *becoming* goes beyond the description of an empirical reality which has been, is and will be always changing because of the ‘increasing’ number of migrants. Rather ‘multicultural’ plays the role of indicating what a *future* society might look like. From this view, ‘multicultural policy’ is employed as a tool to help Korea *prepare* for such a society. In other words, ‘multicultural policy’ is conceived and developed as a *vaccine* against problems presumed to occur in a fully ‘multicultural society’. In this respect, multicultural policy is a policy grown out of a certain *fear of the future*: a policy through which the rhetoric of the future dictates the present. Such employment of multiculturalism as *a vaccine against future problems* will be analysed in detail in Chapter six.

Ironically, despite the fact that multicultural policies were mostly *pre-emptive* measures to potential problems stemming from this transition towards a multicultural society, this ‘futuristic’ implication also gets easily attached to mostly celebratory accounts of multiculturalism. By presenting multiculturalism as a positive societal change, this celebratory rhetoric often frames multiculturalism as a normative discourse. Though the term ‘multiculturalism’ is not often used with its suffix, ‘-ism’, outside of its scholarly use, multiculturalism as prescription appears, for example, in phrases circulated by the media such as ‘Korea *should become* a multicultural society.’ This is revealed in the aforementioned survey questionnaire. Leaving aside the result of the survey, it is interesting to see how each answer choice in this multiple choice question was phrased and categorised. The term ‘multicultural’ seems to be used in a descriptive manner in the abovementioned two answer options – 1) ‘Korea is a multicultural society now’ 2) ‘Korea is not a multicultural society now, but will become one’ and the answer option number 4) ‘Korea is not a multicultural society now and does not seem likely to become one’ (cited in E-M Kim et al. 2009, 59). However, there are two other answer choices stating 3) ‘Korea is not a multicultural society now but should become one’ 5) ‘Korea is not a multicultural society now and should not become one’ (*ibid.*)¹¹. Thus, within one single question item, ‘multicultural society’ is confusingly presented as both an empirical reality and a value-laden idea. Such confusion and obscurity was found in the policy vision – ‘bringing about an open multicultural society’ – of the aforementioned government’s *Grand Plan*. Here, ‘multicultural society’ implicitly

¹¹ According to the result of the survey, 15.8 per cent of respondents chose number 3 and 1.6 per cent number 5 (E-M Kim et al. 2009, 59).

connotes not only a future society, that has not yet arrived, but also one that Korea should aim to be.¹²

Other than this distinctive ‘futuristic’ connotation, the most popular use of the term ‘multicultural’ is its use as a qualifier – for instance, in phrases such as ‘multicultural family’, ‘multicultural child’ and ‘multicultural woman’. Even at times, ‘multicultural (or multiculture)’ without any following word is understood as a generic term for migrants in everyday conversations (usually with a negative connotation). Surprisingly, this use of ‘multicultural’ as a qualifier was conventionalised by the state. From the beginning of multicultural policy development, the state’s interest lied in promoting the social integration of a specific group of migrants, i.e. female marriage immigrants. In 2008, the *Support for Multicultural Families Act* was legislated with a specific focus on female marriage immigrants and their children. As can be seen in the title of this Act, the term ‘multicultural’ is used as a form of qualifier for a certain group of people, here indicating a family formed by international marriage. The use of ‘multicultural’ as a qualifier had existed prior to 2008, but the legislation surely endorsed such use.¹³ For example, the state-run *Migrant Women’s Family Support Centre*, first established in 2006, changed its name to the *Multicultural Family Support Centre* after the legislation.

¹² But it should be noted that what kind of society that is, remains very vague. In this regard, this type of proposition is often criticised as a rhetorical form of speech, not as a substantive commitment to multiculturalism. This type of critique will be explained in detail in a following section where I map out academic criticisms of current multicultural policies in Korea.

¹³ An in-depth explanation of such use of ‘multicultural’ in relation to the Act will be provided in Chapter four where I trace the euphemistic shift in racialisation.

As can be seen from the aforementioned different uses of the term multicultural, the various meanings attached to multiculturalism, especially with distinctive Korean twists, seem to make it harder to establish what the term actually means. However, despite this multicultural confusion, or more correctly because of this flexible use of the term multicultural, multiculturalism has become the language that you cannot circumvent (regardless of your opinions on multiculturalism) when talking about migrants and the Korean society they are in. As commentators point out, there has seldom been a significant attempt to philosophical or public discussion about what ‘multiculturalism’ means and why it is needed in Korea (cf. H-S Kim 2007; K-K Han 2008; J-R Choi 2010; Y-S Lee 2011; Kwon et al. 2012). Moreover, in Korea, multiculturalism has not been put forward by migrants themselves as a strategy to enhance their rights. And despite its major role in multicultural policy development, the Korean state has never declared multiculturalism as its official policy as was the case in countries such as Canada. Yet, multiculturalism seems to have become a keyword in talking about our new neighbours here and now, and in discussing different visions of society while channelling both hope and fear.

In tandem with this policy development and concurrent multicultural confusion, research on multiculturalism has become a burgeoning industry too. Various different ways of employing the term multicultural and various interpretations of multiculturalism are also found in the literature on multiculturalism, exponentially increasing in size. Geon-Soo Han (2012) insists that ‘multicultural fever’¹⁴ reached a messy point where whatever type of constructive scholarly discussion seems

¹⁴ He calls a dramatic increase of multicultural discourses in Korea: ‘multicultural fever’ (G-S Han 2012).

almost impossible because of the abuse of the term and concept. As concerns about multicultural confusion grow, theoretical studies on multiculturalism (particularly to identify ‘Korean multiculturalism’) and critical examinations of current multiculturalism are increasing too.

1.2. Thinking of Korean multiculturalism as an aberration?

In this section, I will map the literature on multiculturalism that criticises the current form of Korean multicultural policies and/or the problems of multicultural discourses. This mapping, by no means, includes the entire body of literature on multiculturalism. Also it is not my intention to review all forms of criticism of the government’s multicultural policies and neatly categorise them. Instead, I will focus on criticisms that, explicitly and implicitly, address the questions, ‘what is Korean multiculturalism like?’ and ‘what should Korean multiculturalism be like?’ By reading such critiques as academic reactions against the aforementioned multicultural confusion, I will critically examine scholarly debates on how to overcome such confusion. As suggested earlier when discussing the employment of multiculturalism within the Korean context, the prescriptive nature of multiculturalism does not always ground its substance in the philosophy of liberal multiculturalism. The majority of critical studies on Korean multicultural policies, indeed, argue that Korean multiculturalism is an empty rhetoric whose actual policy practices contradicts itself (cf. G-S Han 2007; K-S Oh 2007b; H-M Kim 2008b; J-R Choi 2010). In comparison with what Korean critics believe multiculturalism should be like, the current form of Korean multiculturalism is conceived to be aberrant, largely in two (interrelated) ways: one is about its lack of concern regarding

‘equality’, and the other is about the lack of consideration for ‘the right to be different’, particularly with respect to migrants’ ‘cultural’ rights.

Hierarchical distribution of rights behind the rhetoric of multicultural equality

A ‘conventional’ form of multiculturalism (Vertovec 2001) that is considered accordant with ‘liberal values of freedom, equality, and democracy’ (Kymlicka 2007, 18) is largely understood as policy principles ‘abandoning the myth of homogeneous and monocultural nation-states’ and ‘recognizing rights to cultural maintenance and community formation, and linking these to social equality and protection from discrimination’ (Castles 2002, 1156).

Though the South Korean state has not clearly defined the ‘multiculturalism’ that it envisions, its policy rhetoric does not seem to run counter to the aforementioned values of multiculturalism. For example, N-I Kim, a Korea Immigration Service official, explained that the *Act on the Treatment of Foreigners in Korea*¹⁵, one of the major legal foundations of policies for migrants, was legislated (in 2007) in order to ‘create a society where foreigners, regardless of their ‘race’ and nationality, thrive

¹⁵ In accordance with this *Act*, the Ministry of Justice has endorsed and overseen the *Basic Plan for Foreign Resident Policy* created every five year since 2008. This policy is often called ‘*oegugin chōngch’ae*’ (‘foreigner policy’ in English) in abbreviation. As can be noted both in the title of the *Act* and its policy, it is interesting to see that the term ‘foreigner’ is used to indicate migrants in general. What is paradoxical in this nomenclature is that this policy actually concerns not only ‘foreigners’ but some ‘Korean nationals’ such as marriage immigrants naturalised as Korean citizens. In this sense, this use of the term ‘foreigner’ shows that the common-sensical criteria of distinguishing *foreign* and *national* in Korea is not just based on legal citizenship but also that of ‘race’, ethnicity and culture. In the *second Basic Plan (2013-2017)*, the Ministry of Justice themselves acknowledge that the naming of the policy as a policy for ‘foreigners’ (Kor. *oegugin*) is in fact inaccurate and problematic (FPC (Foreigners’ Policy Committee) 2012, 7). The Ministry explains that this policy actually refers to ‘immigration policy’ (Kor. *imin chōngch’ae*), and the reason that they were reluctant to use the term *imin* (‘immigration’ in English), in the first place, was because they worried it would confuse the public by implying that it is about ‘Koreans emigrating abroad’.

and successfully integrate into society by protecting their human rights and promoting mutual understanding and respect among people' (N-I Kim 2007, 149). In a similar vein, *the Progress Report on the KIIP (Korea Immigration and Integration Program)*¹⁶ defines 'multicultural society' as 'a society where foreigners from diverse cultural backgrounds have an equal opportunity to participate in society, regardless of language, religion, custom, values, nationality, race and ethnicity'¹⁷. If such statements are taken at face value, it seems possible to infer that the Korean government is taking an inclusive approach and considering 'equality' as an important value in integrating migrants of ethnically different backgrounds. Yet critical investigations of actual policies claim that Korean multicultural policies are not an attempt to provide migrants with equal rights nor to legitimise their social membership¹⁸.

This critique mainly focuses on the fact that substantive policy measures are undertaken only targeting a specific group of migrants, female marriage immigrants, despite its benign and seemingly progressive rhetoric of multiculturalism. H-J Kim (2007, 67) pointed out the fact that the basic framework of social integration and support for marriage immigrants – the government's first plan to appropriate multicultural rhetoric – was, in fact, developed by the *Presidential Committee on Aging Society and Population Policy*¹⁹. This reveals that the government's

¹⁶ The *KIIP* is a policy programme for immigrant integration, run by the Korea Immigration Service under the Ministry of Justice (delivered by various organisations selected through a tendering process). This programme offers some incentives to immigrants who finish the course, such as an exemption from the mandatory writing test needed to be taken when applying for naturalisation.

¹⁷ Cited in J-K Park 2010, p. 268. *The Progress Report on the KIIP* was published in November 2008.

¹⁸ See, for example, G-S Han 2007; K-S Oh et al. 2007; T. Lim 2010; Eom 2011; J.K. Kim 2011.

¹⁹ After the *Presidential Committee on Aging Society and Population Policy* first designed the policy for female marriage migrants, the launching of the plan was carried out by the *Presidential Committee on Social Inclusion*. Despite its 'multicultural' rhetoric, suspicion has been raised as to whether social

multicultural initiative was to solve Korea's demographic problem, i.e. low fertility rate and aging population (*ibid.*). Hence, from the very beginning of policy development, the Korean state considered these female marriage migrants as a tool to solve the demographic problem, while largely excluding the majority of migrants – that is, migrant workers. Despite the proliferation of multicultural discourses, the Korean state has controlled its border very tightly up till present time, to the extent that migrant workers hardly have any chance to secure their long-term stay or permanent residence, which, in turn, has justified their limited access to various rights.

In this sense, Oh (2007b, 33-4) places the essence of multiculturalism in ‘postnational citizenship’ in accordance to what Soysal (1994) explains, migrants should be granted universal rights regardless of their membership status in a nation-state. From this perspective, he claims that the current form of Korean multicultural policies does not attempt nor result in the expansion of equal rights (*ibid.*). Similarly, J-S Kim (2011) insists that Korean multiculturalism is no more than a label that, in fact, contradicts the fundamental idea of multiculturalism – the extension of universal human rights.

Human rights discourses developed by migrant workers and Korean activists in the 1990s to challenge the system that had made migrant workers ‘illegal’, and consequently rightless, have become deradicalised in the context of the emergence of multicultural discourses. The state’s co-optation of multicultural discourse has

inclusion and multiculturalism was actually the main rationale of the plan, because the plan itself had been devised by the aforementioned Committee whose initial aim was population control.

created an environment where NGOs were both forced and attracted to get involved in this specific ‘multicultural’ policy framework for the integration of marriage immigrants or the implementation of cultural and educational programmes in partnership with government (S-O Lee 2007; G-S Han 2011). In addition, such practical focus on marriage immigrants central to multicultural policy design has effectively compartmentalised migrant workers and marriage migrants into the two different categories and, at the same time, engendered the hierarchisation of rights among migrants. In this sense, Oh (2007b, 34-5) criticises that Korean multicultural policies have deployed a tactic of ‘divide and rule’ in order to obstruct solidarity among migrants, lacking any intention of enhancing equality for migrants in general.

Furthermore, despite a dramatic increase in various welfare programmes for migrant women, implemented over a relatively short period of time since the mid-2000s (H-S Kim 2010, 8), these social policy measures and accompanying multicultural discourse have largely framed these women as ‘pitiful others’ who needed to be taken care of (H-S Kim 2008, 52). In this sense, multicultural policies do not consider even its major beneficiary – the female marriage immigrant – as a bearer of rights, but merely as an instrument to fix Korea’s population and family problems (cf. Kim and Chun 2008). This can be proved by the fact that policy support for these women has been justified on the ground that they are part of the Korean family (and mother to a Korean child) (see M-J Kim 2006; H-M Kim 2007; H-M Kim 2008b). Hence, if I borrow a term from Hannah Arendt, in the case of these women, recognition of ‘the right to have rights’ is only *partially* and *conditionally* granted. In this sense, H-M Kim (2008b, 65) criticises that multiculturalism, an idea that supposedly strengthens equality among diverse members of society, has been

decoupled from its original guiding principle in Korea and has been appropriated by the state as a tool to manage marriage migrant women.

The fact that Korean multicultural policies do not have a clear vision nor follow-up plan to enhance multicultural awareness among the majority within Korean society, i.e. among ‘native Koreans’, is also criticised as an obstacle in eradicating discrimination against migrants and enhancing equality. Commentators argue that current multicultural policies are deficient in improving ‘mutual’ understanding despite the fact that such understanding is key to a multicultural society (see Y-S Kim et al. 2007; Y-J Yang 2007).

No place for cultural rights

In relation to the aforementioned one-directional approach towards integrating migrants into the Korean society, Korean multiculturalism is considered to be far from the idea of accommodating the right to difference, particularly in terms of cultural rights of minorities. Commentators argue that the current form of multicultural policies is completely assimilationist, judging from the fact that support programmes for (female) marriage immigrants have mainly consisted of Korean language learning courses, Korean cooking classes, traditional Korean culture classes and everyday Korean culture classes where these women learn Korean family relations and manners for everyday life situations (see Y-S Kim et al. 2006; W. Kim 2011).

Although there are other cultural programmes such as migrants' cultural festivals funded by the government, this type of event is not free from criticisms, because they are usually one-off interventions, hardly capable of creating a sustainable environment for mutual understanding (see Hong 2008a; Y-S Kim et al. 2008). Furthermore, these festivals often objectify migrants through an essentialised understanding of their cultures (see Shim 2007; W. Kim 2011). Using Taylor's theorisation of multiculturalism as a reference in critiquing Korean multiculturalism, W. Kim (2011) argues that the Korean state and NGOs have never truly attempted to recognise the equal value of different cultures nor created conditions for migrants' 'cultural survival'. Indeed, Charles Taylor (1992), in his essay, *The Politics of Recognition*, argues for recognition as a vital human need by stating 'nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppressions' (p. 25). From this perspective, he claims that difference-blind liberalism, failing to acknowledge cultural distinctiveness, cannot recognise the equal worth of cultures and thereby cannot ensure the survival of diverse cultures. Y-S Kim et al. (2008, 74) explain that the indifference to migrants' right to difference²⁰ stems from the fact that state multicultural policies were initially devised to overcome the '(potential) negative impacts that their differences bring about'. In this sense, migrants have been treated as a potential threat (whose diverse cultures might disrupt social cohesion) rather than members of society whose cultural rights need to be acknowledged.

Though the above-mentioned critics might not agree on the extent and the ways in which a certain value (such as equality and recognition) needs to be pushed forward,

²⁰ It needs to be noted that this does not mean indifference to difference. On the contrary, as explained so far, the development of multicultural policies itself was a conscious, pre-emptive effort to control differences.

the majority of them criticises Korean multiculturalism for being far from ‘multiculturalism proper’. Indeed, many of them agree that Korea’s multicultural policy is closer to a *differential exclusion model* (and in the case of policies for female marriage immigrants, having some aspects of *assimilation*) according to Castles’ (1995) typology of different approaches to migrant incorporation (cf. Seol et al. 2006; Y-S Kim et al. 2007; Oh 2007b; Ko 2008; Won and Park 2009; J-K Park 2010). Stephen Castles (1995; 2002) identifies three main approaches concerning the ways in which each country deals with migrants: *differential exclusion*, *assimilation*, and *multiculturalism*. Differential exclusion adopted by guest-worker-recruiting countries like Germany in the 1960s implies the approach to accept immigrants only within functional and temporal limits. This model allows immigrants only to be incorporated into certain areas of society, such as the labour market, but excludes immigrants and their descendants from others such as political participation. This model maintains a strict distinction between citizens and immigrants. In the model of assimilation, immigrants are expected to give up their cultural and linguistic characteristics to be entirely integrated into host societies. This model is different from the differential exclusion model in that immigrants are largely included on the condition that they adopt the new national identity of the host country. Yet it also differs from multiculturalism for it imposes only a one-sided adaptation of immigrants. Compared to the aforementioned two models whose primary commonality is a belief that the host society should not change because of immigrants, the multicultural model denotes recognition of social, cultural changes brought by immigrants. Immigrants are allowed (and encouraged) to maintain their own culture(s) and are not discriminated on the basis of their differences.

Although I mostly agree with the diagnosis that Korea's current policies work closer to the policy model of differential exclusion betraying its 'multicultural' label, particularly concerning the discrepancy between what the government says they do (or aspire to do) and what they actually do, the way in which the majority of criticisms, explicitly and implicitly, presuppose 'multiculturalism proper' as a reference point that current Korean multiculturalism needs to emulate seems more problematic than useful. It is understandable that many researchers look to other countries (mostly Western countries) that have already implemented such policies, since Korea is obviously a latecomer in the multicultural policy-making market. For instance, A.E. Kim (2010, 127) argues that the Korean government should look into multicultural policies adopted by 'such immigrant societies as the United States, Canada, Australia and European countries to learn from their experiences' by noting that multiculturalism as a policy and ideology is misunderstood and the term multicultural is misused in Korea. Learning from others' experiences and importing good practices, programmes or appropriate models is certainly not confined to multicultural policy development but prevalent in the field of public policy in general. Indeed, the term 'multicultural' came to be used in the context of policy-making in Korea as a result of policy transfer. In this sense, Korea has been influenced by the global diffusion of multiculturalism that Kymlicka (2007) underscores as follows:

A set of ideas about the importance of accommodating diversity is being circulated by international networks of non-governmental organisations, scholars, and policy-makers. On virtually any given day of the year, somewhere in the world an international organisation is sponsoring a seminar or publishing a report intended to publicise the ideals and practices of multiculturalism. These activities often involve sharing knowledge about "best practices" in various countries, building transnational

networks of experts and advocates, creating space for the safe expression of politically sensitive topic, and training local educators, bureaucrats, NGOs and media personnel in the challenges of accommodating a multiethnic and multicultural population. (Kymlicka 2007, 3-4)

As for the case of Korea, a telling example is the case of the CERD (the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination) a UN-affiliated organisation exerting its influence to change racially charged terms. In 2007, the CERD advised the Korean government against using racially discriminatory terms such as ‘pure-blood’ and ‘mixed-blood’. This prompted the use of the term ‘multicultural’ to be widely circulated in Korea as a politically correct way of naming migrants instead of the commonly used term, ‘mixed-blood’. What critics of current multicultural policies have emphasised to date is that the Korean state, coerced into adopting this international norm, does not truly agree with the ideology of multiculturalism nor does it intend to implement genuinely multicultural practices (cf. K-K Han 2007; A.E. Kim 2010). In this vein, researchers often focus on revealing the aberrant nature of Korean multiculturalism as a policy that does not live up to its name by drawing upon theories of liberal multiculturalism and comparing Korea’s policy programmes with those of other countries (cf. Y-S Kim 2007; T-J Lee et al. 2007; Yoo 2010). Despite the validity of this critical stance on the discrepancy between the rhetoric and actual policy, such an approach does not seem quite sufficient to narrow the gap between the ideal of multiculturalism and the not-so multicultural policies in Korea. Indeed, it seems that the idealised view of multiculturalism is starting to face increased amount of academic rejection, and doubts have been raised as to whether multiculturalism is a suitable policy model for diversity management in Korea (cf. Seol 2009; Y-M Kim 2013). In the face of this critical onslaught, it is arguably more

important to capture the complex political dynamics of multicultural policy development than to point out the inconsistency between policy rhetoric and practice based on the normative justification of multiculturalism. This requires us not to reduce the process of multicultural policy-making and implementation merely to a mechanical process of choosing the right policy model. Rather more rigorous analyses are called for to understand the persisting motivation for the state to maintain this inconsistency, how policy development reflects and also shapes the politics of belonging, and what kind of stakeholders are involved in this.

As mentioned earlier, doubts have been raised in Korean academia against the notion of multiculturalism as a progressive ideology. Some commentators criticise the academic tendency of postulating multiculturalism as a positive ideology, and practices of importing Western examples and applying them to Korea (see Eom 2006; H-S Kim 2006; 2010; Seol 2009; Jeon 2009). They also point out that there is no consensus on what multiculturalism means in Korea. Seol (2009), for instance, insists that the concept of ‘multiculturalism’ is analytically useless in Korea because Korea’s approach to migrant integration is not based on the model of multiculturalism at all. For him, if the concept itself is only used to criticise the fact that Korean multiculturalism is not genuine, it is best discarded, and Korean immigration policy needs to be simply classified as a combination of differential exclusion and assimilation (*ibid.*). Yet this type of argument goes beyond merely pointing out the inaccuracy of Korea’s use of the term multiculturalism. By drawing attention to Korea’s difference from Western countries in regards to conditions of migrant integration, such as the composition of immigrants and its relatively small number, disenchanted scholars urge caution against the celebratory discourses of

multiculturalism and raise the question of ‘why multiculturalism?’ In this sense, Seol (2009) rejects the idea that the model of assimilation implemented in France and Germany is purely ‘ethnocentrism’, and suggests it should be re-considered as a viable way of integrating migrants in Korea as well.

As mentioned earlier, I agree that multiculturalism imposed as a politically correct ideology can be problematic, especially when it is divorced from the specific historical and political context in which it is implemented. Yet the emerging academic backlash against multiculturalism, often presenting itself as politically neutral and pragmatic, in contrast to the allegedly dogmatic defence of normative multiculturalism, in fact bends the stick too far in the other direction making unnecessary (and almost fictitious) accusations against multiculturalism. This is problematic because the call for a retreat from the abused concept of multiculturalism often reduces it to a naively idealistic discourse, which has been talked about ‘too much’, and which does not really fit Korea’s situation. In so doing, this rejection of multiculturalism, in fact, circumvents an already existing muddled reality where actual policies and ideas are produced in conjunction with the ‘multicultural’ label. However contradictory these various considerations, concerns, and practices are to the normative idea of multiculturalism, it is undeniable that they do exist competing against or, at times, fusing with each other. In this sense, as Hall (2000, 211) writes, the fact that the concept of multiculturalism ‘means so many different things and so effectively draws the fire of such diverse and contradictory enemies,’ does not undermine the value of the term. Rather, what is called upon is a sharp and persistent observation of its contested status. Furthermore, this refutation of an allegedly dogmatic position on multiculturalism implicitly projects

multiculturalism as a (future) grab bag for all sorts of social problems, as can be seen in the recent backlash against multiculturalism in Europe. Indeed, this European backlash is often taken at face value and used as justification for discrediting multiculturalism in Korea (cf. Jung and Huh 2011; Y-M Kim 2013; Seol and Lee 2013). In this sense, this growing scepticism about multiculturalism also draws upon Western discourses of multicultural failure just as Korean multiculturalists have referred to Western multicultural policies. As G-S Han (2012) argues when he scrutinises such antagonism towards multiculturalism, this European backlash discourse neither proves multiculturalism is a failed experiment in Europe nor means multiculturalism cannot be successful in Korea. I suspect that both an epistemological position predicated on the idea of ‘multiculturalism proper’ and an intellectual iconoclast type of approach to multiculturalism, unwittingly foreclose critical and contextual examinations of the politics of multiculturalism, by obsessing too much about clearing up the conceptual confusion around multiculturalism.

1.3. Implicit consensus on Korea’s ‘racial irrelevance’

One of the influential studies on multiculturalism in Korea, *Multiculturalism in South Korea: A Critical Review* (2007), edited by Kyung-Seok Oh, attempts to bring politics into the analysis of Korean multiculturalism, without positing the progressiveness of multiculturalism as a given, nor limiting the discussion of multiculturalism to a technical question of selecting one policy option among several. In this collection of essays Oh (2007b) emphasises the importance of asking questions about who actually owns the discourse of multiculturalism and whom multiculturalism is for. By pointing out that the current form of Korean multiculturalism treats migrants as objects rather than subjects, Oh problematises the

absence of the voices of migrants themselves not only in the process of government policy development and implementation, but also in the activities of migrant support NGOs (Oh 2007a; Oh and Jung 2006). In analysing the ways in which multicultural discourses are appropriated by the state and intertwined with other ideologies such as nationalism and statism, Oh (2007a) argues that Korean multiculturalism does not debilitate the homogenising force of modern nationalist projects nor question its limited notion of citizenship. Rather, ‘conservative’ multicultural discourses circulating in Korea effectively suppress migrants’ rights and create a division not only between native Koreans and migrants, but also among migrants themselves, particularly through the differential distribution of rights and resources (*ibid.*). To counter this and maximise the potential of multiculturalism as an alternative project that re-imagines the boundary of nation-states and citizenship, he argues for a grass-root level multiculturalism where migrants can be empowered by each other in solidarity (2007b).

Oh’s approach, which construes the current form of Korean multiculturalism as a mode of governmentality, is insightful for it not only challenges the discursive parameters set on how to discuss multiculturalism within Korean academia, but it also brings politics into multiculturalism studies by critically investigating the role of the state. I also sympathise with his argument for the need to re-appropriate multiculturalism as an emancipatory politics from the grassroots. For this to take place, Oh claims that a ‘new multiculturalism’ needs to be reconstructed in Korea by asserting migrants’ ‘right to stay’, ‘right to work’, and their ‘transformative capacity’ while distancing it from the language of ‘culture’ (Oh 2007b). I suspect that Oh (2007b) uses the term ‘transformative capacity’ in Giddens’ sense of ‘the capability

of the individual to “make a difference” and ‘to exercise some sort of power’ (Giddens 1984, 14). Giddens (1993, 110) writes: “‘Power’ in the sense of transformative capacity of human agency is the capability of the actor to intervene in a series of events so as to alter their course; as such it is the “can” which mediates between intentions or wants and the actual realization of the outcomes sought after.’ Oh (2007b) also argues that it is of great importance for migrants to have power over their own life, that is, to make their own decisions and altering their ways of life at will. And for this, he urges the need to operationalise multiculturalism that does not limit itself to claims for cultural differences (*ibid*).

Though this is definitely a valid claim, particularly considering the fact that the cultural rhetoric of multiculturalism often diverts attention from structural inequality, Oh stops short of unearthing the underlying mechanism that strips migrants of their basic rights and its relationship with the politics of multiculturalism. This is perhaps the reason why his formulation of an alternative multiculturalism remains somewhat abstract. In order to concretise this vision, I believe that a more rigorous scrutiny of what multiculturalism *does*, particularly concerning the ways in which ‘race’ and nation are reconfigured, is necessary.

Indeed, it is odd that racism has hardly attracted scholarly attention in Korea despite a plethora of discussions about multiculturalism. Of the small number of extant studies looking at ‘race’ and racism, the majority has been produced within the field of media studies, especially in the area of research on the media representation of

racial others.²¹ Besides such research in the field of media and cultural studies, there are studies on the ways in which immigrants feel about their racial and national identities, how Koreans perceive immigrants and racial minorities, and what kind of prejudice and discrimination they face in Korean society.²² However, in the majority of research on migrants and multiculturalism, racism is hardly examined, or if mentioned, is simply characterised as individual prejudice to be rectified through education, or rather referred to as ethnocentrism/xenophobia. Also there seems to be a strong academic tendency to dismiss ‘race’ and racism as useful analytical concepts, particularly when examining discrimination in Korea (e.g. H-S Kim 2010). Such dismissal is predicated on mainly two different rationales. Firstly and more tacitly, ‘race’ as a biological category is perceived to be pseudo-scientific and thus invalid, so it should not be used. Secondly, discrimination against migrants in Korea is not based on racial differences but rather on differences in nationality (mostly in relation to the degree of economic development of each country) (e.g. H-S Kim 2010, 33) and on ethnic differences (e.g. A.E. Kim 2010). As I will argue later on (particularly in Chapter four), both rationales are problematic, since they tacitly circumvent racism by understanding ‘race’ only as a (false) biological concept and racism as false consciousness based on such understanding of ‘race’.

Even when racism is acknowledged as a structural problem, the degree and extent of the incidence of racism in contemporary Korea is not considered as serious as it is in other countries (e.g. Eom 2006). This stance is problematic since it (unintentionally)

²¹ See, for example, D-H Lee 2006; Jung and Lee 2007; H-E Lee et al. 2007; K-H Kim 2009; Y-R Kim et al. 2009; Hong and Kim 2010; M-J Park 2011; S. Kim 2012.

²² See, for example, K-T Park 1999; G-S Han 2003; D-S Kim et al. 2003; Seol and Han 2004; K-T Park 2005; Seol 2006; J-B Lee 2009; M-Y Oh 2009.

reduces racism to ‘overt’ prejudice and more importantly, understands racism to be caused by in-coming migrants. For example, Eom (2006) explains that the Korean case is different from many Western countries where the root of contemporary immigration can be traced back to their history of colonisation, and also different from many non-Western countries whose population is multi-ethnic. According to him, Korea is in a transitional phase in which xenophobia is turning into racism because the diversification in its population is a fairly new phenomenon (*ibid.*). By illustrating this transition, he states that racism arises when heterogeneous groups start to cohabit (*ibid.*). Though I also think specificities of Korean racism definitely need to be taken into account when examining its historical and contemporary articulation, I do not think racism takes place because of the increase in interactions between racially different groups. By placing the cause of racism to ethnic diversification (or by presenting racism as a natural byproduct of increasing ethnic diversification), racism is delinked from the state and also from the racialised construction of Koreanness itself. Consequently, the prevalent scholarly reticence and narrow understanding (or misunderstanding) of racism contributes to making racism invisible in Korea.

Indeed, race critical studies have been, historically, almost non-existent in Korea. In particular, the ways in which Koreanness has been racialised historically and conditioned by the global discourse of ‘race’ is significantly understudied. Among the few scholars who critically interrogate the historical development of racial nationalism, Vladimir Tikhonov²³ examines the development of nationalism and

²³ His Korean name is Noja Park. He got married to a Korean woman and was naturalised as a Korean citizen.

social-Darwinist thought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and Gi-Wook Shin explores the historical dominance of a racialised notion of nation in Korea while conceptualising Korean ethnic nationalism.²⁴ Such academic silence about ‘race’ is not only limited to research of the past. How the interaction between racism and nationalism is articulated in emerging multicultural discourses is largely absent in the existing literature. Also there is hardly any serious attempt to address racism either in the policy development process²⁵ or in intellectual discourses about multiculturalism. K-T Park (2009), Liem (2010), H-S Jeong (2010) and Ha (2012) are among the few researchers that critically engage with the issues of racism in relation to contemporary multicultural development in Korea. Park (2009), in his introductory work on the genealogy of racism and the ways in which racism appears in multicultural Korea, explains various forms of discrimination against migrants by applying the concept of ‘new racism’ – a prevalent contemporary form of racism based on cultural arguments of human differences instead of the biological ones of old racism (Barker 1981). Liem (2010), based on Omi and Winant’s theory of racial formation (1986), provides a schematic explanation of South Korean ‘racial projects’ illustrated in issues of crackdowns and criminalisation. In so doing, she urges for the interrogation of the intersection of ‘race’ and class and criticises multiculturalism as an ideology that conceals structural racism and class exploitation (*ibid.*). Jeong (2010), particularly focusing on the intersection of ‘race’ and gender, argues that racism is constantly reproduced in Korea despite the development of multicultural

²⁴ See G-W Shin 2006; Tikhonov 2001, 2010, 2012a, 2012b. My Chapter three, a historical analysis of racial nationalism in South Korea, draws upon these previous studies.

²⁵ The *Anti-racism Bill* (literal translation of Korean title: *Prohibition of Racial Discrimination Act*) was proposed by an MP, Jun Byung-hun, but failed to be submitted to the National Assembly because opposition prevailed during the public consultation process in 2010 (see Chapter four for more details).

policies. Ha (2012), in his compelling article *Yellow Skin, White Masks*, explores the connection between the historical construction of internalised white racism in Korea and its contemporary workings, particularly in relation to Korea's state multiculturalism. However, apart from the small number of studies that discusses racism, there is notable silence about 'race' and racism in academia that indeed, can be understood as a specific mode through which racism articulates itself.

In contrast with the absence of studies on racism, nationalism – often qualified as 'ethnic nationalism' – has been castigated as a questionable ideology in the majority of literature on multiculturalism. Particularly, the 'pure-blood' ideology in which Korean ethnic nationalism is supposedly anchored, is often analysed as a false but pervasive belief and also a cause of negative perceptions towards migrants (see B-S Park 2011). However well meant these criticisms of ethnic nationalism are, they are not without problems, particularly in that this repudiation of ethnic nationalism often does not provide a concrete and conjunctural analysis of nationalism. As such, the simplistic dismissal of ethnic nationalism as a 'bad' ideology that should be abandoned in the present time, paradoxically discounts the enduring power of nationalism as both official and popular ideology.

Some commentators have provided different arguments about the specificities of Korean nationalism or its relationship with multiculturalism. For example, by criticising the interpretation of Korean nationalism as a pure blood ideology that causes contemporary discrimination against migrants, Han and Han (2007) trace the origin of Korean nationalism back to the adoption of a sinocentric cultural distinction between *Hua* and *Yi* (Sino-barbarian dichotomy) in *Chosōn* dynasty (1392 – 1897).

The Hua-Yi distinction, which originally differentiated superior Chinese from inferior foreign others, was based on culture (i.e. the degree of civilisation whose essence was centred in Chinese values and customs) instead of ‘race’ or ethnicity, although the notion of culture certainly was intertwined with ethnic differences. This concept travelled outside of China’s geographical territory at the time including other polities such as what was then Korea – where this idea was enthusiastically embraced by the Confucian ruling elite from the late fourteenth century – and influenced the way different polities in the region see the world (Chang 2011, 107).

Han and Han (2007) maintain that elites of the Chosōn dynasty came to think that the Chosōn dynasty’s level of civilisation had reached the same level as that of Hua and such belief in its own cultural superiority was expressed in discrimination against foreign groups conceived as barbarians. Based on this historical reflection, they argue that discrimination against migrants in contemporary multicultural society is rather driven by this belief in cultural superiority than by an obsession with the Korean bloodline (*ibid.*).

Also in line with this attempt to challenge the taken-for-granted assumption of the notion of blood purity central to Korean nationalism, Choe’s (2007) analysis of survey²⁶ results shows that Koreans do not necessarily base the notion of national identity in blood ties. Employing the conceptual distinction between civic and ethnic nations, Choe (2007) finds that Koreans puts great importance in the political conception of citizenship when defining national identity. Inferring from this

²⁶ Choe (2007) uses data from the ‘Survey of Public Opinions on Multicultural Society’ commissioned by the Korean Women’s Development Institute and conducted in 2007. This survey sought to find out how Koreans conceive their national identity and feel about migrants.

observation, he emphasises that Korean nationalism can be classified as a civic nationalism rather than an ethnic one.

If aforementioned studies try to provide different explanations of the nature of Korean nationalism, there are studies which question the conventional wisdom of the incompatibility of nationalism and multiculturalism. For example, J-T Kim (2012) maintains that the argument that presupposes the causal relationship between negative perceptions of foreign migrants and nationalism lacks sufficient evidence. Rather, as corroborated by widespread antagonistic feelings against Korean Chinese migrants (who share an ethnic Korean heritage), he argues that a hierarchical distinction between *sōnjin'guk* (developed country) and *hujin'guk* (developing countries)²⁷ exerts a greater influence than ethnicity in determining attitudes towards different migrant groups (*ibid.*). Furthermore, he identifies an affinity between this *sōnjin'guk* discourse and multiculturalism in that multiculturalism is considered as a necessary tool for Korea to join the group of advanced countries.

I concur that instead of sweeping and hollow criticisms of nationalism as an outdated ideology, it is of utmost importance to critically examine various modalities of nationalism underpinning contemporary discrimination against migrants. The abovementioned studies are surely attempts to deal with troublesome issues of nationalism in a multicultural society. However, even within such endeavours, the complex and flexible nature of nationalism is often neglected while nationalism is

²⁷ The literal English translation of *sōnjin'guk* is an *advanced country* and *hujin'guk* a *backward country*. While the classification schema of advanced countries and backward countries largely accords with that of developed countries and developing countries, the connotations in the Korean language are more blatant in expressing its developmental aspiration as can be seen in the literal translation.

conceived as a static, monolithic entity. For me, it seems unnecessary (and also quite impossible) to decide whether Korean nationalism can be best explained by the centrality of ethnicity or its association with cultural superiority. The same could be said for discussions of whether civic aspects are more salient in Korean nationalism than ethnic ones. Also it seems unlikely that the discourse of *sōnjin’guk* does not hinge on the development of nationalism. Characterising nationalism as either this or that (or more of this than that) easily leads to its oversimplification based on the binary conceptions of biology and culture, ethnic and civic, or ethnic nationalism and developmentalism. And by doing so, this type of approach tends to ignore the dynamic relationship between various ideas, which collectively constitute nationalism as a historically powerful ideology.

In this sense, this thesis seeks to look into why there is no talk about racism in South Korea, and how the notions of ‘race’ and nation are modulated by multicultural discourses. As mentioned earlier, the implicit rationales underpinning the academic silence about ‘race’/racism in South Korea seem to be mainly three-fold. Firstly, the concept of ‘race’ and scientific racism were endemic in Western conceptualisation of the world and the historical development of racism was seen as largely irrelevant to Korea (and if anything, Koreans were its victims). Secondly, since Korea was ethnically homogeneous (i.e. racial purity is considered to be preserved within the Korean territory until the twentieth century), racism as such could not have developed. Thirdly, the concepts of ‘race’ and racism are taken to be not analytically useful and academically legitimate because ‘race’ can no longer be understood as a categorisation of human groups. From this perspective, discrimination against

migrants in contemporary Korean society is often loosely explained as xenophobia, an expression of ethnocentrism (or ethnic nationalism).

These beliefs about Korea's 'racial irrelevance' are indeed tenacious and have been hardly challenged within Korean academia, and there is a paucity of race critical approaches in analysing the Korean context. In this sense, Korean academia, I argue, has been complicit to some extent in silencing racism as a historical and political process and in contributing to the dissemination of the idea of Korea's 'racial irrelevance'. The pitfalls of such claims will be shown, throughout the thesis, by examining the historical workings of Korean nationalism and contemporary multicultural discourses. Here, I briefly explain why the aforementioned rationales are misguided. The claim that since racism is a foreign concept it is, thus, extraneous to the course of Korean history is not only illogical (in that the origin of a concept does not predetermine its relevance to a certain country), but also counter-factual. Racism, as Dirlak (2008, 1375) writes, may have been born and developed in the West, 'but it is no longer merely Euro-American, since it has been internalized in the worldviews of populations around the world.' It is hardly deniable that scientific racism travelled to other parts of the world through colonial/imperial projects and provided the template for conceptualising human differences and hierarchically categorising internal and external populations. This is also the case in the East Asian region, as argued by Dikötter (1997) in the case of China; Weiner (1997) in Japan, and Tikhonov (2010) in Korea.

Secondly, the assumption that Korea's ethnic homogeneity has left no room for the existence of racism is also counter-factual in that it ignores the discrimination and

even expulsion of mixed-race people, and also the exclusion of the ethnic Chinese in Korea (Kor. *Hwagyo*) from participation in the socio-economic and political life of Korean society, in the course of Korea's modern history. Furthermore, this type of claim is flawed in that it often conceives racism as a natural outcome of increasing diversity in contemporary Korean society. Yet, racism cannot be explained as a by-product of racial diversity, as much as it cannot be simplistically presumed that increasing interactions between racially different groups will eradicate racism. Thus, such a causal (or circumstantial, at the very least) formulation of the relationship between racism and the existence (or number) of racial others, recently migrating to Korea, not only distorts the historical facts, but can also be easily absorbed into anti-immigration arguments that assign the cause of racism to the influx of migrants.

The third rationale provided by the ‘race avoidant’ tendency within Korean academia at first glance seems to be in line with the global academic tendency to move beyond ‘race’ and racism by problematising the use of ‘race’ as a critical concept and the over-generalisation of the term racism. Indeed, for most contemporary students of ‘race’ and racism, it is always dilemmatic that even the critical use of the term ‘race’ cannot completely eliminate the risk of essentialising racial identities. However, without engaging with the concept, I believe the (re)production of racism can easily disappear from our sight. Surely, testing the accuracy and validity of concepts and formulating new concepts that have more explanatory power is a legitimate academic exercise. Yet, I have reservations about the outright rejection of the use of ‘race’ as an analytical tool and the banishment (or the strictly limited use) of the term racism, since this position often collapses into the denial of racism and racialisation as grounds for inequality and exclusion. Furthermore, the ‘race avoidance’ in Korean

academia cannot be understood to stem from the critical engagement with concepts of ‘race’ and racism, particularly considering the fact that there has been virtually no discussion around this subject in Korea. In this sense, the idea of ‘race’ as a non-concept functions as tacit knowledge that discourages academic inquiry into racism and racialisation.

Thus, the concepts of ‘race’ and racism seem to be dismissed in Korean academia having little chance of being critically tested in the Korean context. Against this backdrop, discriminatory discourses and practices against migrants and the rise of anti-immigration politics are loosely termed as ‘xenophobia’ caused by ‘ethnocentrism’. However, the concrete meaning of these terms are rarely explained in most research of contemporary multicultural issues in Korea. When defined, xenophobia loosely means an ‘unreasonable fear or hatred of strangers, foreigners, and their cultures’ which has its root in ethnocentrism (D-I Lee 2012, 100-101). And ethnocentrism is often assumed as a ‘tendency to judge all other ethnic groups by the standards of one’s own particular culture and value, and not to endorse different ethnic groups’ (K-M Yang 2009, 393). Certainly the manifestation of anti-immigrant sentiment in Korea can be seen as a rise of xenophobia, which often employs the rhetoric of ethnocentrism (see Chapter four and six for the analysis of far-right anti-multicultural discourses). However, the ways in which migrants are differentiated from the majority, ‘native Koreans’, and the ways in which different groups of migrants are differently identified, categorised, and treated cannot be fully grasped by the term ‘xenophobia’ or ‘ethnocentrism’. These terms usually describe contemporary forms of anti-immigrant attitudes and practices that only draw the line between one’s own ethnic group and in-coming ‘foreigners’. In order to provide a

more accurate and full account of the conditions and complex dynamics that produce strangers/foreigners, it is important to look into how the boundary between the self and the Other is *racialised* and also how ‘race’ operates as an important element in determining the degree and modalities of ‘foreignness’. As Balibar (2009) writes, when he examines the ideas of sovereignty, citizenship, and political belonging in the context of contemporary Europe:

[T]here are no longer any “foreigners” in a simple legal sense, because some are “assimilated” – they are *less than foreign*, no longer really “strange”, instead becoming “neighbours” – while others are “dissimilated”. They are *more than foreign*, as it were, becoming “absolutely strange” or “aliens”. (Balibar 2009, 204, emphasis in original)

This phenomenon is also observed in the Korean context, as will be analysed in detail in the following chapters. In this vein, this thesis attempts to explain how the idea of ‘race’ underlies and modulates this differential distribution of ‘foreignness’. Another significant problem in the aforementioned use of the terms xenophobia and ethnocentrism is that the distinction between xenophobia and racism is inaccurately made and unfairly applied to the Korean context. According to Eom (2006, 50), xenophobia is primary dislike and fear of outsiders appearing when ethnic diversity starts to increase in a society, whilst racism comes into existence after a long period of co-existence with different ethnic groups and when this state of coexistence has become permanent. Based on such a distinction, it is argued that Koreans’ negative attitudes towards migrants can be understood as xenophobia rather than racism, considering the fact that Korea’s homogenous past only provided Koreans with limited opportunity of interaction with different ethnic groups (see Eom 2006; Hwang et al. 2007). Apart from this problematic relation between the amount of

interaction and the rise of racism that this definition sets up (as discussed earlier), such a simplistic explanation engenders the naturalisation of xenophobia and ethnocentrism, and silences the discussion of racism. In my view, one of the more useful ways to think about the distinction between xenophobia and racism is the question of power. As Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992, 12) argue, xenophobia turns into racism ‘when there are power relations involved’. Yet, what I am most concerned here is not with how to make a valid distinction between the terms, but with the fact that the articulation of the Korean case as a form of xenophobia and ethnocentrism reproduces the dominant understanding of ‘Korea’s racial irrelevance’ and often presents racially inflected realities as benign and natural. In this sense, it is all the more important to re-scrutinise the dominant academic practices of conceptualising (and at times, normalising) Korean nationalism in separation from racism.

As Balibar (1991b) argues with respect to the relationship between nationalism and racism, the concept of nationalism never functions alone, but always works in relation with other ideas and signifiers within a specific historical time and context. In other words, nationalism has proven to be an eminently adaptable ideology whose present workings in constructing the boundary of nation, and concomitantly the notion of self and the Other in conjunction with its historical development merit attention. From this perspective, I argue that it is impossible to understand Korean nationalism without including racism in it. It should be noted that the sharp compartmentalisation between nationalism and racism is not confined to academic practices of Korean scholars. For example, Benedict Anderson ([1983]1991), whose notion of ‘imagined communities’ has been greatly influential in understanding

modern nations, insists on the clear distinction between nationalism and racism by emphasising their different origins and implications. For him, ‘nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies’ that evoke feelings of ‘profound self-sacrificing love’ in its people, while ‘racism dreams of eternal contaminations’ whose destructive power is induced by fear and hatred of the Other (ibid., 149, 141). This attempt to keep the two sharply separate, constantly differentiates nationalism from racism – one as a ‘normal’ ideology and constructive politics and the other an ‘excessive’ ideology and behaviour (Balibar 1991b, 46). Defying this distinction, Balibar (1991b) underlines the ‘reciprocal determination’ between racism and nationalism by bringing our attention to the fact that ‘race’ and nation operate in tandem throughout modern history. According to him, not only are these two interrelated, but the relationship between the two is not one of ‘formal similarity’ nor of ‘perversion’, but of ‘historical articulation’ (ibid., 50). In other words, neither is racism just a perverse ‘expression’ of nationalism, nor is nationalism the cause of racism in a mechanistic sense (ibid.)²⁸.

Other scholars of ‘race’ and racism also acknowledge the fact that racism is historically imbricated with nationalism and modernity at large (e.g. Goldberg 1993; 2002; Gilroy 2000). In positing the modern state as nothing less than a ‘racial state’, Goldberg (2002) explains how racialised differences have been and are continuously being created, applied and reproduced in order to construct homogeneity in practices of nation-building and in the development of nationalism. This approach to the interlacing of ‘race’ and nation is, indeed, inextricably linked with the critique of

²⁸ Instead he formulates that racism is *a supplement of nationalism* or more precisely *a supplement internal to nationalism* (ibid. 54).

liberalism's claims to universality. Contrary to the common belief that racism is an extreme example of particularism, deviant from the commitment of liberal modernity to the universal equality of man, racism has been rethought as constituting part of universalism (cf. Goldberg 1993; Balibar 1994; Mills 2003). By creating a 'general idea of man' that persists in establishing the boundary of which man can be man (Balibar 1989, 15), 'liberalism's commitment to principles of universality is practically sustained only by the reinvented and rationalized exclusions of racial particularity' (Goldberg 1993: 39). From this perspective, the common presumption of racism's irrationality is completely refuted. Rather, critical investigation into the genealogy of racism highlights the fact that racism has been 'rationally ordered and legitimated' throughout modernity (ibid., 11), and has structured nation-state formation and the construction of nationalisms.

1.4. Multiculturalism and *the politics of hush*

This thesis stands by the arguments that racism and nationalism cannot be fully explicated without an interrogation of their relationship, and that the understanding of multiculturalism cannot be detached from the examination of the contemporary politics of race and racism. In this sense, I attempt to provide an understanding of what multiculturalism actually *does* rather than to propose what multiculturalism *is* in a normative sense. As previously discussed, I find it hardly constructive that studies about multiculturalism in Korea are preoccupied with debates on the extent to which Korean multiculturalism is aberrant from the multicultural ideal, whether the term multiculturalism has any use in Korea, or which model of migrant integration the Korean government needs to adopt and implement. Such approaches, at best, indicate that Korean multiculturalism involves inconsistencies, revealing

discrepancies between its rhetoric and practices. What seems to be needed, rather, is a close look at the reasons why such discrepancies exist and the ways in which this inconsistency-ridden multiculturalism works as a framework that shapes the politics of race and, at the same time, imagines the nation in certain ways. In this sense, I disagree with the dominant academic viewpoint that treats Korean multiculturalism as an inert phenomenon (both on the level of policy and politics) just because it does not live up to its name. I also would question the notion that the much-criticised discrepancies have been caused simply by the lack of philosophical understanding of the multicultural ideal, or by the inconsistent implementation of multicultural policies.

No matter how contradictory Korean multiculturalism appears to be, it is clear that it generates certain ideological and material effects, as it provides a frame with which racial/cultural differences are conceived and discussed in relation to the making of Korea as a nation. As Goldberg writes, in lieu of reducing multiculturalism to either a political doctrine or to a set of policies, or to an intellectual paradigm and radical critique, it is required to examine ‘concerns and considerations, principles and practices, concepts and categories that now fall under the rubric of “multiculturalism”’ (Goldberg 1994; 2). Hence, this thesis, as Ben Pitcher (2009) does in his analysis of the politics of multiculturalism in Britain, considers multiculturalism as a pragmatic and descriptive concept rather than a normative one, by understanding it as ‘a form of social practice’ through which the contemporary politics of race finds its expression. Put differently, I intend to scrutinise the discourse and practices of multiculturalism and explore what it identifies as

problems, what it proposes as solutions and strategies, and what kind of visions it offers in relation to questions of ‘race’, culture, and belonging.

Particularly, this thesis attempts to make the discussion of ‘race’ (or more accurately, the silence about ‘race’ and racism) central to the analysis of multiculturalism. This deliberate effort might incur the risk of being read as unnecessarily provocative because of its reference to the concept of ‘race’, especially in the Korean context. Indeed, as detected in the aforementioned academic reticence on ‘race’/racism, and as will be further corroborated later in my discussion of the empirical data, bringing up the subject of racism during interviews clearly disturbed the majority of my interviewees and often elicited the dismissal of the subject itself. However, I argue, precisely for this reason, that a critical interrogation of racial politics in relation to multicultural discourses gains more significance in the Korean context. It should be clear by now that I do not take recourse to the use of categorical notions of ‘race’ as a scientifically verifiable reality and do not endorse the reification of ‘race’. Yet, it should be also noted that dismantling ‘race’ as a category (or at a superficial level, simply avoiding the use of the term ‘race’ for categorisation) is what Korea’s state multiculturalism currently focuses on, which in effect, diverts attention from the social reality of racism. In this sense, it seems useful to follow Stravenhagen’s observation, ‘race does not beget racism, but rather racism generates races’ (1999, 6)²⁹, particularly when examining racism in the Korean context. Ahmed (2004) states:

²⁹ See also Guillaumin (1995).

Racism works to produce race as if it was a property of bodies (biological essentialism) or cultures (cultural essentialism). Race exists as an effect of histories of racism as histories of the present. (Ahmed 2004)

Indeed, the Korean case of multiculturalism is emblematic in this regard since historically obscured race-thinking is being grafted onto the process of constructing new racial categories without deploying the language of ‘race’. Accordingly, such categories exert power over the possible course of action of a certain group of people who are ‘seen to inhabit this or that category’ (*ibid.*). As such, multiculturalism serves a dual but conflicting function, in Amin’s (2010) word, ‘doublespeak’. On the one hand, it declares that ‘race’ is not relevant any more. On the other, it constantly engenders racialisation by framing and naming others. Indeed, the employment of the term ‘multicultural’ as a pseudo-racial category in Korea, to wit the use of multicultural as a qualifier of a certain group of people,³⁰ can be seen as a somewhat crude form of ‘anti-racialism’ (Goldberg 2009), that is, resisting the application of racial categories. However, in fact, this seemingly colour-blind language not only is no less racialising but also effectively conceals racism. In this sense, placing stress on the importance of interrogating the ‘non-performativity of anti-racism’³¹ in multicultural politics (Ahmed 2004), I aim to investigate how the declarative mode of promoting multiculturalism reproduces racism. In other words, this thesis explores how the enunciation of multiculturalism as a good, desirable inclination to overcome

³⁰ See Chapter four for detailed discussion.

³¹ Explaining the non-performativity of the performative, Ahmed (2004) maintains ‘the declarative mode involves a fantasy of transcendence in which “what” is transcended is the very “thing” admitted to in the declaration.’ In other words, anti-racist speech acts do not actually do what they say. They create a belief that what is said is already achieved and concurrently let it be negated. For example, the admission of racism as bad practice itself is often endorsed as proof of one’s anti-racist practice, even though it is not materialised in any form of social action.

various forms of prejudices automatically exonerates the enunciators from charges of racism.

In so doing, this thesis particularly focuses on the role of culture appropriated in constructing differences, constituting the dynamics of in/exclusion and at the same time silencing racism. As Lentin (2005) argues, states' implementation of multiculturalism in the post-war Western countries can be seen as a 'culturalist turn' that replaced 'race' with 'culture' as a way of dealing with diversity. For its part, this culturalist turn has been in sync with the project of anti-racialism which has garnered international support after the Holocaust. Though I do not deny that anti-racialism can function as a radical critique and practice in a certain specific context, it is worth acknowledging its limit. This is particularly so considering the ironic fact that culturally based explanations of human differences proffered by multiculturalism have been often co-opted by the racist agenda. Indeed, as Goldberg (2002) discusses in his book *The Racial State*, 'racelessness' has become the primary form of contemporary racisms. The allegedly race-neutral appearance of 'new racism' (Barker 1981) – also called 'racism without race' (Balibar 1991b) and cultural racism – requires us to reflect on culture as an essential constituent of racism. Racism always talks about culture: it could be said that there is no single form of racism which does not use the language of culture in framing differences. Such understanding of the relationship between racism and culture is especially valuable to examine racism in Korea where the process of racialisation heavily draws on cultural differences, both historically and in the present day. And particularly within the prevailing discourses of multiculturalism, it is officially claimed that we now have different but equal cultures instead of a 'hierarchical structure of race'. As a

result, racism does disappear in the field of visibility, but not in reality. Race, in due course, becomes a taboo notion used only by a small number of racists, and racism is disconnected from the state (Lentin 2005). In this vein, this thesis will formulate the workings of state multiculturalism as *the politics of hush* within the Korean context.

As argued above, this examination of the politics of multiculturalism inevitably begs the question of what kind of national self is constructed in tandem with a racial/racist construction of the Other. Multiculturalism does not necessarily need to be conceived within the remit of a nation-state and is, in fact, not always implemented at/through the national level. Yet, I find it useful to conceptualise multiculturalism as strategies mainly employed by the state to manage diversity and to produce certain type of citizens. As such, multiculturalism is not an antithesis of nationalism. Rather, it is often overdetermined by the politics of national identity and its relationship with nationalism is mutually constitutive.

Indeed, the current form of multiculturalism in Korea is more aptly described as multicultural nationalism. Although nationalism (often modulated with qualifiers such as ‘historically strong ethnic’ nationalism) seems to be rejected as an outdated value in contemporary multicultural discourses, this disclaimer itself often embodies a nationalist desire, one that consciously searches for its place in a globalised world. Here, it should be noted that multiculturalism is not only concerned with the management of internal diversity but with the presentation of the self in a larger world.³² For this reason, it is of primary importance to look at the role of the state as

³² See Chapter six for detailed analysis of this point.

a key agent who produces and reproduces ‘the nature of the hegemonic national ethos in the society’ (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992, 27).

As explained earlier, I tend to move beyond the dominant academic tendencies in Korea in terms of delineating the relationship between nationalism and multiculturalism: either a simple presumption of the relationship between nationalism and multiculturalism as antagonistic, or an (implicit) attempt to reconcile the two. Rather, resisting the (intentional) decoupling of ‘race’, nation and culture, this thesis will look closely at the (re)construction of the national self under the rubric of multiculturalism and its racialised and racialising nature, which will hopefully lead to provide a compelling new account of the politics of multiculturalism in Korea.

Conclusion

This chapter has mapped the newly emerging intellectual terrain of multiculturalism in Korea, explaining my theoretical position by reflecting upon problems I identified within the existing literature, and consequently creating a new research space for the critical analysis of multiculturalism. In so doing, I particularly emphasised the importance of interrogating multiculturalism in relation to the construction and transformation of racialised nationalism. As explained earlier in the chapter, this type of approach is virtually absent from Korean academia, which itself is, I argue, symptomatic of the silence about ‘race’ and the denial of racism prevalent in Korean society at large, despite the fervent celebration of multiculturalism. In my opinion, thinking about multiculturalism cannot and should not circumvent the discussion of racism. And thinking about racism in Korea first and foremost needs to grapple with

the claim of ‘Korea’s racial irrelevance’ and also the simple fact that Koreans can be racists. In order to probe this claim, we need to examine the inextricably intertwined construction of the self and Other based on the understanding of the reciprocal relationship between racism and nationalism. From this perspective, the following chapters will look into historical modalities of this mutual constitution of racism and nationalism, with particular focus on its contemporary reconfiguration that takes place within the growing presence of multiculturalism.

By exploring various resources that racist practices and racial categories – indeed, racist culture – draw upon under the rubric of multiculturalism, I aim to discuss what multiculturalism does particularly in relation to racism, which is articulated through the silence about ‘race’. Although this thesis takes a critical stance towards this multicultural silencing, it should be noted that it does not simply reject multiculturalism by identifying it as a cause of racism as such. In addition, while my use of the term multiculturalism throughout this thesis is not a normative one, I neither intend to denounce all the normative arguments developed by political theories of multiculturalism nor to discredit the value of the concept entirely. On the contrary, I have already explained the problems of such an outright rejection earlier in this chapter, when analysing the academic backlash against multiculturalism and its conservative turn in Korea. In this sense, the starting point for this thesis is to acknowledge that, whether we like it or not, multiculturalism does have an impact on reality by opening up a space where racial/cultural differences are debated. In so doing, multiculturalism reconstructs national identity, changes our language of rights, and contests values taken-for-granted in the past. And what it does and how it is done is multifarious and, indeed, contradictory.

It is worth emphasising again that multiculturalism is ‘a kind of floating signifier which gains both meaning and strategic capabilities only in a specific context’ (Gunew 2004, 28). Therefore, instead of taking a position for or against multiculturalism, this thesis aims to rigorously engage with the complexities lying within it.

Chapter 2

Methodological considerations in designing and doing research

As suggested in my previous mapping and critique of the extant literature, critical race theory functions as both an epistemological and a methodological tool to unravel the silence about ‘race’ and racism in Korea. If a methodology is ‘a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed’, which is inseparable from the issues of epistemology and method, as Harding (1987, 2-3) argues, this is definitely the case in this project. Indeed, the questions being asked in this thesis are first and foremost shaped by the critique of a colour-blind epistemology, which, arguably, diverts our eyes from and, in fact, undergirds contemporary racial formation (Omi and Winant 1986). Accordingly, the set of instruments used to approach these questions and the ways to understand data gathered through my empirical research are also informed by a critical race perspective.

The possibility of using any quantitative method was ruled out in the first place mainly because this project aims to research a taboo subject (including virtually unused terms in modern Korean parlance) – ‘race’/racism – and to explore the ways in which this subject is variably understood, persistently silenced but also variously articulated. My interest lies in the very concepts and conceptualisation, and also categories and categorisation of ‘race’ and racism, which often are smuggled into different ideas (such as nation and culture). Therefore, a quantitative approach that risks imposing certain categories based on the researchers’ own hypotheses (and

often essentialises the categories themselves) has a good chance of doing the complete opposite of what I intend. It might be worth mentioning that while the terms ‘race’ and racism are rarely used in any type of research in Korea, the majority of research that examine Koreans’ perception of migrants, foreigners, multiculturalism, nation and citizenship takes the form of quantitative research, often employing the survey method (e.g. K-T Oh et al. 2007; J-M Hwang et al. 2007; I-J Yoon et al. 2010; B-J Kim et al. 2011). This preference for quantitative methods can be explained in many ways: one reason may be that the results of quantitative research can be easily taken as hard evidence, so are preferred by policy makers; also this preference reflects a certain level of academic anxiety over generalisability³³.

Although my research focuses more on how ‘native Koreans’ understand the notion of ‘race’ and nation than on an investigation of racism experienced by a specific group of migrants, generating a large amount of measurable data through a survey (which is often considered to make the results of the research more generally applicable) was not an option because of the aforementioned reasons. Here, I, by no means, intend to negate the value of quantitative research approaches altogether. In fact, many of them have a ‘heuristic value’ in that they (often inadvertently) show tensions and contradictions in Koreans’ attitudes towards the multiculturalisation of Korean society, and provide useful information on socio-economic factors that might affect various dispositions (often phrased as the level of ‘multicultural acceptability’ in such research) (Hwang et al. 2007). This is particularly so considering that, to

³³ However, it seems that even if the size of the researched group is smaller, the preference for using surveys still seems to exist. For example, studies that did not identify their researched groups as ‘native Koreans’ as a whole but more specifically ‘college students’ (T-H Chang 2001), ‘central government officials’ (Won and Park 2009), or ‘expert groups’ (I-S Jang 2010), also used the survey method.

date, the ways in which the majority (i.e. ‘native Koreans’) perceives self and others and how they feel about multiculturalisation has been hardly studied. Furthermore, although I do not intend to set a rigid boundary between quantitative and qualitative methods by drawing on an all-too-familiar criticism of positivism³⁴, the limits of quantitative methods are obvious in relation to my research. For example, B-J Kim et al. (2011) identify ‘race’ with ‘skin colour’ when designing their survey, which not only simply presupposes that people distinguish races based on different skin colours but also runs the risk of tacitly reinforcing such belief through this type of surveys and research³⁵. What I attempt to do is to interrogate the very premise and practice of such taxonomies, which can be better achieved by employing qualitative methods.

The aim of this chapter is to outline the qualitative methods used for this project and to explain the rationale underpinning the selection of particular methodological approaches. I will begin by framing my historical examination of the construction of nationalism and Koreanness as a critical genealogical inquiry, particularly in relation to Chapter three where I attempt to unpack the interconnected development of nationalism and racism in the ‘pre-multicultural’ era. In so doing, I will explain the ways in which genealogy opens up a space where a critical reading of the prevailing historical narrative can be operationalised, especially with respect to the analysis of racial nationalism. A full descriptive account of the research design deployed to examine the contemporary discourses of multiculturalism will follow this. While I will introduce several complementary sources that my research draws upon, the

³⁴ Also it should be noted that all quantitative research cannot be labelled as positivistic.

³⁵ In this sense, as Gunaratnam (2003, 7) writes, I consider research as a ‘discursive practice’ that is a ‘part of social and historical relations, and produces rather than simply reflects what we are researching’.

majority of the discussion will focus on the process of planning, conducting and analysing in-depth interviews. Reviewing the process of fieldwork in a reflexive manner, I will highlight some methodological issues including various tensions and conflicts that occurred during the process of fieldwork. In proffering *stories* of the research experience, my aim is to demonstrate that this reflection is inextricably linked to the analysis of the silence about ‘race’/racism that will unfold in successive chapters.

2.1. A genealogical inquiry of nationalism

History [also] teaches how to laugh at the solemnities of the origin. (Foucault 1984 [1971], 79)

Foucault (1984 [1971]), in his essay *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, emphasises that Nietzschean genealogy is not a means of searching for ‘origins’ and ‘inviolable identity’ but is used to seek the exact opposite – deconstruction of timeless ‘truths’ and ‘dissipation’ of identity (p. 79, 95). In this sense, the genealogical method employed by Foucault through his reading of Nietzsche – as shown in his historical studies such as the *History of Sexuality* (1978), is indeed an inversion of traditional historical investigation which often looks at the past for its own sake, or interprets the present as a linear progression from the past. From this perspective, genealogy can be used as a useful methodological tool, when questioning taken-for-granted notions and indisputably received truths of the present day. For example, in his genealogical analysis of sexuality, Foucault (1978) reverses the prevailing belief that sexuality was repressed in nineteenth-century Victorian society (in Foucault’s words, the ‘repressive hypothesis’) by excavating the Victorian bourgeois’ obsession with

sexuality which, Foucault explains, functions as the basis of their differentiation from the aristocracy. In this vein, genealogy can be employed by ‘social scientists who attempt to investigate the “history of the present” first by mounting an organised assault on the intellectual object that we take history to be and by unsettling and disrupting the political and intellectual grounds upon which we rest our inquiries’ (Anaïs 2013, 126).

As argued in the previous chapter when exploring the conceptualisation of racism and nationalism in Korean intellectual discourses, my research begins with the problematisation of a naturalised account of the (racially pure) nation and the persistent decoupling of nationalism and racism which are manifest in the silence about ‘race’. In this sense, my historical examination of nationalism is informed by critical genealogy with the aim of contesting the present discursive formation about ‘our past’ – the history of Korean nation – from which the present modes of being are conceived as a historically inevitable and essential arrangement. However, in tracing ideological formations and transformations of nationalism, I do not seek to provide a truer account of the origin of nation. For instance, it is not my intention to corroborate the multiethnic foundation of the Korean nation as such, and thereby prove the notion of ethnic homogeneity false. In other words, my interest lies in tracking how Koreans have been made to believe who they are, rather than in explaining who they really are. In this sense, as for my research, genealogy works as ‘more a tactics of sabotage and disruption than a straightforward head-to-head measuring up of “supposed truth” with a “truer” counter-example’ (Hook 2005, 7). By placing stress on the role of critique in Nietzsche’s genealogy, Deleuze writes:

Genealogy means both the value of origin and the origin of values. Genealogy is as opposed to absolute values as it is to relative or utilitarian ones. Genealogy signifies the differential element of values from which their value itself derives. Genealogy thus means origin or birth, but also difference or distance in the origin. Genealogy means nobility and baseness, nobility and vulgarity, nobility and decadence in the origin. The noble and the vulgar, the high and the low – this is the truly genealogical and critical element. (Deleuze 2006 [1962], 2)

Not only as a historical hermeneutical analysis but more importantly as critique, genealogy allows us to look at ‘both the value of origin and the origin of values’ according to Deleuze. This means that genealogy directs us to question how a certain practice or ethos attains its meaning and values. And this search is not to sanctify the truth of origin or a single account of history, but to reveal contradictions and plurality, historically involved with the very practice or ethos.

From this point of view, my approach to the history of racial nationalism draws its inspiration from Weinbaum’s (2004) take on genealogy, as both a ‘raced and reproductive object’ of analysis and a ‘critical theoretical tool’ (p. 18). In her *Wayward Reproductions* (2004), where she situates genealogy in her conceptualisation of ‘the race/reproduction bind’ – the notion that ‘race can be reproduced’ (p. 4-5) – Weinbaum traces the inextricable relationship between race and sex embedded in the notion of reproduction and its role in constituting nationalism. She does so particularly by reinterpreting modern transatlantic intellectual thought as a site where such interconnection is revealing. And in this project, she employs genealogy both in the sense of an indication of bloodline – ‘notions of racial “purity”, familial, and national belonging’ – and a ‘method of critical historical inquiry’ (*ibid.*, 8) to contest the very notions by unpacking not only

the perpetuity of the idea of the ‘racially pure nation’ (p. 17) but also its impossibility. Following this approach, my use of genealogy attends to both identifying historical (trans/)formations and mobilisation of the notion of nation, and demystifying the present understanding of *National History*.

In Chapter three, I begin this genealogical undertaking from the late nineteenth/early twentieth century. The reason for this is that, contrary to the prevailing trans-historical conceptualisation of nation, it is the time when the concept of nation and the ideology of nationalism became central to the identification of who Koreans are or who they ought to be. In this sense, my selection of particular times, events, discourses and practices reflects an attempt to historicise what is often thought to be trans-historical. This historicisation also involves an *active* practice of selection in order to reveal interactions of various ideologies such as nationalism and racism that are often conceived to be irrelevant to each other in the Korean context. I, by no means, claim that this historical examination of nationalism proffers a comprehensive, chronological account of the development of nationalism. In fact, that is exactly what I intend to avoid, as it should be clear by now what it means to look at history through a genealogical lens. Rather, against a teleological approach to reading the present as an inexorable endpoint of history, I highlight the historically *contingent* nature of nationalism particularly by focusing on its transfigurations.

Furthermore, my choice of particular events in Chapter three can be considered as part of a process of reading my own empirical study – interviews. Broadly, the ways in which the nation is discussed by my respondents, in a biologically and culturally reproducible sense, prompted me to hone my genealogical approach as a tool to

explore not only the historical institutionalisation of racial nationalism but also its shaky ground – i.e. the impossibility of pure homogeneity. More specifically, some events, episodes or historical analogies that my interview respondents (implicitly and explicitly) brought up, when they discussed issues of contemporary multiculturalisation of Korean society, were chosen as objects of investigation precisely in order to deconstruct the essentialist notion of self often attached to such descriptions of the past. To sum up, by exploring historical modalities of nationalism in an episodic manner – put differently, attending to history fraught with ‘accidents’, ‘minute deviations’, ‘errors’, ‘false appraisals’ and ‘faulty calculations’ (Foucault 1984 [1971], 81) – what I aim to do is to problematise and denaturalise the present. In this sense, throughout the thesis, genealogy is used to ‘reveal the wholly constructed character of the present even as it reveals discontinuities and fissures in that construction’ (Brown 2001, 113).

2.2. In-depth interviewing

Apart from other complementary resources I resorted to for my research (which will be explained in the following section 2.3.), open-ended, semi-structured, face-to-face in-depth interviews were the key method that I employed in order to understand how multiculturalism is understood, practiced, and contested and how, in this multicultural discourse, ‘race’ and racism are signified with respect to the construction of self and Other. I conducted in-depth interviews with various social actors, forty-five people in total, who actively respond to the multiculturalisation of Korean society in their varied roles as migrant rights activists, government agencies,

media personnel, anti-multiculturalists³⁶ and migrant workers. These interviews were carried out between December 2011 and February 2012 in South Korea, specifically within the Seoul capital area (the Seoul special city and Gyeonggi Province) and the Busan Metropolitan City area. Though it is impractical to classify my interviewees neatly into distinct groups using typical sociological categories such as occupation, age, gender, and ethnicity, I will first provide a short description of the eventual make-up of the sample in order to give readers a rough idea of the composition of my interviewees and some general information on my fieldwork.

- Various NGO activists who work with migrants/for migrant rights (12 in total)
- Government funded organisations (6 in total)
- Government officials in Ministries (3 in total)
- Assistants to MPs (2 in total)
- Migrant activists (3 in total)
- Migrant women who work as counsellors and translators in a government funded organisation for migrant women (3 in total)
- Other migrants (2 in total)
- Anti-multiculturalists (5 in total)
- Media personnel (6 in total)
- Heads of multicultural schools (2 in total)
- Other: Artist group working with migrants/on the issues of migrants (1 in total)³⁷

The majority of the interviewees were Koreans both in terms of their nationality and ethnicity (since interviews were designed, in essence, to understand the majority's perception of self and Other within the context of emerging multicultural discourses) and, except for five, all the other interviews were conducted in Korean, my native

³⁶ This naming, *anti-multiculturalists*, may sound vague and even confusing to readers who are not familiar with the specific Korean context of emerging anti-immigrant activism. A detailed explanation will be given in this section.

³⁷ See Appendix 1 for more information on respondents.

tongue. The other five interviews were conducted in English (or English/Korean) with respondents who were more comfortable with speaking English or had difficulties in speaking Korean. For two of them (one, a Canadian who works for a government-run multicultural institution and the other, a Korean-American social justice activist), English is their native tongue. Naturally, oral Korean proficiency varies among migrants in general and also among my respondents. However, the fact that some of my respondents with a migration background were not fluent in speaking Korean (nor English) did not cause any serious communication difficulty during interviews. In some cases, my interviewee and I used both Korean and English when we wanted to clarify what we meant or could not come up with the exact words in one language. Furthermore, my interviewees whose Korean vocabulary was limited often tried to explain their experience and thoughts in an easier but more detailed way, which, at times, rather allowed me to have a richer understanding of their feelings and thoughts.

The forty-five recorded interviews – in fact, the total number of recorded interviews is larger because two respondents were interviewed twice – lasted two hours on average. The places where interviews were conducted varied: respondents' workplaces (in most cases), cafés, and a seminar room. I always asked respondents to choose a time and place convenient for them over the phone (or via email) though I expressed my interest to visit their workplaces (particularly for respondents who work for GO/NGOs involved in migrants/multicultural issues). This is because I wanted to see and *feel* the environment in which they were working, to have a chance to talk to other people there, and to observe activities that might be planned for the day. Indeed, the feel of their work places (which is not limited to the actual

physical appearances of the places) played surprisingly many roles when conducting an interview and also when reflecting on conversations I had afterwards. At times, it was used as a conversation starter or smoother, which often elicited other stories related to the places and people (such as government funding cuts, or non-availability of government funding to some of the organisations, other venues that a certain organisation keeps/uses for specific activities, their sponsors, and the histories of their organisations). Furthermore, when I read my fieldwork notes (part of my research diary which describe the places I visited, people I met there, casual conversations often exchanged before/after interviews and also during breaks, which were not recorded) simultaneously with the transcriptions of interviews, I found that the feel of the places often implicitly affects my understanding of interviewees' remarks and the ways they positioned themselves vis-à-vis, for instance, other GO/NGO workers. And indeed, GO/NGO workers preferred my coming over to their work places and often invited me to look at or take their print materials, including leaflets, brochures and booklets during or after the interview and, at times, introduced me to their co-workers or migrants there. It is worth mentioning that, contrary to the fact that the majority of GO/NGO workers were interviewed in their workplaces, all the anti-multiculturalists were interviewed either in a café or a seminar room rented for their meetings (which I was allowed to observe). This is mainly because these respondents (and their respective online organisations) did not have a physical office space for their anti-multicultural activities. Furthermore, compared to GO/NGO workers and activists whose means of livelihood depend on their work for the respective organisations, the occupations of anti-multiculturalists vary. In the following section, I offer a detailed account of this fieldwork, which

addresses methodological and epistemological issues in choosing and contacting participants and also meeting and talking with them.

Choosing and contacting people

At first glance, the composition of my interviewees may seem to cover too extensive a range of different groups, and thus may raise doubt on the validity or generalisability of the findings from a traditional sociological perspective. Yet such sampling of interviewees was not only inevitable but also deliberate from the beginning of the planning stage. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this project aims to interrogate significantly under-researched questions of ‘race’ and nation and their silent yet clear manifestation in contemporary multicultural discourses. Since such an approach itself is relatively new, restricting the scope of research did not seem to be a viable option. In order to find a plausible answer to how racism is reconfigured and what kind of national subject is constructed in/through contemporary multicultural discourse, this project was designed to explore the perception of the majority (broadly ‘native Koreans’) specifically with a focus on opinion-makers. The ways in which this project defines opinion-makers in relation to multicultural discourses will be elaborated later in this section.

Apart from the fact that the existing literature about multiculturalism has rarely touched upon this subject, particularly in the form of qualitative research, there are more important rationales behind such a focus on the majority (“native Koreans”) and opinion-makers. Despite increased academic attention on discrimination against migrants alongside the growth of multicultural discourses, the paucity of critical

examination of Koreanness unwittingly reduces racism to problems of ‘minority groups’³⁸. The emphasis on Koreanness in this project, which is reflected in the make-up of the sample, may be understood more clearly in comparison with critiques made by whiteness studies in the tradition of critical race analyses.

The intellectual attempt to critically engage with whiteness (represented by the emergence of whiteness studies³⁹) focuses on the fact that, in the study of race and racism, whiteness is often considered irrelevant to the question of race. This critique indicates, that by escaping racialisation, whiteness in reality maintains a normative and hegemonic position. In this sense, the whiteness studies paradigm problematises the constant downplaying of whiteness and aims to ‘displace the “unmarked marker” status of whiteness’ in order not only to examine the construction of white identity but also to excavate ‘the foundations of *all* racial and cultural positionings’ (Frankenberg 1997, 1-2). This approach, indeed, inspired the positioning of this project, which attempts to bring Koreanness to the centre of the examination of racialisation.⁴⁰ Thus, in order to explore the oft-hidden racialised nature of Koreanness and its effects, I mainly recruited ‘native Koreans’ as my interviewees. Certainly ‘Korean’ cannot be a single and fixed category of identity as much as any other racial/ethnic/cultural category is not. In other words, ‘native Korean’ (here,

³⁸ This certainly does not mean that studies on migrants’ experience of discrimination that reveal the complex nature of their experience, and also get their voice heard are less important in studies of racism.

³⁹ Whiteness studies, indeed, is not a totally new perspective that was nonexistent in the tradition of race critical studies. For example, Twine and Gallagher (2008) trace the foundation of critical white studies to W.E.B. DuBois’ works (of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century) that challenged the invisibility of whiteness and explained the ways in which this unseen whiteness naturalises white supremacy, resulting in racial inequality.

⁴⁰ It should be noted that this is purely analogical thinking. In other words, I do not assert the alikeness of whiteness and Koreanness in an analytic sense, for example, by making an implausible claim that the workings of racialisation is same in them.

‘native’ indicating both nationality and ethnicity) itself is a category that needs problematisation – the reason why I put this in inverted commas. Also Koreanness is variedly identified and practiced by different ‘native Koreans’. Indeed, I intend to explore the exact multifaceted nature of Koreanness while being aware of the danger of reifying such a category. Thus the focus on ‘native Koreans’ needs to be read as an approach to scrutinise the deracialisation of *the majority* rather than as a presumption of a coherent racial/ethnic/cultural group identity.

In narrowing down such a broad (and potentially controversial) identification of interview subjects, I decided to focus on opinion-makers who shape emergent multicultural discourses. As explained in the previous chapter, multicultural discourses and policies have been initiated and actively institutionalised largely by the Korean state (in cooperation with, or through the co-option of NGOs), not in response to demands by migrants. Furthermore, though the number of migrants has been increasing rapidly over the past two decades and the concurrent multiculturalisation of society is indeed an empirical reality, the majority of Korean population does not experience this change necessarily in their everyday life, mainly because the residential and working areas of the majority of migrant workers are practically segregated under the current immigration system.

The flow of low-skilled workers (which compose the majority of migrants in Korea) is regulated through the setup of (yearly) country-specific quotas within a certain subcategory of visas. These migrant workers are only allowed to work in specific industry sectors considered to experience labour shortages. These small manufacturing companies or other workplaces (for example, in farming and fishing

communities) are largely segregated from Korean residential areas or city centres and the majority of migrant workers stay in accommodations nearby provided by their employers.

Due to this lack of interaction between migrants and native Koreans, multicultural discourses and migrant issues are largely framed by opinion-makers via diverse platforms such as state institutions of various levels, social activism, and the media (not only the mainstream media but also social media and the blogosphere). Here, opinion-makers are defined as persons who influence the opinions of the general public by transmitting their ideas, individually or collectively, on the issues of migration and multiculturalism. As shown in a brief introduction to the composition of the interviewees, the range of opinion-makers covers policy makers (including government officials), people in leadership positions at major government agencies, NGO activists who work with migrants/for migrant rights (including a few activists of migrant background), media personnel (both TV and newspaper), and anti-multiculturalists (most of whom were in leadership position for respective anti-multicultural online communities).

Selecting opinion-makers in state institutions and the media followed a relatively simple logic. For example, regarding interviews with assistants to MPs, I identified MPs who were particularly active in forming the multicultural agenda. Each held a position in one of the two major political parties in Korea respectively: one from the ruling (then and now) *Saenuri* Party and the other from the *Democratic United* Party. Typically, the latter is considered to be more liberal (or less conservative) in their political inclination and often perceived to be more pro-migrant rights (in a broader

framework of human rights) by the majority of NGO activists whom I interviewed. This perception definitely cannot be taken for granted and needs interrogation. Whilst I originally did not place too much meaning in this variable (for example, to find out differences and similarities between the two), my analysis of the data implies that these allegedly different political inclinations do not elicit decisively different approaches towards the problems of racism. In terms of government officials and people in government agencies, I first identified major institutions in policy-making and delivery and contacted persons who were in charge. As for media representatives, I selected well-known TV programmes themed around the lives of migrants in Korea⁴¹ and contacted the producers or writers of respective shows. Similarly, for newspaper journalists, I searched newspaper articles⁴² over a one and a half year period using keywords such as (im)migrants / (im)migration, multiculturalism/multicultural, foreigners/foreign brides/foreign workers, and the *Chosŏnjok* (Korean Chinese) and identified a few journalists who frequently wrote on these topics.

Establishing a general sampling frame from which I could select NGO activists and anti-multiculturalists was a more laborious task. As for NGO activists, pilot interviews I did with some activists and researchers helped me learn the history of migrant rights movements in Korea, current key issues, and the key networks, organisations, and figures participating in the migrant rights movement and enrich information that I had gathered from other sources. Though I selected the initial

⁴¹ Each programme having been broadcasted respectively by one of the three major Korean television networks – KBS, MBC and SBS.

⁴² Though checking news on migrant issues and multiculturalism in Korean papers was my daily job throughout this project, I used KINDS (a Korean news database) when I needed to set a certain period of time and to use keywords in order to organise and classify data more efficiently.

sample based on the information that I gained through this process, I also used a snowball method, asking initial respondents for referrals to subsequent respondents. In the case of anti-multiculturalists, I identified several online groups and subscribed to their websites. Though the names of each group differ, the term – *anti-multiculturalists* – is commonly used as a self-label by those who engage in anti-immigrant activism and strongly oppose the government's multicultural policies. As the epithet 'anti-multiculturalist' was taken up by these groups, it became synonymous with xenophobe or racist, although anti-multiculturalists themselves obdurately denied such associations. In order to subscribe to the entire feed of their websites, acquiring membership (which is usually authorised by the website administrator after filling out a membership form) was often required, although some sections of the websites were open to the public. At first, I felt uncomfortable about becoming a member of these anti-multicultural groups since it seemed hypocritical to do so considering the fact that it would give the impression that I agreed to their cause. However, the questions on the form which I had to fill in were open-ended and left room to explain one's own thoughts on issues such as multiculturalism. Also I found out that some of the members did not necessarily share the anti-multicultural, anti-immigrant stance of the online groups but still were accepted as members. Basically, most of these anti-multicultural groups did not have rigid selection criteria when recruiting members. This is mainly because they were online-based (though some members of the groups actively participated in offline activities) and because they were eager to promote their ideas and spread their agenda to the wider public. Thus, I decided to join these online groups after I clarified my research interest either in the membership application form or over a phone conversation with the website administrator. Besides the potential interviewees whom I identified through this

process, I also conducted interviews with people who had not originally been on my list but whom I got to know when was invited to attend their offline meetings.

Although the research design firmly centres on ‘native Korean’ opinion-makers, the final make-up of the sample also includes a number of migrants. I originally had planned for interviews with migrant rights activists (and also government agencies employees) from a migrant background since they are also important opinion-makers with respect to multiculturalism and migrant rights.⁴³ Interviews with other migrants were not pre-planned but designed (or just happened) during the course of my fieldwork. For example, I decided that the racialisation of Korean Chinese (*Chosŏnjok*) migrants by ‘native Koreans’ despite their racial/ethnic similarity deserved a small case study (actualised as my Chapter five), after conducting several interviews. While these interviews with the Korean Chinese were developed during the fieldwork for a specific reason, I also once had an interview with migrant workers purely by accident because the ‘native Korean’ activist whom I was interviewing introduced me to them during our interview (though interviews with these migrant workers were not counted as part of the final sample). By including migrants as respondents, I did not intend to use their accounts to refute the claims of ‘native Korean’ respondents nor to generalise their stories as *the* migrants’ voice. Rather, I attempted to explore contradictions, confusions and indecision in their account of living in Korea, living with differences – put differently, their various

⁴³ I was particularly interested in activist organisations run by migrants themselves such as the MTU (Migrants’ Trade Union – a Union which the Korean government still does not legally recognise) and MWTV (Migrant Workers’ TV). There are only a few activist organisations run by migrants themselves whilst the majority of NGOs are led by ‘native Korean’ activists. The central role of ‘native Korean’ activists in the migrant rights movement has been contested as a problem for further growth of the movement.

stories about multiculturalism – in order to understand the effects and affects of racism and contextualise them within diverse (anti-/)multicultural discourses.

Before I met my interviewees, I briefly introduced my research project via email (in addition to occasional further clarification and also a short self-introduction over the phone). This short introduction of the project was also included in an informed consent form.⁴⁴ Since there was a broad array of differently positioned interviewees and also because the subject matter of this project – racism – was a sensitive issue (often considered taboo), I tried to draw up this introduction as neutrally as possible in order not to give my respondents the impression that I only endorsed certain viewpoints. In a similar vein, to some interviewees who had asked to look at my questions beforehand, I explained that I had not planned a structured interview so did not have a clear set of questions. For some who still insisted to have more information, I sent them a short list of broadly categorised conversation topics.

Inevitably, some interviewees were harder to contact and get consent from than others. Yet spending time on finding various ways to contact a potential interviewee turned out not to be merely a technical task, that only consumed time and effort, but a fruitful process that could add a new dimension to research. For instance, after I failed to get hold of a pastor who worked with Korean Chinese migrants, I went to a Sunday church service led by him in hope of talking with him after the service. Before going there, I had only expected to meet up with him and arrange a meeting for some other day. However, I found that hanging around the church before/after

⁴⁴ I prepared a informed consent form (both in Korean and English) that included items such as my basic information, purpose of the research, voluntary participation, withdrawal from the study, confidentiality, questions about the research and legal rights and signatures.

the service and attending the service – observing the congregation and listening to the pastor’s sermons, announcements, and prayers – were no less valuable than having an interview with the pastor. This is not only because this entire process enriched the themes and ideas of what to talk about during that interview, but also because it led me to sharpen and also add new dimensions of questioning for further exploration.

To sum up, though I identified potential interviewees based on aforementioned rationales and variably categorised them for practical reasons, the nature of such categorisations, the ways in which I conceived my interviewee sample, and the questions which I asked were under ‘subsequent revision, rethinking, or supplementation’ of my original premises (Frankenberg 2004, 107) throughout the entire process of my fieldwork. And this process always involved a reflexive approach to my ‘positionedness’ (*ibid.*) while deliberating on preceding conversations with respondents, observations and also my feelings and thoughts.

The dynamics between the researcher and the researched: negotiating positions

One of the much-debated methodological concerns in research crossing ‘race’, gender, and class boundaries is about the implications of a researcher’s insider or outsider position vis-à-vis the researched group. The advantages and disadvantages of the ‘racial matching’ model in doing social research have been discussed in this vein focusing on the effect of the race of the interviewer on the research. It is generally assumed that a researcher whose racial/ethnic background is same as that of her or his interview subjects has an advantage in being able to generate more

effective communication and gain a deeper understanding of the subjects. This is, supposedly, because s/he is viewed as sharing similar experiences and thereby able to acquire the trust of the interviewees more easily and, in effect, able to gather more valuable data than a researcher from different racial/ethnic background (e.g. Blauner and Wellman 1973; Zinn 1979). However, these assumptions have been challenged by criticisms, for example, that such methodological approaches are based on the assumption of a single ‘truth’ or ‘reality’, one that can be revealed through respondents’ accounts. Such an approach not only neglects the possibility of plural truths but overlooks the ‘situated and contingent’ nature of realities (Rhodes 1994, 548). Furthermore, that the quality of communication might be compromised due to racial mismatch can be disproved by the fact that interviewees often give detailed, lengthy and thick descriptions of their experiences to a researcher considered as an outsider, since her or his knowledge is not taken-for-granted. In this vein, Young (2004) argues against the presumed benefits of racial matching and the ‘insider’ status. By assessing his own research experiences, Young writes:

Rapport is immediately assumed to be a product of interaction predicated upon two principle features associated with insider status: intimacy and trustworthiness. The comfort or familiarity that comes with insider status can also promote impatience or confusion when one or more of the interacting parties does not seem to follow, the implicit rules of dialogue for people who are familiar with each other. Put more specifically, one may feel that he or she should not have to say certain things to familiar others because those others should already be “in the know”. (Young 2004, 194)

Thus in some cases, being perceived as an insider can be more of a burden than an advantage. Furthermore, it needs to be noted that the racial/ethnic sameness of the researcher does not automatically guarantee the researcher’s insider status. A

racially matched (or ‘native’) researcher can be still recognised as an outsider by her or his interviewees due to many other reasons such as differences in gender, age, class, language and education.⁴⁵ In this vein, Twine (2000, 9) states, even when ‘racial affiliation is such a salient basis for socio-political identity, “insiderness” is still constituted by other factors which may render race of secondary consequence.’ Neither can insider/outsider status be reduced to racial, ethnic, or any other similarity between the researcher and the researched nor be considered as fixed during the process of doing research. Indeed, the following elaboration on my research experience uncovers the ambivalence of insiderness and the ever-changing positioning of the researcher throughout the process of research.

Because of my ‘native’ Koreanness and the fact that the majority of my respondents are ‘native’ Koreans, I may be viewed as an insider with easy access to interviewees by, for example, the academic community in the UK. From this point of view, it could be also assumed that the interactions between respondents from a migrant background and me, present more difficulties or involve more complicated power relationships than those with ‘native’ Korean respondents. Here, I do not intend to refute some level of accessibility and rapport that my ‘native’ Koreanness might have brought about, or to gauge to what extent it was the case. Rather I attempt to describe the burdens imposed, at times, by this (perceived) ‘native’ Koreanness and also the ways in which this supposed insiderness was challenged by other factors.

⁴⁵ And since ‘insiderness’ is based on perceptions, what is important is not actual identities or facts, but the ways in which a researcher is perceived by her or his interviewees.

Contrary to the common belief that an interviewer is a person who interrogates and an interviewee the subject of interrogation, almost all the time when I met my interviewees, they interviewed me first. By saying this, I do not mean to nullify the need for ethical considerations on the power relationship between the researcher and the researched, which is inevitably related to the fact that the researcher is the one who controls the presentation of the interviewees after all. On the contrary, I intend to highlight the fact that the power relationship (during the interview) was not fixed, but influenced by many factors whose dynamics can be unfolded through a reflexive approach. Indeed, my respondents often tried to figure out why I was interested in this area of research or them in particular, what my own opinions were, and how I was different(/or similar) from (/to) other researchers they had met before, based on the information they had gathered by questioning my background, motivation, and the impression that they got from me. Such interrogations were largely caused by respondents' worries about the ways in which I would present them and related to the attempt to control the information which they would share with me. Naturally, the extent to which each respondent did such scanning and the ways in which they did it differed. Particularly in the cases of government officials, government agency employees, and some NGO workers, the initial scanning was more intense and cautious mainly because they were afraid of misrepresenting their organisations. To relieve their anxiety, I emphasised that all data would be treated with confidentiality and also that I considered them as individuals not as spokespersons of their respective organisations.

As mentioned earlier, I tried to introduce my research interest as simply as possible and tried not to use suggestive terms which could imply that I saw things from a

certain vantage point. Indeed, considering the fact that I could not possibly have had any decisive conclusions at this stage, this may sound oxymoronic. Still, a researcher cannot be free from her or his own expectations which are shaped by and also shapes one's positioning. Thus what I meant is that I tried to be conscious of this (unintentional) shaping. Nevertheless, some respondents questioned my use of certain terms or expressions during our conversation. For example, one respondent (who eagerly expressed his belief in the need for the development of multicultural education) picked up on one of the phrases – ‘critically analyse the recent development of multiculturalism’ – in the informed consent form by asking whether this meant I was against multiculturalism. Right after I responded that my stance was neither pro nor against multiculturalism⁴⁶ and that I was actually interested in what he meant by multiculturalism or ‘against multiculturalism’, he mentioned in passing that ‘educated people like *us* should recognise the value of multiculturalism...contribute to the development of our country in this era...’ It can be noticed by his use of the expression, *us*, that my educational background (which was considered as highly educated) made him assume that I was (if not, *should be*) on the same side as him. First he was suspicious about the direction of my research and also surprised by the fact that I was not quite as enthusiastic about multiculturalism as he was, and then implicitly suggested, from his perspective, a more legitimate direction of research.

Indeed, when it came to the topic of racism (particularly when I used terms such as ‘racism’ and ‘racial discrimination’), either my ethnic insiderness or my position as a

⁴⁶ Even though this was a genuine response considering that my interest lied in different meanings and interpretations of multiculturalism, when such questions came from anti-multiculturalists, I found it more difficult to position myself in this way. This point will be elaborated later in this section.

researcher who was interested in migrant issues, was put into question by the majority of my ‘native Korean’ respondents. Treating the very use of the terms as discomforting, interviewees deployed various tactics to avoid the conversation about ‘race’ and racism and/or to undermine my interest in racism as ill-directed (or at least, inappropriate). One respondent directly questioned the term ‘racial discrimination’, claiming that it was essentially wrong because ‘there is no race’ (meaning the concept ‘race’ is scientifically unjustifiable and simply an ideological construction) and suggested that the term ‘human discrimination’ would be better. Another respondent, reflecting on her own experience as a migrant right activist, stated:

I actually don’t have a clear idea of what racism is. What is it? Can we really see discrimination against migrants in Korea as racism? Some might say so. People who organised the *** initiative⁴⁷ perhaps would say so. But most of them are not really working closely with migrants dirtying their hands with real messy issues [...] Anti-racism sounds too abstract even for an activist like me. How can it be helpful to solve issues like restriction of rights to stay which differ variably among migrants? [...] I hope activists take more practical and detailed approaches. (JM, a migrant rights activist)⁴⁸

By saying this, the interviewee implicitly challenged my academic (and also political) interest in anti-racism as a politically (and also practically) invalid one. Another respondent indirectly expressed her worries about my potential presentation of Koreans as racists⁴⁹ by arguing that racism in Korea was really insignificant compared to that of other countries and exaggerating this would only tarnish Korea’s

⁴⁷ The interviewee directly referred to the name of a specific activist initiative which held anti-sexism and anti-racism as its main agenda. I hid the name due to the potentially sensitive nature of the comments.

⁴⁸ Interview conducted on 19/01/2012

⁴⁹ Based on the fact that my research would be presented in English in the UK

image abroad (implying that such defamation should not be done by fellow Koreans). In this sense, despite my ‘native Koreanness’, or rather precisely *because of* my Koreanness, the very groundwork of my project potentially made this research ‘an act of betrayal’ (Islam 2000). During interviews, I was often indirectly but constantly told what my research should focus on, what aspects were unnecessary, and how I needed to represent them. All these interventions and ensuing tensions were, indeed, valuable and insightful for the research, particularly since, in the end, what I sought to explore was exactly what such a ‘culture of avoidance’ tried to avoid and how it was manifested (Kenny 2000).

Yet it was often not clear-cut to what extent I should act upon such interventions and in what ways I should state my position without jeopardising the relationship with my interviewee. Depending on my response, the respondents could have easily become more guarded in what they said to me. As a result, I sometimes felt that I was put in a difficult position particularly because a few respondents (mainly some NGO activists and government agency workers) initially complained about researchers in general, by illustrating previous experiences of how researchers had asked for surveys to be filled out, or asked for interviews with activists or migrants without sincerely wanting to know the nuts and bolts of migrant issues. Respondents mentioned this, often before an interview started, emphasising how many requests they had got from researchers and how much this bothered them by consuming their time and energy. Most of them, then, distinguished me from other researchers by saying that they thought my approach was different. This comparison might have been just out of courtesy, in order to mitigate the tension they had created, possibly in an attempt to control the parameters and power in the following interview. Yet

they often came up with reasons that made them accept my request. And most of these reasons generally centred around the idea that they felt I sincerely wanted to learn about ‘important stuff’ judging from the conversations we had over the phone, emails I had sent, or from the people who had introduced me. For example, to some NGO workers, I was perceived as a person who possibly would speak the same language. This impression was perhaps generated by the fact that I had participated in and had interest and knowledge in various social movements. Such subjects naturally popped up during informal conversations we had before or during interviews. In some cases, it seemed that my identity was presumed to coincide with that of the people who had introduced me to them. Thus, though I needed to let their guard down and, as explained, at times, was quite successful in doing so, my perceived position as an insider was not always beneficial and convenient since I felt that I would (or needed to) disrupt their perception in an attempt to explore the taboo subject of racism. Put differently, the very nature of this project which involves ‘naming the unnamable’, ‘marking the unmarked’ and ‘seeing the invisible’ (Kenny 2000, 114) constantly caused a feeling of walking a thin line throughout the course of the interview, while benefits generated by my insiderness were, at times, caught up with ethical questions about my positioning.

This dilemma was deepened in interviews with anti-multiculturalists. Reflecting on such difficulties one may face in doing interviews, Wiewiora (2004) writes:

In an individual interview, the researcher who wishes to understand and not simply record the facts of the situation has to create minimum feeling of empathy with the person questioned quite simply to make them want to participate in the discussion. The researcher knows that he is not in a purely neutral position. He has to respect the person being interviewed, take him or her seriously, push them to go as far as

possible in thinking about the themes discussed; now, if this person is racist, this type of position is difficult. (Wiewiora 2004, 62)

For me, getting the consent of anti-multiculturalists for interviews and getting them to talk was not as difficult as I had expected because they eagerly wanted to tell their side of the story. Furthermore, the reason why I wanted to talk with them was not because I had singled them out as racists, as commonly done, particularly by the mainstream media. In this sense, I made sure that I would be there not to *judge* or *correct* them. Yet a bigger challenge was posed by moments when respondents seemed to somehow misrecognise my careful listening or silence as my (at least, partial) agreement or approval of what they were saying. Such misrecognition may have been caused by my fairly non-judgemental attitude⁵⁰ or my act of understanding (not necessarily agreement). This, at times, made me feel anxious to straighten my position out, but I often found it difficult to find appropriate ways of intervention. Pretty overt and clearly racist remarks were rather easy to manage because I could challenge them by asking why they made such comments and whether they thought it to be racist or not. Rather difficult was, if I refer to a previous example, to manage how statements such as 'I am neither pro nor against multiculturalism' would be perceived by these anti-multiculturalists.

My interview experience with migrants also defies the simple dichotomy of insider/outsider status, varying according to different people and also fluctuating during the interview. Despite my ethnic Koreanness, migrant activists openly talked about racism (existing both at macro and micro level) in Korea while often

⁵⁰ I suspect that, based on their comments on previous interview experience with journalists, this was mainly because their opinions were often dismissed directly by their counterparts in official conversations.

addressing me as a ‘comrade’⁵¹. But this openness also varied not just among different persons (variously positioned by gender, line of work, ‘race’/ethnicity, age, cultural identity, etc.) but within different contexts. For example, when I asked one respondent about racial prejudice he might have felt in working with ‘native Korean’ activists, he became very evasive about the topic by trying not to give personalised stories but to make generic comments, which was in contradiction to his previous ways of telling stories.⁵² On the other hand, in an interview with one Korean Chinese female migrant, she first felt uncomfortable to talk about discrimination against migrants in Korea by saying with light laughter that ‘because you are Korean, I feel awkward to talk badly about Koreans.’ But afterward, she started to tell me some episodes that indicated how racist Koreans were, how hurt she had felt, and also how her (Korean Chinese) friends and she used to badmouth these ‘bad Koreans’⁵³. Then, she also acknowledged that the Korean Chinese were also (racially) prejudiced, while talking about her previous life in China, and made a quite ‘racially oriented’ conclusion that ‘this extreme self-centredness and bias are perhaps ingrained in the root of the *Chosŏn minjok* (racial/ethnic Korean nation)’ roaring with laughter. As seen in this case, commonalities (e.g. both of our ethnic Korean identity) and differences (e.g. my ‘native Koreanness’ and her Korean Chinese identity) were variably attributed affecting and being affected by what stories she chose to share with me and how we interacted with each other. Accordingly, the positioning between her (the researched) and me (the researcher) was constantly in

⁵¹ This leftist form of address is widely used by individuals participating in various social movements (particularly labour movement) in Korea.

⁵² This description is not to say that migrant activists necessarily feel uncomfortable to talk about racism ‘inside’ their political circle. For example, one respondent’s fierce criticism of ‘native Korean’ activists’ silencing of racism and also their everyday practices of racism makes such generalisation difficult.

⁵³ Condemnation of Koreans’ discriminatory behaviours was often mitigated by remarks such as ‘Not all Koreans are like this. There are good Koreans as well.’

change throughout the course of the interview, as I was being put in a position of neither complete insider nor outsider.

While interviewing is inevitably an interactive process through which both the researcher and the researched engage in the presentation of self (Goffman 1959), such presentation and ensuing understanding (and also misunderstanding) is under revision throughout the course of the interaction. In order to put my interviewees at ease and get more personalised narratives, I consciously and unconsciously tried to increase my insiderness to some extent in various ways. Yet not only what was picked up and perceived as commonalities by different respondents, but the ways in which such perceived commonalities (and differences on other dimensions) worked throughout the course of the interview, varied and often differed from my initial expectations. While I tried to be ‘a researcher the whole time’ – be there not ‘either to accept nor reject the remarks made, but to understand them and enable those who make them to think about them’ (Wiewiora 2004, 62), the dynamics of positioning was not always definitive, defying the simple logic of the insider/outsider model and often generating ethical dilemmas. In this vein, the process of interpreting respondents’ accounts required me to reflect on the conditions under which these accounts were produced. Furthermore, as illustrated earlier, it also involved examining assumptions and decisions made from the outset of the project, and thoughts and feelings emerging during the fieldwork. This effort of operationalising reflexivity was crucial in reading my data, particularly since, in this type of project which explores a taboo subject, understanding what is refused (or circumvented) to be said, and how such refusal is made, is equally (if not more) important as interpreting what has been said.

2.3. Complementary sources

Besides the interview data, the evidence upon which this thesis is based on also comes from the review of documents (including white papers, documents published by GO/NGOs, presidential speeches, and media reports and editorials) and the analysis of comments from certain anti-multiculturalist online communities. Although the interview data was given prominence in organising the analysis of contemporary multicultural discourses, other sources also contributed to providing evidence of the ideological constellations of racism and nationalism of the past and present. Furthermore, the use of these sources was not confined to the final presentation of my analysis. Primarily, these sources were used to develop my knowledge of the field, refine my research questions before/during the fieldwork, and inform the ways in which interviews were designed and conducted. Reversely, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, interviewees' accounts on certain events or people also led me to examine a specific time, objects, and relevant discourses by resorting to these complementary sources. In this sense, the employment of these sources for the project cannot be decoupled from the process of planning, conducting and analysing the interviews.

The process of examining comments from certain online communities requires a more detailed explanation particularly considering its extensive employment in Chapter five. Initially, as explained earlier, anti-multicultural online communities were selected to identify potential interviewees, get preliminary ideas of their self-referential languages and rhetorical codes as part of my preparation for interviews, and also use them as complementary sources for interviews with anti-multiculturalists. In this sense, the Internet was both a recruitment tool and fieldwork

site for this research project. These online communities, indeed, were rich sources for gathering data since they are a major platform for communication for anti-multiculturalists and a recruitment tool for anti-immigration activism. Not only issues of immigration, ‘foreigners’, and multiculturalism were discussed – covering criticisms on the government’s multicultural policies and pro-migrant NGO activities, assessment of media reports on migrant-related issues, sharing of personal stories, hyperlinks and comments on international news (e.g. European backlash against multiculturalism, Norway shooting in 2011), but also virtually all of their off-line activities were planned, announced, and evaluated through these online communities. In this sense, such online communities are telling examples of how the Internet enables people to ‘sense, listen, feel and be involved intimately in racist culture from a distance’ (Back 2002, 629). Despite the early optimism about the Internet’s potential to create a ‘race-free’ environment where greater democratic participation is possible, it is becoming clear that racial inequality persists no matter how wired we are. Moreover, the Net itself is far from being race-neutral in that it continues to generate varying degrees of racialized communications and racial identity practices and facilitates new modes of racist imagination (cf. Kolko et al. 2000). Nakamura and Chow-White writes:

Mediatized conversations about race, whether on the Internet with human interlocutors or with the torrent of digitized media texts, have become an increasingly important channel for discourse about our difference. (Nakamura and Chow-White 2012, 5)

From this perspective, anti-multicultural online communities were chosen as an important research site to examine how differences are narrated and race is

performed. It is worth noting that in the thesis, these online communities are not deemed as a separate, distinctive space detached from the offline context and broader societal discourse. In other words, the online/offline distinction is not pursued as a research strategy. Though the relationship between the digital and race requires a more complex approach to understand the implications of technology in generating new modalities of race – different from those produced by analog media – such a line of investigation has not been thoroughly attempted here since it goes beyond the scope of the thesis. The underlying position of this thesis in terms of online/offline data collection is to find the best way to answer my research questions, which according to Hine (2005, 20), can be achieved at times ‘through research relationships conducted solely online’, but in other cases, ‘be best served by moving research relationships either from online to offline or vice versa’. Concerning my research, the research relationship with members of anti-multicultural online communities has moved from online to offline and back. There have been discussions about the benefits and problems associated with the triangulation of methods when combining online and offline data in digital research (cf. Hine 2000; Hine 2005; Garcia et al. 2009). On the one hand, combining online contact with offline is generally regarded beneficial since it enables a researcher to understand the Internet-based phenomenon in link with the broader social context which it is embedded in. On the other, a generic emphasis on the benefits of offline interactions with informants may run the risk of assuming that the offline method would allow more authentic and reliable data to be collated, which could turn out not to be true (Orgad 2005, 52-3). In my case, though the offline interview data have not been regarded as a more credible source, offline interactions were given primacy. This is because I needed to harmonise the examination of anti-multicultural online

communities with the core method of the thesis – in-depth interviews with various actors in the politics of multiculturalism.

Whilst several anti-multicultural online communities were initially targeted as sources of data collection, the decision to include one of the major mums' online communities was made after completing my fieldwork. As briefly mentioned earlier, during fieldwork, I identified the distinctive dynamics of the racialisation of Korean Chinese (*Chosŏnjok*) migrants, which seemed useful in understanding the relationship between 'race', nation and culture in constructing racism. However, because many NGO activists were evasive when talking about Korean Chinese migrants (for example, saying they felt uncomfortable to discuss this matter because they knew very little about it), which itself surely is a significant research finding to reflect upon, I decided to include some pastors who had been working for Korean Chinese migrants' rights and also some Korean Chinese migrants as my interviewees. To understand one of the reasons why many NGO activists were unforthcoming about the discussions of Korean Chinese migrants, and the reason why I contacted pastors, a brief background explanation of Korean Chinese migrants' rights movement is needed (which will be further elaborated in Chapter five).

Despite their 'ethnic Koreanness' upon which the concept *tongp'o* (blood kinship of overseas Koreans) is based, the Korean state has not granted the majority of Korean Chinese migrants (who are proportionally the largest migrant group) preferential treatment for overseas ethnic Koreans to work and stay in Korea. Although they have been rhetorically included as *tongp'o* (and legally since 2004), the flow of Korean Chinese workers (mostly manual workers) is still regulated by the current

immigration system by granting them a specific visa status (which is different from most overseas ethnic Koreans and also from other foreign migrant workers). Korean Chinese churches have been playing a major role in the fight for the legal recognition of Korean Chinese migrants as *tongp'o* and for the relaxation of their immigration status (Piao 2011). However, mainly because the immigration status of Korean Chinese migrants in Korea has become different from that of other foreign workers, and the rationales for the Korean Chinese rights movement have been firmly grounded on their blood-kinship with Koreans, the solidarity between the migrant rights movement in general and the Korean Chinese struggle for recognition is (practically) non-existent. Against this background, most migrant rights activists who work with foreign migrants do not work on the issues of Korean Chinese migrants while such issues are largely put forward by Korean Chinese NGOs including Korean Chinese churches.

A month after I finished my fieldwork and got back to the UK, a mutilation murder was committed by a *Chosŏnjok* migrant and anti-*Chosŏnjok* feelings spread rapidly, while various stories about the case and *Chosŏnjok* crime stories in general were extensively circulated by the media. While reviewing media reports and comment/stories from online communities, I became interested in the increasing concerns about *Chosŏnjok* babysitters [aka *Chosŏnjok aunties*], which also were stimulated by the recent intensification of discourses criminalising the *Chosŏnjok*. And indeed, these topics – crimes committed by migrants and ‘problems of *Chosŏnjok* babysitters’ – had popped up during interviews and informal conversations from my fieldwork. However, considering the fact that my interview data in relation to these issues was limited and also temporally anti-*Chosŏnjok*

discourses seemed to gather momentum after the outbreak of the murder case, I decided to include a mums' online community where stories about *Chosŏnjok* babysitters were actively shared. Though there were practical considerations (e.g. time and money) in deciding not to pursue additional interviews but to use other sources, it was also a strategic decision that could better capture the creation and circulation of criminalising narratives.

Comments and discussions from these online communities can be considered to be more honest (and overt) because people speak on the condition of anonymity. Indeed, McKenna et al. (2002) find evidence that the relative anonymity of online communication settings creates a ‘strangers on a train’ phenomenon in which ‘people sometimes share quite intimate information with their anonymous seatmates’ (p. 10), by reducing the cost of self-disclosure (see also Bargh et al. (2002)). This could be more so the case with discussions of taboo subjects such as ‘race’. Yet as Sharpe (1999) puts it:

It is not simply that we can be more “honest” about race issues on the Internet because we are not accountable but that the personas we create (even if they begin as “us”) start to take on lives of their own in relation to those whom they encounter. The Internet allows for the consensual as well as the non-consensual acting out of racialized fantasies. (Sharpe 1999, 1094)

That these online comments can be read as the performance of ‘non-consensual racialised fantasies’ and also that these fantasies can feed into new consensual racial images encouraged me to explore these online communities particularly in relation to discourses of criminalisation and problematisation. Furthermore, since I was interested not only in the creation of stories about the *Chosŏnjok* but in the

reproduction of these stories, and not only in the contents of these narratives but also in the very narrativisation of these contents, these online communities functioned as perfect sites for gathering data. For instance, whilst in-depth interviewing may provide thicker description of the stories about the *Chosōnjok*, it may be less capable of uncovering the ways in which these stories or images are *circulated* and variably narrated.

The rationale for collecting and analysing data with respect to *Chosōnjok* babysitters (in Chapter five) came from this perspective. Concerning the organisation of data collection and analysis, I also needed to make the amount of collected data practically manageable for analysis. For this, I collected data from one of the major mums' online communities from the 1st of April to the 30th of September 2012 (six months after the aforementioned mutilation murder case). This online community is one of the largest online communities for mums with approximately 1.83 million (1,827,798) members (as of 6 December 2012). Members share information about pregnancy, childcare, etc. In this online community, there are diverse sub-groups where members chat about their life and exchange information according to place of residence (various regions in Korea and abroad), age, number of children and various other criteria. There is also a chat room specifically for *multicultural* mums. The main reason I chose this online community for my analysis is because members actively share their experience related to *Chosōnjok* babysitters. Furthermore, I intended to choose an online community that officially has nothing to do with the anti-multicultural agenda or *Chosōnjok* immigration issues, in order not to limit my scope of analysis to hard-core self-professed anti-multiculturalists. From this online community, the posts including the word, *Chosōnjok*, were collected and analysed

qualitatively with a specific focus on stories about *Chosŏnjok* crimes and *Chosŏnjok* babysitters. The number of posts which matched such criteria was 264 in total (excluding replies to original posts). I did not keep a separate count of the number of replies but they are included in my analysis when the original post included the word, *Chosŏnjok*.

As can be seen in the aforementioned process of choosing additional sites of data collection and using these data, the employment of complementary sources were not entirely pre-planned or treated with rigorous and formal methods. Rather these sources were brought into the research process organically while designing, conducting and analysing my fieldwork.

Chapter 3

The construction of national identity within a social Darwinist paradigm: ‘Pre-multicultural’ era

The notion of nationalism has acquired, and still maintains, positive, even sublime, connotations in Korea, though the very notion has been appropriated for different political goals by various political actors – for example, the repressive state used it for the military mobilisation of people while advocates of independence used it for anti-colonial resistance. This pervasive but chameleon-like idea of nationalism, in fact, has been a political battleground where all sides of the political spectrum have been called upon to fight for one’s legitimacy one way or the other. Despite its fluid and contested nature, or precisely due to its flexibility, the notion of nationalism has yet to be dragged down from its righteous, pseudo-sacred status. This derives from the fact that nationalism immediately evokes memories of Koreans as the victims of colonisation. Coupled with this strong feeling of victimisation, nationalism is also conceived as the impetus necessary to survive historical hardships. In this sense, Korean nationalism is perceived as a ‘good’ nationalism, which aims to construct one’s own state against imperialist powers and is thus different from the ‘bad’ nationalism which subjugates other nations with one’s expansionist drive (Balibar 1991b, 47).⁵⁴

⁵⁴ According to Balibar, the internal dilemma within the notion of nationalism is that it constantly divides into ‘good’ nationalism and ‘bad’ nationalism: for example, ‘dying for one’s fatherland’ vs. ‘killing for one’s country’ (*ibid.*).

This chapter attempts to examine how racism has articulated itself within nationalism by exploring modern Korean history from the *kaehwa* (Enlightenment) period of the late nineteenth century to Korea's globalisation drive of the late twentieth century. I, by no means, intend to provide a comprehensive picture of the entire history of modern Korea, as this would inevitably fall beyond what can be achieved within the space of this thesis. However, it seems necessary to engage with the historical development of nationalism in order to analyse and fully comprehend the ways in which the idea of the nation plays out in contemporary multicultural discourses. Thus, this chapter aims to sketch out the historical development of the concept of nation and to discuss Korean specificities in the construction of racialised national identity by bringing attention to key historical conjunctures. The main reason to go back a hundred years is that this is the period when notions of 'race' and nation started to become central in defining differences and understanding the self and Other in Korea.

This historical mapping contributes to the analysis of my empirical data in that it is valuable to help us see the transformation or continuity of contested ideas such as that of nation. In particular, this chapter focuses on social Darwinism as an overarching ideology concerning the ways in which race thinking registers itself within nationalism. Though it is fair to say that the term, social Darwinism, was only widely used among intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the main tenets of social Darwinism were inscribed in the dominant articulation of nationalism throughout history.

3.1. Inventing the ‘Korean nation’: semantic history of ‘nation’

In Korean, the term, ‘nation’ bifurcates into two distinct words – *kungmin* and *minjok*.⁵⁵ This bifurcation has existed since the early twentieth century when the concept of nation travelled to and settled in Korea, and is still present today, though the meanings of the two words have changed throughout history. The concepts of *kungmin* and *minjok* have overlapped, competed, and been conflated throughout history.

Kungmin indicates a political community bound by the modern state system while *minjok* identifies a historical and cultural community related by blood (Youn 2009, 83). This reflects today’s legal definition of *kungmin*, citizen of the Republic of Korea in the *Nationality Act*. The *Chaeoe Tongp’o Pōp* (*Act on the immigration and legal status of overseas Koreans*) is the legal foundation for the definition of *tongp’o*, a term closely related to that of *minjok*, which goes beyond the territory of nation-state. According to this legal definition, the *Chosŏnjok* (Korean Chinese) who do not have Korean citizenship, are not *kungmin*, but bound by the *Chaeoe Tongp’o Pōp* and recognised as part of *hanminjok* (*Korean minjok*).⁵⁶ However, the everyday use of the term *minjok*, cannot be neatly pinned down due to its flexibility and abstractness.

⁵⁵ ‘Nation’ (or ‘state’) can also be translated into the word, *kukka*, whose contemporary usage refers to the nation-state. However, I will concentrate on investigating the aforementioned bifurcation of ‘nation’ into *kungmin* and *minjok* since my aim here is to uncover the process of ‘modern identity formation’ by looking into the semantic history of nation.

⁵⁶ The *National Institute of the Korean Language*, defines *minjok* as a ‘social group living in a certain area together for a long time and sharing the same language and culture which does not necessarily accord with *injong* (race) or *kungmin*’. The first definition of *tongp’o* is ‘brothers and sisters who have same parents’ which shows the original meaning of the Chinese word, 同胞, and the second one is ‘a cordial way of calling people of the same *minjok*’. (<http://stdweb2.korean.go.kr/main.jsp>)

3.1.1. East Asia's adoption of the concept, nation: Korean specificity

When did the concept of *kungmin* and *minjok* appear in Korea? By the late nineteenth century, the concept *minjok* had not existed while the notion of *kungmin*⁵⁷ – which rarely had appeared – had mainly meant commoners who belong to a feudal state or a tributary state in the China-centred regional order, or people ruled by the monarch (Kang 2005). Instead, words such as *paeksōng* (commoners whom the monarch reigned over), *inmin* (people), *sinmin* (subjects)⁵⁸ had been used widely to name the ruled. This is evidenced by the analysis of terms that have appeared in the *Tongnip Sinmun* (*The Independent*, April 7, 1896 – December 4, 1899)⁵⁹ where *minjok* was never used and *kungmin* rarely turned up compared to the frequent usage of the word *paeksōng* and *inmin* (B. Kwon 2007, 198).

Indeed, various new concepts were introduced mainly through Japan and China from the late nineteenth century. In this process, some traditional terms acquired new meanings as the term *kungmin* did. Also having been affected by different interpretations and changing political circumstances, the meaning and relation of newly introduced words were transformed (K-J Song 2009, 125). In the East Asian region, Japan first adopted the modern concept of ‘nation’ during the early Meiji era⁶⁰, that is, the 1870s. Ōyama Ikuo claims that *kokumin* (Japanese translation for

⁵⁷ The term *kungmin* had existed before the modern era as the Chinese word, 國民; however, it was barely used (Kang 2005).

⁵⁸ Kwon (2011) shows that the term *sinmin* was widely circulated after the proclamation of the Taehan Empire –the state that succeeded the Chosŏn Dynasty in Korea, having existed from 1897 to the annexation of Korea by Japan on August 20, 1910 (p. 16).

⁵⁹ A bilingual (Korean/English) newspaper published by *Tongnip hyōp'oe* (Independence Club: a Korean non-governmental political association)

⁶⁰ During this period (1868–1912), Japan enthusiastically modernised its society and introduced many new ideas from Western societies.

‘nation’) has a direct association with the German term, *Staatvolk* (Tikhonov 2004). However, while *Staatvolk* means a group of people who are politically and culturally dominant in a state (Conner 1993), the notion of *kungmin* (Jap. *kokumin*) in the East Asian region attaches its meaning strongly to people of a political community, loyal to their state (Tikhonov 2004).

Though Korea, Japan and China share the term *kungmin* and *minjok* (respectively based on the Chinese words 國民 and 民族), the relationship between the two differ. In Japan, the notion of *kokumin* (Kor. *kungmin*) won over *minjoku* (Kor. *minjok*) within the framework of a strong ‘family state’ (Jap. *kazoku kokka*) during the Meiji period. The centrality of the state in the concept of nation, where the emperor symbolised the benevolent father to his filial child-subjects, put more emphasis on the notion of *kokumin* than *minjoku*. In mainland China, particularly after the Republic of China (pinyin: *Zhōnghuá Mínguó*, 1912–1949) was established, the term *minzu* (Kor. *minjok*) has meant ethnic minorities who do not belong to the *Han* Chinese ethnicity (Youn 2009, 80). The dynamics between the two concepts, *kungmin* and *minjok*, were more complex in Korea compared to those of Japan and China. In Korea the boundary between the two concepts kept slipping during the modern nation-building process as the country underwent colonial subjugation by Japan (1910 – 1945), division of the Korean peninsula (1945), and the Korean War (1950–1954).

3.1.2. The bifurcation of ‘nation’ into ‘kungmin’ and ‘minjok’, 1905-1910

The term *kungmin*, came into use ahead of *minjok*, as demonstrated by its appearance in the *Tongnip Sinmun*, but was rarely used until 1905. The use of this term increased extensively during 1905-1910, the time when Korea became Japan’s protectorate (1905) before the 1910 annexation and when the authority of the *Taehan* Empire diminished. The notion of *kungmin* became popular as the *Aeguk Kyemong Undong* (Patriotic Enlightenment Movement) was launched by intellectuals who felt distressed by the Japanese threat. The term *minjok* also started to emerge after the Russo-Japanese War in 1904. According to Kwon’s research (2007) on the use of terms in the *Taehan Maeil Sinbo* (*Korea Daily News*, July 1, 1904 – August 18, 1910)⁶¹, the reference count for both *kungmin* and *minjok* grew phenomenally from 1905 to 1910. The article in the *Taehan Maeil Sinbo* in 1908, titled ‘Distinction between *minjok* and *kungmin*’, demonstrated that the two terms had by now become popular (and also conflated) to the extent that they needed to be distinguished and their exact meaning clarified.

Despite both being nouns, *kungmin* should be distinguished from *minjok*. That people who do not know the difference between these two terms use them indiscriminately is problematic. Thus, clarification is needed. *Minjok* refers to individuals who share the same bloodline, territory, history, religion, and language [...] *Kungmin* refers to people who not only share the same bloodline, territory, history, religion, and language, but also the same spirit, perceptions, and actions. *Kungmin* functions internally akin to the various organs of the human body, and externally akin to a military machine [i.e. a united front fighting external threats] (*Taehan Maeil Sinbo* 1908, my translation)

⁶¹ The *Taehan Maeil Sinbo* was free of censorship because it was published by Ernest T. Bethell, a British journalist.

The excerpt above from the newspaper article shows three interesting characteristics with respect to the ideas of *kungmin* and *minjok*. Firstly, the existence of *minjok* seems to precede *kungmin*, although the concept of *minjok* was invented later than that of *kungmin*. Secondly, *minjok* seems to be regarded as a necessary condition for the construction of *kungmin* but not a sufficient one. Also it can be detected that *kungmin* was conceived as a more superior and desirable entity than that of *minjok*. Lastly, the notion of *kungmin* is described in a strong organic sense. This last point will be looked into later when examining the influence of social Darwinism. Concerning the first and second points, it is worth examining the changes in meanings of *minjok*. Paradoxically, *minjok* is perceived as something which had always been there, despite the term itself being invented around the early twentieth century. The question, ‘what should be the name of our *minjok*?’, which was raised by another article in the *Taehan Maeil Sinbo* in 1910, clearly revealed the fact that the allegedly homogenous *minjok* did not even have its own name.

Then how did *minjok* became an axiomatic fact? Kwon (2007, 206) points out that, in the early twentieth century, four different but overlapping meanings were attached to the term *minjok*. Firstly, *minjok* was used as a generic term to indicate various differences within a human group, not necessarily implicating ‘race’, nation, or ethnicity in its connotation. But more specifically, *minjok* was also associated with a tribe or ethnic group (particularly a small one). Such uses of the term gradually disappeared during the period of 1905–1910, though it did not do so completely. In this period, as explained earlier, *minjok* was increasingly used in relation to the idea of modern nation-state, within the political context of heightened Japanese aggression. In this conjuncture, the use of *minjok* developed into two directions. One

of them is *minjok* as members of a nation-state, indicating people who belong to the *Taehan* Empire, for instance. However, *minjok* began to acquire a different meaning which transcended the nation-state system, as Japanese colonisation accelerated and the national crisis deepened.

Indeed, the assertion of *kungmin*'s importance in the aforementioned article shows the anxiety of the ruling elite to develop the *Taehan* Empire into a modern nation-state and strengthen the unity of *kungmin* against Japan's imperial aggression. However, as the fate of the Korean nation-state had got dimmer, particularly after the annexation by Japan in 1910, the concept of *minjok* gained greater importance whilst also gaining a more abstract and transcendental nuance.

3.1.3. Minjok, a sacred concept

The transcendental importance of *minjok* can be found in writings of intellectuals of the age such as Sin Ch'aeho and Ch'oe Namsǒn. Sin Ch'aeho, a nationalist historian (1880-1936), contributed to the invention of the distinct Korean ethnic identity by re-writing Korean history based on the history of *minjok*. In his *Toksa sillon* (*A New Reading of History*) he states that 'without *minjok*, there is no history; without history, *minjok* cannot have a clear perception of the state' (cited in Em 1999, 343). Identifying *minjok* as the central historical subject, he identified the origin of the Korean ethnic nation with *Tan'gun*, a mythical figure who is regarded to be the founder of the earliest Korean state, *Ko Chosǒn* dating back to the year 2,333 B.C. (ibid., 339). By reconstructing Korean history as the history of a Korean ethnic nation with common ancestry, the Korean *minjok* was clearly defined as a

historically autonomous group that needs to resist Japanese imperial aggression and establish its own nation-state.

Youn (2009) claims that *minjok* acquired its distinctive meaning and significance differentiated from the concept of *kungmin* in the articles published in the journal for would-be intellectuals, *Sonyōn* (*The Adolescent*, 1908–1911), for which Ch’oe Namsōn worked as the editor-in-chief. As a representative cultural nationalist, discontent with the pervasive tendency of replacing the Sino-centred mentality of *sadae* (serving the Great) with the emulation of Western civilisation, Ch’oe Namsōn asserted that the Korean language, literature, folklore, and history had a unique quality of their own (Allen 1990). For him, while the notion of *kungmin* hinges on the adoption of *munmyōng* (civilisation), *minjok*, as an organic and autonomous being, was considered to hold a higher status than civilisation/modernisation, since it was the fundamental element that initially made the thrust towards civilisation possible (Youn 2009, 95). Ch’oe Namsōn projected *minjok* into Korea’s glorious past by bringing the value of Korea’s natural/historical heritage and indigenous traditions to the fore. This type of cultural, past-oriented approach to *minjok* seems inevitable considering the fact that Korea, at that time, had little chance of achieving independence in the near future.

The transformation of *minjok* and its relationship with the notion of *kungmin* reveals the complicated construction of Korean identity during the early modernisation period. Furthermore, the unique development of *minjok* explains the specificity of the Korean idea of the ‘nation’. Shin et al.(1999, 469) claim that ‘Koreans defined their identity as “immutable” or “primordial” through an imagined conception of

“Korean blood” (*hyolt’ong*), regarding themselves as belonging to a “unitary nation” (*tanil minjok*), an ethnically homogeneous and racially distinctive collectivity.’ However, on the other hand, this Korean bifurcation paradoxically uncovers the universal dilemma of the ‘nation’ which, as Balibar (1991a) argues, depends on the construction of ‘fictive ethnicity’. Balibar states in his explanation of the mechanism of nationalism that produces *homo nationalis*:

By constituting the people as a fictively ethnic unity against the background of a universalistic representation which attributes to each individual one – and only one – ethnic identity and which thus divides up the whole of humanity between different ethnic groups corresponding potentially to so many nations, national ideology does much more than justify the strategies employed by the state to control populations. It inscribes their demands in advance in a sense of belonging in the double sense of the term – both what it is that makes one belong to oneself and also what makes one belong to other fellow human beings. Which means that one can be interpellated, as an individual, *in the name of* the collectivity whose name one bears. The naturalization of belonging and the sublimation of the ideal nation are two aspects of the same process. (Balibar 1991a, 96, emphasis in original)

In this sense, the tension, but also the conflation, between the concept of *minjok* and *kungmin* in their historical formation attests to the fact that the people – a national community – is imagined and produced in a way that appears to be ‘natural’ and to transcend particular individual and social conditions. And central to the production of the genealogical schema is the idea of ‘race’. The idea of ‘Korean blood’ and the ‘purity’ of the Korean nation not only naturalise but also idealise the national identity. And in this process, nationalism involves the acts of drawing a boundary between the self and Other, both internally and externally. The next section will explore various articulations of social Darwinism with particular focus on its role in creating racial knowledge and constructing national identity.

3.2. Social Darwinism: The framework for understanding the world and self

After Herbert Spencer theorised the competition for survival as a law of human evolution coining the phrase ‘survival of the fittest’ in his essay, *A Theory of Population* (1852), his social Darwinist idea has permeated various parts of the world where a wider range of ideologues employed this idea (at times, selectively) for diverse socio-political aims. Among many variants, ‘the popularised model of social Darwinism’ is to understand ‘history as a series of violent conquests of the “unfit” by the “fitter”’ (Tikhonov 2010, 21).

Darwinism, the science of biology, had been already popular around the 1880s in Japan, followed by the introduction of the social Darwinist idea of history and phrases such as ‘struggle for existence’ and ‘survival of the fittest’. In Korea, this type of idea began to take root during the 1890s. Interestingly, Korea adopted this social Darwinist idea without much interest in Darwinism as a biological theory (Chön 1996, 115). However, this lack of understanding for Darwinian biology did not prevent social Darwinist thoughts from gaining influence. Social Darwinism eventually gained absolute centrality in Korea’s modern discourse on national development.

From the late nineteenth century, Korea began to experience a substantial epistemological shift due to the changing world order: the traditional Sino-centric regional order was challenged by the rise of Japan and growing aggression from the West (Shin 2005). In this political conjuncture, social Darwinism became an alternative to replace the weakening Confucian consciousness. However, it is fair to

say that ideas influenced by social Darwinism blended well with Confucian ethics rather than eradicated them. In fact, many Korean social Darwinists formulated the Korean version of social Darwinism by referring to the Confucian thought system, in order to explain this totally new worldview (Tikhonov 2010, 198-199). Furthermore, in contrast to the fact that Darwin's theory was seemingly in collision with Christianity in the West, Confucianism or any other religion including Christianity in Korea did not conflict with this revolutionary idea (K-R Lee 2004). As Tikhonov (2010, 8) insists, 'social Darwinism was indeed seen as *the* scientific truth beyond any religion – a truth which religions simply had to accommodate.'

3.2.1. Social Darwinism: an extrospective gaze

The *Tongnip Sinmun* was the first daily newspaper to contribute greatly to the circulation of social Darwinist doctrines (Tikhonov 2010, 59). Its Korean editorial of June 24, 1897, discusses:

Among humans, there are various categories: black humans, yellow humans, red humans, and white humans [...] The Blacks [...] are generally even more stupid than the Oriental race (*tongyang injong*), and are despicable compared to the White race. The autochthonous race (*t'ojong*) in the USA [...] is even less civilized than the Oriental race [...] Today, the White race is the most clever, diligent, and brave among all the races in the world. The Whites are spread all over the world, and gradually winning over the inferior races. The Whites take their lands, trees, and plants. That is why those among the inferior races who do not mix with the Whites and do not learn their knowledge in order to become their equals are gradually being extinguished without being able to make progress in civilizing themselves. In countries like the USA, the autochthonous race, being unable to learn civilization and progress from the Whites, have been reduced in numbers from several tens of

millions to just several thousand during the course of the last two hundred years.
(*Tongnip Sinmun* 1897, English translation in Tikhonov 2010, 60)

We can clearly see here the adoption of White racism in the perceived racial hierarchy among various racial groups. Beyond recognising Whites as the supreme race and acknowledging its ever-expanding power, this newspaper article took a step further: it justified the colonial enterprise and blamed the weak for their dire conditions based on the social Darwinist idea of ‘survival of the fittest’.

This type of thought can be also seen in *Yun Ch'ihō's ilgi* (*Yun Ch'ihō's Diary*) which Yun Ch'ihō, a pioneering social Darwinist, kept for sixty years, between 1883 and 1943. Yun recorded his thoughts and experiences first in Chinese (1833-1887), then Korean (1887-1899), and finally in English from 1899 onwards (K-I Kim 2008, 145). In his diary entry of March 7, 1890, he argued that the domination of the superior race has nothing to do with ethics or morality since it is an objective reflection of human nature, which is ‘selfish and evil’. This strong internalisation of racial hierarchy is disconcerting, particularly considering the great deal of racism he himself experienced when studying in the US.⁶² In fact, he aptly pinpointed the fallacy of Western democratic doctrines in his diary entry of February 14, 1890. He wrote:

In practice the Americans have shown that their doctrine of equality, etc., etc. is only skin deep. That is if you want to enjoy the so-called inalienable right of man in this “Land of Freedom” you must be White. (Yun 1974, English translation in Tikhonov 2010, 41)

⁶² Yun studied in Japan, China and the US and became an admirer of Western civilisation. He was one of Korea's earliest Protestant converts (Tikhonov 2010, 36).

However, he did not further elaborate on this contradiction. Rather, he defended British colonialism or American racism by asserting that violence and exploitation are inexorable in the process of civilising the inferior (Chǒn 1996, 128). As such, social Darwinism, in its early stage of adoption in Korea, largely functioned as a lens to comprehend the dynamics of the external world, rather than reflecting on the self (ibid., 133). But it surely was more than just a tool for understanding what was going on out there, for it also resulted in the tendency to eulogise the victor and blame the weak. In this social Darwinist interpretation of the world, the idea of ‘race’ functioned as a signifier of civilisation (culture).

As civilisation came to be understood in accordance with the White race, ‘race’ became an indicator of the good and bad people (K-I Kim 2008, 135-6). This racial evolutionary view of civilisation was clearly articulated through the media in the early twentieth century. For example, *Ch'ǒngch'un* (*Youth*)⁶³, one of the major magazines of the 1910s, often ran two photos in each issue: one was the image of a metropolis while the other was the image of aborigines in the world (Kil 2007; Y-A Lee 2010). This vivid juxtaposition of the scene of the metropolis and the image of aboriginal bodies indicates how the distinction between civilisation and savagery, culture and nature, and mind and body operated, and how the idea of ‘race’ was invoked and racial hierarchy was illustrated in this process. And this editing was not only to account for global racial hierarchy but also to encourage Korean readers to aspire to the Western civilisation model, in order not to fall back into savagery. What needs to be noted here is that ‘race’ was used to explain the degree of civilisation

⁶³ Y-A Lee (2010) claims that this magazine was a useful resource to reveal the popularised perception of the ‘outer world’ particularly because it aimed to educate the younger generation of Korea, as can be seen in its title.

achieved. In this sense, although the idea of ‘race’ was based on physical traits, it was not confined to bodily markers. Indeed, while both body and culture became the determinants for racial differentiation or homogenisation (Jang 2000, 120), bodily markers were always (re-)interpreted in association with the level of cultural development. Thus, it can be said that the notions of civilisation and ‘race’ were coupled together, while ‘race’ never simply meant a hierarchisation of human races based on physical traits.

For example, the July 27, 1898 editorial of *Tongnip Sinmun* identified the Chinese as the weak, ‘most disdained race of the world’ after the defeat of China in the 1894 Sino-Japanese War, which was often represented as a righteous war between civilisation and savagery (*ibid.*, 128). This depiction of the Chinese, indeed, does not seem to accord with the aforementioned understanding of global racial hierarchy which placed Whites at the top and Blacks at the bottom, and Yellows in between. Yet an inner hierarchy within the ‘Yellow’ race (the broad racial category to which both Japanese and Chinese are presumed to belong) should not be seen as a negation of the global racial hierarchy but as a form of transformation and internalisation of this racial structure that is strongly inflected by social Darwinist thinking and translated into regional politics.

In examining articulations of race thinking in the East Asian region, it is important not to simplify racism as a single doctrine of global white supremacy coherently imposed by Western colonialism, in a top-down manner. As Berg and Wendt argue by borrowing Robertson’s concept of ‘glocalisation’, ‘indigenous populations did not simply adopt certain ideas about race that were introduced into their societies by

Western colonial authorities, scientists, and military personnel, but that they actively adapted them within the local contexts of their native environments' (Berg and Wendt 2011, 3). In this sense, the aforementioned racial inferiorisation of the Chinese and the following example of intellectual-political development of Asianism reveal how racial/racist ideologies were disseminated, adapted, and transformed in different and often contradictory ways in connection with specific regional and national politics.

Indeed, modern Asianism, first developed by Japanese intellectuals and widely disseminated among Asian intellectuals from the late nineteenth century, is emblematic in proving how the idea of 'race' and 'civilisation' were diffused and differently played out within the context of Japanese expansion in the region. Influenced by this Asianist worldview, many East Asian intellectuals 'viewed race as the primary category of distinction in the world and understood the present global situation as an age of racial struggle, especially between the yellow (*hwangsaek injong*) and white (*paeksaek injong*) races' (Shin 2005). And under the goal of creating Japan-centred regional solidarity, Asians (mainly Korean, Japanese, and Chinese), allegedly similar in racial and cultural terms, were called upon in solidarity to fight against Western aggression.

For example, Yun Ch'icho, the aforementioned social Darwinist, adopted this rationale for racial solidarity among the 'yellow race' in hope that Japan – the only nation, in Asia, modernised and civilised enough to compete with Western nations – would act as the saviour of Asian nations that were threatened by Western imperial expansion (K-I Kim 2008, 150-154). For supporters of Asianism, the 1904 Russo-

Japanese War became an exemplary case in proving the superiority of Asians and the need for Asia to build its own civilisation. Against this backdrop, Russians were deemed as an inferior race, despite their whiteness, by some Korean advocates of Asianism. In his diary, Yun Ch'icho, wrote:

The meanest Japanese would be a gentleman and scholar compared to a vodka-drunk, orthodox Russian. Between a Japanese and a Korean there is a community of sentiment and of interest, based on the identity of race, of religion, and of written characters. Japan, China, and Korea must have one common aim, one common policy, one common ideal – to keep the Far East the permanent home of the yellow race, and to make that home as beautiful and happy as nature has meant it to be. (Quoted from Shin 2005)

Here, the characterisation of Russians as ‘vodka-drunk’ and ‘orthodox’ and the Japanese as ‘gentleman’ shows that Asianism adapted the conception of ‘civilisation’ in a way to refute the purported racial hierarchy between white and yellow. Yet this cultural inferiorisation of Russians and emphasis on cultural commonalities of the ‘yellow race’ does not mean that the ideology of Asianism was performed to fundamentally repudiate the pre-existing racist categories and to counter scientific racism as such. This is evidenced by Japan’s contradictory positionality in-between White Western imperialists and other ‘lesser’ races. Indeed, despite the rhetoric of commonalities among the yellow race, Japanese intellectuals such as Taguchi Ukichi put their efforts into distinguishing the Japanese from the yellow race and identifying themselves with the white race (see Ching 1998). As Ching writes:

On the one hand, Japan needed to respond to the prevalent racist-thinking in order to elevate itself above and differentiate itself from the wretched of the earth in identification with the “white” colonial powers. Yet on the other hand, paradoxically

and concomitantly unable to escape the epidermal classification of this very scientific racism, it consequently constructed a racial and cultural interconnectedness with its “yellow” neighbors in justifying its own colonial endeavor. (Ching 1998, 67-8)

Indeed, Japan’s contradictory positionality reflected in Asianism suggests that the concept of ‘race’ in this region developed and manifested itself in a way ‘not deducible from the biological system itself’ (*ibid.*, 66). But as already mentioned, this does not mean that the Eurocentric racial schematisation or the relationship between ‘race’ and culture was completely rejected in this transfiguration of the idea of ‘race’. Rather, as Ching argues, the concept of ‘race’ became ‘an abstraction’ (*ibid.*), strongly intertwined with the notion of ‘culture’.

As Japanese colonisation took concrete shape in Korea after the Russo-Japanese War, some previous Korean Asianists got disillusioned with the rhetoric of ‘racial solidarity’. But others attempted to reconstruct Asianism with Korea at its core (Korean-centred Asianism), or kept supporting a Japan-centred pan-Asianist vision throughout the colonial period (Shin 2005). For example, Ch’oe Namsŏn (a social Darwinist historian and literary intellectual) was a representative figure who supported the former, a Korea-centred Asianism. He inverted the aforementioned Japanese Pan-Asianism and placed Korea at the centre of northeast Asia by emphasising the value of Korea’s unique culture (Allen 1990, 803). By romanticising Korea’s past culture, his Korean version of cultural, religious Asianism put the Korean race forward as the leader of the Asian region. On the other hand, in continual support of the Japanese pan-Asianist vision, Yi Kwangsu emphatically justified and internalised Japanese colonialism in his wartime writings.

He explicitly propagated the ideology of *naesōn ilch'e* (meaning ‘Japan and Korea as one body’) which advocated that Koreans should be willing to die for the Japanese Empire. In one of his writings, he argued:

No one will believe that British and Indian could be one... Even though Mohandas Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore speak fluent English and completely assimilate themselves into British culture, no one will consider them British. Besides, Christianity can never be in harmony with Indian religions [...] The relationship between Japan and Korea is totally different from that of Britain and India. Though Japan and Korea have lived in different territories for thousands of years, they have shared common ancestors and have kept exchanging their blood and culture. (Kim and Yi 1997, 19-20)

As can be seen here, the rhetoric of ‘racial’ and ‘cultural’ affinity was used to present Japanese colonialism as something different from that of the British and thereby legitimise Japan’s colonial domination of the Korean peninsula and disguise colonial racism as benign assimilation for co-prosperity in greater East Asia.

3.2.2. Social Darwinism: an introspective gaze

Pushing social Darwinist ideas to its extreme inevitably caused the dilemma of concluding that the uncivilised and inferior Korean race deserved extinction or colonisation by other civilised races. When Yun Ch’ihō lamented Korea’s ‘centuries of despotism, injustice, cruelty and oppression’ which ‘have deprived the rulers and the ruled of their sense and reason’, his observation clearly resonated with that of Western missionaries’ (Tikhonov 2010, 40). Then what was the practical application of this thinking? Though some intellectuals outspokenly collaborated with the Japanese on their colonial enterprise, as shown in the aforementioned adoption of

Asianism, many still were eager to rescue the Korean nation from drowning. Prior to the Japanese Annexation in 1910, many social Darwinists emphasised that Korea needed to be enlightened and to strengthen its competitiveness based on patriotism.

The editorial of September 5, 1899, in the *Tongnip Sinmun*, reveals that racial hierarchy was not entirely conceived as immutable. By arguing that two forces – natural force and social force – are essential to ‘enlightenment’ (socio-economic progress through modernisation), it opened up the possibility for any country to become civilised, provided it attempted to overcome natural adversities while advancing social development. And more importantly, the article claimed that, in so doing, one could climb up the ladder of racial hierarchy (Chön 1996, 120).

Born out of the precarious state of Korea’s survival as a nation, the enlightenment discourse of progress in Korea fully centred on ‘national’ development instead of individual freedom. Liang Qichao, a renowned Chinese social Darwinist, exerted great influence on Korean intellectuals who aimed to create the ‘new people’ of the day (K-R Lee 2004). Johann K. Bluntschli’s ideas of organic statehood were introduced to Korea via Liang Qichao’s writings and became very popular. Bluntschli argued against excessive individualism, which he thought would harm the organic state that every individual is a part of (Chön 1996, 147). Similarly, Liang, in his treatise, *Xinminshuo* (New People, 1903), claimed:

Freedom means freedom for the group, not freedom for the individual [...] Men must not be slaves to other men, but they must be slaves to their group. For, if they are not slaves to their own group, they will assuredly become slaves to some other.
(Quoted from Pusey 1983, 189)

This idea of the organic state was enthusiastically endorsed by Korean intellectuals who had been long influenced by the Confucian relationship of the state and people that conceives the state as an extension of the family bound by filial piety and paternal love. Under this influence, competition for survival was located among states, not within a state (nation). For example, P'o Usaeng, one of the commentators of *T'aegük Hakpo* (Journal of the Supreme Ultimate)⁶⁴, in his article titled *Fundamental principles of competition*, claimed:

The pursuit of individual happiness is important. However, more importantly, individuals should devote their life to the prosperity of their own nation. Only by doing so, can they find true happiness. (Quoted from S-T Jeong 2011, 31, my translation)

In this framework, the worth of each individual was to be determined by his/her contribution to the state. Another contributor to this Journal, Pak ilch'an, defined the state as a ‘religion of all people’ (*ibid.*). Thus, for the unified goal of strengthening the state, the sacred organic entity, *kungmin* needed to develop their bodies, enlighten their thoughts and cultivate their morals. Chǒn (1996) points out that this strong organic concept of the state stemmed from a compromise between social Darwinism and Confucian thoughts under Korea’s dire political climate. The centrality of the organic state in the discourses of modernisation unavoidably diminished after Japan annexed Korea, but ‘eventually evolved into the 1920s theories of an elitist “organisation [in charge of the] reconstruction [of the Korean nation]” (*kaejojuŭi tanch'e*, in Yi Kwangsu’s terminology)’ (Tikhonov 2010, 14).

⁶⁴ A scholarly journal published by *T'aegük hakhoe* from August 1906 to November 1908.

Indeed, compared to the early social Darwinists who attempted to mobilise people with the promise of a powerful country, social Darwinists under the Japanese rule were greatly influenced by eugenics. Coining the term ‘eugenics’ and the phrase ‘nature versus nurture’, Francis Galton paved the way for racist social engineering (Pak 1997, 54). Galton’s ideas influenced Japan and subsequently its colony, Korea through Japanese colonial assimilation policies (Pak 1996). For example, the Japanese colonial government promoted intermarriage between Japanese and Koreans justifying it as a measure for rehabilitating the Korean race (*ibid.*). Also people deemed to have ‘bad genes’ such as leprosy patients were sterilised from the mid-1930s (Y-J Shin 2006, 150-1). Yet such eugenic ideas were not only enforced by the Japanese colonial government, but also espoused by Korean intellectuals on the ground that they would provide inferior/helpless Koreans with hope of racial improvement (Y-A Lee 2010). Indeed, eugenic ideas became increasingly popular in the 1920s among Korean intellectuals; they would propagate such thinking through their writings, public lectures and conferences. In 1933, this eugenics movement gathered momentum through the establishment of the Korean Eugenics Association (Kor. *Chosŏn Usaeng Hyōphoe*), which was initiated by 85 Korean intellectuals including the aforementioned social Darwinists Yun Ch’icho and Yi Kwangsu.

The Korean version of eugenic ideas was epitomised in Yi Kwangsu’s *Minjok kaejoron* (*Treatise on the Reconstruction of the Korean Nation*), published in May 1922 in *Kaeb yok*, a monthly intellectual magazine of the 1920s. Citing Gustave Le Bon, a French social psychologist who claimed there is an unvarying mental constitution for each race (Le Bon 1898, 6), Yi argued that national character is composed of a ‘fundamental’ character that can hardly be altered, and a ‘secondary’

one that can be enhanced (Yi 1979). Yi continued to claim that the fundamental character of the Korean race – is ‘brave, humane, a bit ascetic, and altruistic’ (Tikhonov 2010, 211). Yet, despite such a good ‘fundamental character’, Yi lamented that Koreans’ ‘secondary character’ – ‘the sum of national habits’ – had deteriorated into ‘Sinophilic flunkeyism, impractical aloofness, literary weakness, empty ritualism, egoism and laziness’ (*ibid.*, 212). Thus, for him, it was imperative that Koreans improve this problematic secondary character.

This effort of racial rehabilitation⁶⁵, influenced by Japanese culturalists, focused on cultural and moral problems, on the basis that weak morality engenders cultural degeneration – a cause of all socio-economic ills (Pak 1997, 35). Hence, Yi directly related *minjoksōng* (national character) with ‘culture’ (a whole way of life) and the moral basis of the nation. However, these efforts for cultural and moral reforms tended to break away from traditional Confucian morality which was seen as the cause of the problem. Indeed, as a member of the literary elite who wrote many novels, Yi forged the relationship between ‘fostering of the emotional faculty (*chōngyuk*) and the inculcation of moralities’, which he thought had been ignored in Confucian ethics (J-K Lee 2005, 89). He emphasised the importance of the emotional faculty in ‘voluntarizing’ (not coercing) the population to take responsibility for national development. In so doing, he differentiated this type of disciplining effects from the previous Confucian way of imposing moral

⁶⁵ I borrow the translation of ‘racial rehabilitation’ (indicating this program of “*minjok kaejo*”) from Jin-Kyung Lee (2005). She attributes this terminology to Ruth Hsu who addresses the ‘rehabilitative concept of ethnicity’ (J-K Lee 2005). The main reason I use this term rather than the oft-translated term of ‘national reconstruction’ is because the term ‘racial rehabilitation’ more accurately captures the racialised/racist aspects of this initiative and the workings of bio-politics. Lee (2005) applies Foucault’s theorisation of bio-political system to her analysis of Yi Kwangsu’s discourse on racial improvement.

responsibilities upon its subjects. In such a framework, an ‘education of the emotions’ became key in achieving this racial rehabilitation. Indeed, Lee (2005) points out that the modern Korean term for ‘education’ (Kor. *kyoyuk*) itself – consisting of ‘teaching’ (*kyo*) and ‘fostering’ (*yuk*) – connotes ‘the bio-political concept of the development of abilities as human resources’ (p. 90).

It seems that, deprived of political sovereignty and state institutions, anti-colonial nationalists⁶⁶ inevitably turned their eyes to education, the cultural sphere of racial rehabilitation. Yet cultural development through education was conceived as a means of rehabilitating the Korean race and thereby occupying a higher position in the global hierarchy of race, which would lead to the achievement of national independence. In this sense, even when this racial reform was pursued through cultural programmes and motivated by anti-colonial nationalist consciousness, it still mirrored ‘the colonial state’s bio-political disciplines’ which sought to recreate Koreans as desirable colonial subjects (*ibid.*, 102).

As briefly mentioned above, the Japanese colonial state implemented various policies such as compulsory education and disease eradication initiatives under the goal of forging sound bodies and souls. Regarding the relationship between healthy body and culture, Y-R Kim’s (2005) analysis of the entertainment policies during wartime, the late 1930s, clearly shows the role of culture as ‘soft eugenics’. If ‘hard eugenics’ aimed to eradicate the unfit and prohibit debilitating behaviours in order to produce potential soldiers’ bodies, often by employing physical violence and

⁶⁶ Here, I am referring to mainstream culturalists in various anti-colonial factions. There were different ideological factions among the anti-colonial movement such as anti-colonial communists, which cannot be examined here due to limited space.

exclusion, ‘soft eugenics’ attempted to foster ‘positive culture’ by encouraging people to enjoy various entertainment such as sports, outdoor activities, film, and theatre (Y-R Kim 2005, 328). Thus, cultural activities (entertainment), which had been previously the privilege of the upper class, became widespread and, in fact, increased considerably during wartime, contrary to the conventional understanding of this era as bleak, oppressive times. By carefully controlling the boundary of good and bad entertainment, the colonial state effectively constructed a social system and everyday culture based on eugenics (*ibid.*, 342). Hence, it seems that in colonised Korea, both the colonial state and anti-colonial nationalists put ‘culture’ on the frontline of racial rehabilitation and modernisation. J-K Lee (2005) suggests that:

Culture in the colonial-modern Korean context, delimited and semi-autonomous under the colonial rule, was much more than the “corrective supplement” that it was in the imperialist-nationalist modernity of Europe. In playing multiple and ambivalent functions – ethnonationalizing, collectivizing, stratifying, rehabilitating, educating the population, ethnosculture as a nationalist institution replicates and substitutes for the close relationship between the modern state and its cultural institutions. (J-K Lee 2005, 103)

Indeed, the notion of culture entangled with ‘race’ played a significant role in (re)producing collective identities across the political spectrum, particularly in Korea’s situational void of viable political actions. And social Darwinism, a truly flexible ideology, functioned as the dominant interpretive schema through which the conceptions of ‘race’, nation, and culture were constructed. This section examined the ways in which such social Darwinist thinking underlay the contradictions of colonial modernity – the practices of racialised self-assertion or self-negation, and the glorification of the nation’s past or the pursuit of national reform. Though I have

no intention to equate the nationalism of the dominated with that of the dominant and surely do give anti-colonial nationalists credit for fighting against oppression, it is much needed to examine where and how the very boundary of nation was drawn in nationalist discourse as well. This is particularly important because such nationalist discourse inflected by social Darwinism has become more influential in post-colonial Korea while its internal contradictions have been buried.

3.3. Nationalism geared toward the exclusion of internal others

Japan's defeat in World War II and the subsequent liberation of Korea did not result in the establishment of an independent nation-state. Under the cold war system, Korea became a geo-politically critical base for ideological battle. The Soviet and US arbitrarily divided Korea in half and, from 1945 began to govern the North and South, respectively. This supposedly temporary settlement finally led to the establishment of separate nation-states in South (August of 1948) and North Korea (September of 1948). This post-1945 territorial division posed grave concerns over who, among the two Koreas, would represent the Korean nation. For the ruling elites in both Koreas who had pushed ahead with the separate nation-building plan, nationalism, once over-determined by Japanese imperialism, needed to be reconfigured. Thus, propagating one's legitimacy over the other, each of the two Koreas defined the US or Soviet Union as a new imperialistic power, seen as an obstacle to the achievement of true independence (J-H Kim 2000, 172). Since the establishment of separate regimes, particularly after the Korean War (in 1953), anti-communism and nationalism have become imbricated with each other in the ROK (Republic of Korea). This section will examine the politics of nationalism developed

in post-colonial, divided Korea while focusing on how nationalism played the role of excluding others within.

3.3.1. ROK's nationalism under the cold war system

The aforementioned organic concept of the strong state, having emerged in the early twentieth century, has since become an effective outlet for nationalism. Facing national partition, this state-centred nationalism needed to be transmuted while redefining the relationship between nation and the state. Rhee Syngman, the first president of the ROK, proclaimed *Ilminjuŭi* (One People-ism, an ideology of one nation) as state doctrine in an attempt to acquire legitimacy for the state. The brains behind this ideological invention were An Hosang – the first Minister of Culture and Education, and Yang U-chōng – the president of *Yonhap* Newspaper, a right-wing journalist (Im 2005b; Ha 2003).

Considering the strong aspiration for a unified nation among people at that time, the discrepancy between the political and racial base of the Korean nation posed a great burden for the ruling elites. Since nationalism was the dominant discourse of the day, in the context of national liberation, the ROK urgently needed to ‘domesticate’ the anti-imperialistic, resistant language of nationalism while claiming the South as the sole owner of nationalism⁶⁷. The first task was to redefine the Korean nation. Yang, one of the abovementioned ideologues, illustrated the nation as an extended form of

⁶⁷ North Korea also dived into this politics of nationalism in order to claim legitimacy over the entire Korean nation. Thus, the two nationalisms were fiercely pitched against each other, both appropriating the language of sacred ‘nation’. However, I will confine myself to looking at the South. To compare the strategies of each regime, see G-W Shin 2006.

family⁶⁸ by making the concept comprehensible for the public: as in family, the notion of ‘pure blood’ was the basic premise of national identity (Im 2005b, 276). Being associated with the idea of family, where filial piety is a key moral value within Confucian legacy, the nation-state became not only an organic but also a moral entity where the patriarch is of absolute moral value. However, it is hard to say that this ‘familialisation’ strategy of *Ilminjuŭi* was successfully implemented in practice. Among many reasons, including the inevitable dilemma of having to prioritise ideology over blood (family), Rhee Syngman seemed ineligible for the role of patriarch of the Korean nation since he was too westernised (Cumings 1990; Im 2005a). Besides the fact that he studied in the US (BA, MA, PhD) and adopted Westernised thoughts and gestures(!), the fact that his wife – Franziska Donner – was white, highlighted his foreignness. This damaged his status as the patriarch of the ‘pure Korean nation’ and consequently destabilised the familialisation strategy of *Ilminjuŭi* (Im 2005a, 314-316).

Indeed, this racialised, naturalised concept of nation faced a dilemma since it highlighted the ROK as a temporary, factional, regional polity. Thus, nation needed to be more than just a community bound by kinship in order to rationalise national partition and legitimise the establishment of the ROK. To this end, the nation was defined as ‘a community of common ideology’. *Ilminjuŭi* implicitly prioritised itself as a common ideology over blood ties (Im 2005b, 280-281). An’s account of *Ilminjuŭi* elucidates the relationship between *Ilminjuŭi* and nation:

⁶⁸ Concerning etymology, the Korean translation for nation-state is *kukka*: *kuk* means country, while *ka* connoting family.

That the Korean race shares a unitary national history with common ancestry forms the basis for nation and *Ilminjuŭi* [...] “One nation” is a necessary condition for “*Ilminjuŭi*.”. But the opposite is also true: one belongs to nation only if one believes in “*Ilminjuŭi*.” (An 1950, 30-31, my translation)

Thus, *Ilminjuŭi* (One People-ism), the ideological raison d’être of the ROK, became a yardstick to determine whether one is part of the nation, subsequently depriving communists of their right to nation. Interestingly, Korean ruling elites did not resort to directly applying the language of democracy or capitalism in claiming their legitimacy over their communist counterparts, but attempted to invent and christen their own state doctrine. In fact, An, conceiving of human history as the competition of thoughts, insisted that ‘we, by ourselves, should develop our own leading principles for our nation’ (Ha 2003, 315). From this perspective, *Ilminjuŭi* elevated Korea to the position of a ‘genuine’ (*chinjōng*) nation-state, being analogised to the final synthesis of Hegelian dialectic⁶⁹ which sublated ‘hypocritical’ (*wisōn*) nation-states, not only including communist regimes but capitalist states as well. This disassociation from capitalism, at least at the rhetorical level,⁷⁰ reflects the pervasive anti-capitalistic sentiment among the populace in the late 1940s, which forced the ROK’s ruling elites to present themselves as an inclusive polity for the whole nation surpassing the ideological battle of communism and capitalism (Im 2005b, 295). The aporia of *Ilminjuŭi* – the political need to represent itself beyond the ideologies of communism and capitalism whilst fighting communists in and out to protect a regime totally dependent on the US – inevitably created theoretical ambiguities and

⁶⁹ Indeed, An Hosang, a professor of philosophy, was strongly influenced by German idealism, particularly Hegel’s theory, while studying in Germany.

⁷⁰ Though *Ilminjuŭi* distanced itself from capitalism at the theoretical level, *Ilminjuŭi* ideologues never publicly condemned the US despite constantly condemning the Soviet as ‘red imperialists’ (Im 2005b, 302).

even contradictions. In practice, *Ilminjuŭi* was enforced in the form of a ferocious red-hunt.

The state's representation of the so-called *Yōsun* Incident reveals how the ROK became engaged in a war with its internal Other, the communists. In April of 1948, a mass uprising against the general election planned for May 10 (on the ground that the election would perpetuate Korea's partition) broke out on Cheju Island where partisan forces were active (Suh 2010, 509). The state used its military forces to quell the rebels, which led to the killing of approximately 30,000 residents. This led to the *Yōsun* Incident (October 19-25, 1948) which broke out when leftists within the military units refused to suppress the rebels. The subsequent military campaign led by the state caused significant collateral damage in the southern area of the ROK.

The authorities immediately created a narrative that framed this incident as an anti-national atrocity committed by communists. The state, enjoying the right to define 'what is violence' and 'who is the perpetrator/victim', constantly described this incident as the slaughter of innocent people by beastlike rebels through various outlets: horrific images of the dead, heartbreaking stories of bereaved families, and stern warnings of possible danger ensued. The communist rebel group was identified as 'the destroyer of family and nation, and the perpetrator of homicide, patricide and fratricide' (Im 2001, 299). As can be seen in President Rhee's denunciation of this incident, 'promoting the killing and injuring of, and the extinction of the nation (*minjok*)', the state successfully discredited the communists by accusing them of being traitors to their own people (nation) (ibid., 297). The language of nationalism

was effectively exploited in otherising internal anti-establishment groups, and enabled a more robust purge on ‘anti-national’ leftwing activists.

Even though *Ilminjuŭi* itself was short-lived as an official ideology, by examining its constitution, we can see what type of distortions Korean nationalism experienced and how it attempted to negotiate its contradictions. Korean nationalism began to transform itself in the post-colonial space: having lost its external Other (Japanese imperialism), Korean nationalism – fraught with national divisions – shifted its focus to its internal Other. The subsequent Korean War escalated such ideological otherising, setting in motion a dynamic which has affected the politics of nationalism ever since.

3.3.2. Sex, war, and racial others

Long before mixed-race children became dubbed ‘multicultural’ children⁷¹ in South Korea, ‘mixed-blood’ (Kor. *honhyoł*), a strongly racialised term, used to indicate mixed-race people, particularly Amerasians, born to American servicemen and Korean women during the Cold War period. Among various manifestations of the Cold War in South Korea (such as frantic anti-communism), the story of ‘how sex meets war’ – in particular the development of US camptown (Kor. *kijich’on*)

⁷¹ Reflecting the recent increase of migrant workers and marriage migrants from other Asian countries, the majority of these children were born to a migrant from elsewhere in Asia, and one Korean parent.

prostitution⁷² – needs to be explored in order to uncover the role of nationalism in the forgings of sexed and racialised others. As Moon (1997) aptly illustrates:

The selling and buying of sex by Koreans and Americans have been a staple of U.S.-Korean relations since the Korean War (1950-53) and the permanent stationing of U.S. troops in Korea since 1955. It would not be far-fetched to say that more American men have become familiar with camptown prostitution in Korea since the 1950s than with military strategy and Korea's GNP figures. Since the war, over one million Korean women have served as sex providers for the U.S. military. And millions of Koreans and Americans have shared a sense of special bonding, for they have together shed blood in battle and mixed blood through sex and Amerasian offspring. (Moon 1997, 1)

Cho (2000) conceptualises the South Korean developmental regime of the Cold War period as ‘the anticommunist regimented society’⁷³, and accordingly South Korea’s security interests conditioned almost all aspects of South Korean society for nearly three decades after the Korean War. Against this political backdrop, the South Korean government endorsed and regulated this ‘system of prostitution’, as demonstrated by the Camptown Clean-Up Campaign of the 1970s (Moon 1997, 36). In 1971, the reduction of US troops in Korea (resulting from the Nixon Doctrine) increased South Korea’s anxiety for national security and effectively pressurised the South Korean government to strictly implement venereal disease examinations as

⁷² Although ‘mixed-blood’ people in Korea cannot be deemed as one coherent group nor can this camptown narrative be the sole explanation for their presence, the popular conception of ‘the mixed-blood’ or Amerasians has been closely linked to the existence of US soldiers and camptown prostitution. Furthermore, that the Korean government controlled (not just neglected or purged) these sex workers reveals the workings of nationalism in producing internal others, which fits the aim of this chapter. It is also worth noting that migrant women with entertainment visas – mainly Filipinas and Russians – have replaced Korean women in camptowns since the mid-1990s (KCWU (Korea Church Women United) 2002, 98).

⁷³ According to Cho (2000), the construction of the South Korean developmental regime, epitomized by ‘the mobilization for growth in the maximal statist form and integration in the authoritarian form’, is mainly derived from ‘societal confrontation with communism’ (p. 410). This will be analysed later in the chapter when discussing imbrications between economic developmentalism and nationalism.

part of its effort to regulate the bodies of camptown prostitutes. Aiming to appease its ally and improve US-Korea relations, this government campaign ran regular medical check-ups and prostitution etiquette classes (*ibid.*, 91). In this process, camptown prostitutes whom government even spatially segregated from the public became patriotic labourers and ‘personal ambassadors’ who mediate the US-ROK relations (*ibid.*, 102-103). In this sense, the alliance between US imperial power and Korean patriarchal nationalism forged international relations through the subordination of women’s bodies.

Yet these women’s status as a ‘necessary evil’ (M. Lee 2008, 66) was disturbing not only for the South Korean government but for South Korean people at large. Lee pinpoints:

[T]he *kijich’on* women feature as the objects of discourse in two simultaneous and overlapping narratives: one as violated national virgins and the other as agents of sexual and national betrayal. (M. Lee 2008, 67)

Their existence itself was a continuous reminder of the unequal power relations between US and Korea and, of Korea as an emasculated, contaminated nation. Furthermore, these women transgressed both the notion of chastity in Confucian ethics and the idea of the racial purity of nation, which made them ‘doubly impure’ (Moon 1997, 3). Thus, to ‘maintain Korean national pride’, these women were often condemned as *yanggalbo* (Western whore) or *yanggongju* (Western princess) and differentiated from normal Korean women who were identified as ‘chaste daughters and faithful wives’ (N-Y Lee 2007, 454). This gendered nationalism constructed strong aversion for the mixed-blood, their children. Racial hybridity was deemed

repulsive not just because of physical differences, but because this biological trait was ‘culturally imagined’ and delegitimised ‘within the national community’ in relation to these children’s mothers (Nam 2008, 127).

The mixed-blood children were not recognised as legitimate Korean citizens and sent to their fathers’ country by the Korean government. From the mid-1950s till the early 1980s⁷⁴, the majority of mixed-blood children were sent to the US for adoption. This clearly shows that the mixed-blood was institutionally excluded from acquiring Korean citizenship. Furthermore, this expulsion from the start seems to explain why the mixed-blood is perceived as a mixed-blood ‘child’⁷⁵ rather than a mixed-blood ‘person’ (D-S Kim et al. 2003, 17-18). Another mechanism of exclusion that should be noted is the family registry (Kor. *hojōk*), in which all family members are registered under a male family head. This was the legal base of identification for Korean citizens, until the patriarchal system of *hajuje* was abolished in 2008. Though, since 1980, the mixed blood have been able to register under his/her mother’s name, the fact that he/she was not part of this entire Korean patrilineal genealogy, lacking a traditional male head, differentiated them from the normality of Koreanness. Thus, prior to 1980, mixed-blood children who were not sent to the US, were often registered under their male relatives such as grandfather or uncle (*ibid*, 19-20). Against this backdrop, the remaining mixed-blood have been precluded from belonging to the Korean ‘polity’, which is evidenced in the fact that mixed-blood

⁷⁴ From 1954 onwards, the Korean government sent mixed-blood children to the US based on an agreement between the two countries. However, it became difficult for mixed-blood children to be adopted to the US because of the change in the US immigration Act of 1962. But again, in 1982, as the US government passed a bill which gave Asian-American children (born in an area where the US army was stationed) a right to immigration, many of them immigrated to the States. (D-S Kim et al. 2003, 25-8)

⁷⁵ The word, ‘mixed-blood child’ has been far more used than ‘mixed-blood person’ in Korea and sounds more natural, which reflects the fact that the mixed-blood has been associated with a child.

men were exempted from mandatory military service due to their visual differences since 1972.⁷⁶ Although the Korean government stated that this exemption was to protect mixed-blood people from foreseeable racial harassment in the army, it took the easy (cost-effective) route by merely segregating and further marginalising them. Since completing military service has been the foremost duty for Korean men and a symbol of their being Korean citizens, this discriminatory exemption deprived them of the chance of being recognised as full citizens. Perceived as a threat to the notion of homogenous nation, and racialised in this way, the mixed-blood also experienced everyday harassment, which is closely related to their low level of education and economic instability.

This section investigated the making and exclusion of internal others in post-liberation Korea focusing on the nationalist mechanism of producing ideological and racial others. It is important to note that the signifier of ideological others, *ppalgaengi* (reds), has been widely employed to suppress all sorts of political dissent against the state in the name of national security. In constructing its identity as an anti-communist state, the ROK deployed the ‘tactic of *racial* annihilation of the reds’ (S-N Kim 2001, 268). Whilst the state’s obsession with reds exploited nationalism to eradicate ideological others, nationalism was also used to create sexed and racialised others and regulate the mode of their national belonging as it does so today in constructing ‘multicultural women and children’.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ This exemption for ‘visibly distinguishable’ mixed-blood men was abolished in 2011 by the revision of the Military Service Act.

⁷⁷ How ‘multicultural’ women and children (words to mainly indicate migrant women who marry Korean men and their children) were similarly constructed as internal others will be addressed in Chapter four and six where I will explore contemporary multicultural policies and discourses.

3.4. Economy: the new language of nationalism

While the Cold War system put South Korea at the forefront in the fight against communism, Western colonisation and concurrent capitalist modernisation placed Korea as an underdeveloped third-world state on the world's economic map. The latter caused a serious inferiority complex for South Korea, whilst the former manufactured a strong ideology of anti-communism (as discussed in the previous section). This inferiority complex might not be exclusive to South Korea, considering that postcolonial nations are supposed to 'catch up' with the developed world by implementing Western institutions of modernity and economy (Watson 2007, 174). However, the self-reform for evolutionary economic development worked very successfully in South Korea, compared to many other postcolonial nations.

This success was due to the effective exploitation of Korea's political situation as a 'society in truce' (an unended war) which facilitated 'statist mobilization' (Cho 2000, 411) for the national goal of 'building a rich country, strong army (Kor. *puguk kangbyōng*)'. Before the 1960s, anticommunism on its own functioned as the political *raison d'être* to differentiate the South Korean state from its counterpart in the North, as a more legitimate one. But since the Park Chung Hee government (1961–1979), anticommunism was employed to mobilise the public for economic development rather than standing as a sole, ultimate *raison d'être*. The desire to achieve economic advancement has become the dominant mode of South Korea's nationalist articulation of self. South Korea's rapid economic growth, which even surprised its closest ally, the US, has constantly reproduced this amalgamation of nationalism and economic development through its articulation. The following

section looks into how the Korean nation has become imagined as an ‘economic community’ first and foremost, how the boundary of the community has been constantly re-drawn, and in this process how different people have been differently interpellated⁷⁸.

3.4.1. Building a rich country and strong army: The social Darwinist ethos of the Korean developmental regime⁷⁹

In the early 1960s, when Park Chung Hee seized power in South Korea through a military coup, North Korea’s economy had been growing much faster as shown by its per capita income which was double that of the South. Considering the politics of representation between North and South since the national partition, such weaker economic performance apparently alarmed the junta, whose political legitimacy was already being questioned because of the coup. However, for Park Chung Hee, this economic backwardness was not just a challenge but also an opportunity to deflect the question of the legitimacy of his position. Under the goal of the ‘modernisation of our fatherland’, the Park Chung Hee regime highlighted the backwardness and

⁷⁸ In his essay, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Althusser uses the term ‘interpellation’ in explaining how ‘ideology interpellates individuals as subjects’ (Althusser 1971, 170). Providing an example of the policeman hailing an individual on the street ('Hey, you there!') as the operation of ‘interpellation’, Althusser writes that ‘ideology “acts” or “functions” in such a way that it “recruits” subjects among the individuals, or “transforms” the individuals into subjects’ (*ibid.*, 174).

⁷⁹ The concept of the ‘developmental state’, put forward first by Johnson (1982) in his examination of Japanese-style economy and its state-led capitalist development, can be broadly defined as ‘a state that plays a strategic role in economic development, with a bureaucracy that is given sufficient scope to take initiatives and operate effectively’ (Kwon 2005, 483). This concept has since been applied to other East Asian countries; for example, Amsden (1989) characterises South Korea as a prototypical developmental state – the government performs a strategic role over market for the ultimate goal of national economic development. Yet it needs to be noted that though this concept has been mainly used to explain East Asian political economy, the application of this concept is not confined to this specific region (cf. Woo-Cumings 1999).

poverty of South Korea while positioning Park as *the* leader to carry out this important task. Park claimed:

Because we had lacked true leadership throughout our history of five thousand years, we experienced foreign invasions, national partition, and the tragedy of fratricidal war. And people (*kungmin*) have always most suffered from poverty [....] Thus, it can be said that national security and prosperity are predicated on the establishment of true leadership. (Park Chung Hee 1961, my translation)

In this rhetoric, poverty, the hallmark of national backwardness, needed to be collectively terminated. Slogans such as ‘Let us build our nation, as we fight’ and ‘Exporting is the only way to survive’, indicate the aggressive developmental drive of Park’s government. In the name of the nation, a new war was being waged in which Koreans were called to wholeheartedly contribute to industrialisation and the increase of exports. A new identity for Koreans was thus manufactured – that of ‘industrial soldiers’ (Kor. *sanōp chōnsa*).

By this time [1970], a tall metallic tower had been erected in front of Seoul’s city hall. The tower’s electronic bulletin board ceaselessly blinked the dollar amount of export revenue and reminded people of the estimated annual export goal: \$100 million (U.S.). This blinking billboard hurried the South Koreans to the international market to auction off their wealth of cheap labor. Earning dollars was “a sacred patriotic mission!” (Choi 1995, 250-251)

Therefore, the state successfully ‘politicised’ the economy by constantly evoking South Korea’s inferiority complex, based on the social Darwinist paradigm which equates the degree of national power with the level of economic advancement (J-H Kim 2000, 180). Furthermore, as revealed in Park’s policy of ‘unification

after construction', economic development became doubly politicised by being propagated also as a necessary condition for national reunification.

South Korea's participation in the Vietnam War clearly exhibited the dual axes of anticommunist militarism and developmentalism. Under the 'More Flags' campaign⁸⁰, the Johnson administration of the US sought to get commitment from allies, which South Korea's Park Chung Hee had already offered several times since the early 1960s, on the grounds that he saw it as a good opportunity to secure US endorsement for his legitimacy (H-A Kim 2004). Starting with the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH), and Taekwondo instructors in September 1964, the number of South Korean combat troops sent to Vietnam between 1965 and 1973 was more than 300,000 cumulatively: far more than all other allied troops combined (Armstrong 2001, 531-2). Though this exorbitant contribution was certainly effective in getting the US to back Park's regime, what truly motivated South Korea's entry into the war was the possibility of acquiring economic and security gains (H-A Kim 2004, 102). In this context, anticommunism was effectively grafted onto the aim of national prosperity. Park's speech to soldiers in 1965 stressed the urgent need to fight communism; in his speech, the Korean soldiers are dubbed, 'crusaders of freedom'.

We are at the tipping point, fighting for the Vietnamese people, of whether we, the free world, can secure our freedom and safety by smashing communist expansion [...] We must fight for victory. The victory of the Republic of Vietnam government will be not only a victory for the Vietnamese people, but a victory for the entire free world and of us, Korea [...] If you don't help put out the fire in your neighbour's

⁸⁰ The US attempted to justify its war efforts by making it look more of an allied effort against communism (Armstrong 2001, 533).

house, then your own house will catch fire and be burned down... (Quoted from U. Kim 2005, 52, my translation)

As can be seen in this analogy, Park made a close connection between South Korea and South Vietnam putting forward the cause of anticomunism. At the rhetorical level, anticomunism seemed to be presented as the highest cause of all, in an ‘ethicised’ manner. However, this cause immediately was backed by more crucial national gain, that is economic development, which became central to the discourses of the War as South Korea’s involvement in the war increased(U. Kim 2005, 57-58). In his interesting research on collective identities of Korean Vietnam veterans, C-R Yoon (2007) observes that Vietnam veterans did not take the cause of anti-communism of the War seriously while fighting on the battlefield (though they show strong anticommunist, politically conservative tendencies in general). On the contrary, these veterans emphatically associated their participation with Korea’s economic development; such economic gains make them very proud and even excite nostalgia for the then President Park (*ibid.*). This economic motif can also be seen in President Park’s own words from a speech given in 1966 at a summit meeting of Vietnam allies:

We will do our best, in cooperation with allies, not only for the War itself but for Vietnamese socio-economic stability and prosperity after the War. I believe that the economic development of the free world is the most effective tool for blocking the communist expansion. (Quoted from U. Kim 2005, 55, my translation)

Though South Korean soldiers were treated as cheap cannon fodder, getting paid only a dollar per day – 5 per cent of the American soldier’s daily earning (Kang 2003, 248) – it is undeniable that the Vietnam War was a lucrative business

opportunity for South Korea. The total war-related income in the form of direct payment, such as soldiers' salaries, military assistance added up to over one billion dollars (Woo-Cumings 1991). Though in the late 1960s, Korea's exports to Vietnam accounted for only 3.5 per cent of its total exports, Korea's heavy industry sectors such as steel, chemical and transportation equipment were totally dependent on the War. As a result, this sector established a strong foundation for future development, resulting in the boom of the 1970s and 1980s (*ibid.*). Also, the Seoul-Pusan highway, the first expressway of South Korea, was symbolic in this sense, being built with money earned through the War (Lie 1998, 64).

The idea that the Vietnam War was the very first time that Korea, in its long history of over five thousand years, sent its troops overseas is emphatically reiterated in the state publicity discourses as a historical achievement that should "deeply stir all Koreans." (J-K Lee 2009, 660)

This position of lending a helping hand to the US and the resulting feeling of superiority over Vietnam were projected in a distorted, aggressive way as revealed in accounts of the 'brutality of Korean forces toward the Viet Cong and the disdain they had toward the Army of the Republic of Vietnam' (Armstrong 2001, 536). Many veterans seem to resent this type of accusation, particularly ones that blame them for killing innocent civilians (C-R Yoon 2007, 209). They often claim that it was extremely difficult to discriminate Viet Cong and non-VC, since the Vietnam War was a guerrilla war (Yeo 2001, 31). However, leaving the killings of innocent people aside, some veterans such as Suk-young Hwang, in his autobiographical novel *The Shadow of Arms* (1994), recollected the *racialised* and *racialising* experience of the Vietnam War, which stemmed from Korea's interstitial position in this war.

Armstrong (2001, 535) argues that Koreans who looked closer to the enemy needed to ‘prove themselves as effective fighters in the eyes of Americans’ by differentiating themselves from the inferior Vietnamese. He analyses:

Fighting the Americans’ war, Koreans found themselves in the position of the Western power in Asia, and they could see the “natives” from the Americans’ perspective – a situation not unlike what Franz Fanon described for the colonized black in Africa: as “black skin, white masks.” (Armstrong 2001, 535)

In a similar vein, J-K Lee (2009) analyses that Korea’s nationalist rhetoric and practices of war were ‘mimetic’ and ‘reiterative’ acts of ‘subimperialism’ (p. 664). Indeed, such a racialising gaze and racist practice that operated in Korea’s military engagement in the Vietnam War seems symptomatic of contemporary articulation of Korea’s supremacy over underdeveloped Southeast Asian countries and also the workings of racialisation and exclusion of Southeast Asian migrants in Korea (see Chapter four for a detailed discussion).

Although the Park Chung Hee regime was highly authoritarian and employed coercive state apparatuses, the modernisation imperative was enthusiastically upheld by the population; the popular phrase of the day, ‘let’s live well (being rich) like others’ well encapsulated this common aspiration. In fact, D-Y Kim (2004, 175) states that substantial economic development⁸¹ was made possible by the combination of a modernisation drive from above and active public responses from below.

⁸¹ During eighteen years of the Park Chung Hee regime, Korea enjoyed, on average, an annual economic growth of 8.5 per cent (D-Y Kim 2004, 173).

In order to solicit voluntary consent, in a Gramscian sense, the state turned its eyes to cultivating the ‘national spirit’ through various policy measures and rhetorical strategies to present such policies. Various measures such as ‘the Charter of National Education’⁸² and ‘New Village (Community) Movement’⁸³ were implemented with the aim of renewing and creating a national spirit (Hwang 2008, 265). In so doing, the state recognised culture as a crucial tool both to maintain Korea’s distinctive ‘national spirit’ and to achieve the goal of national modernisation (Park 1970, 88). Indeed, Park’s government implemented Korea’s first long-term plan for cultural policy (for 1974-1979): 70 per cent of the total budget was spent on supporting folk arts and traditional culture under the goal of constructing a strong national identity (Yim 2002, 40). What was consistent in these initiatives was the emphasis on national spirit which was perceived to be threatened by the growing influence of Western culture.

Oft-summarised as *Tongdosōgi* (fostering eastern spirit/mind) and utilising western technology), this framework for national development promoted the value of traditional culture and a nationalist view of history, whilst rejecting the equation of modernisation with westernisation (J-H Kim 2000, 179). This dualism of spirit (East) and matter (West), a Western Orientalist view, was paradoxically used to denounce the westernisation of the Korean spirit. However, this inevitably put Park’s

⁸² The Charter, proclaimed on the 5th of December, 1968, starts by stating that ‘we have been born into this land charged with the historic mission of regenerating the nation’ (translation borrowed from Synott 1995, 41). Embodying the central values of the Korean nation, this Charter was recited by every child in school before it quietly disappeared around 1994 without any public discussions of its official abolition (Hwang 2005, 175).

⁸³ The New Village (Community) Movement, was launched by the government in 1970 mainly curbing the increasing flow of people moving from rural areas to cities caused by the government’s policy of rapid industrialisation (D-Y Kim 2004, 178). By interpellating farmers as national agents of modernisation, this movement encouraged voluntariness, self-reform, diligence, and cooperation in communities.

government in a dilemmatic position from the outset. Park Chung Hee, fiercely condemned the pre-modern mindset of Korean people to convince them of the urgent need for modernisation, similar to what Yi Kwangsu did during the colonial period in the name of *minjok kaejo* (racial rehabilitation). Thus, even in terms of spirit (mind), the West could not be entirely dismissed. This encouraged Park to come up with the concept of national spirit which is an ‘amalgam of Western modernity and Eastern tradition’ (*ibid.*). Dividing Western values into positive (e.g. scientific mind, pioneer spirit) and negative ones (e.g. individualism), Park asserted the need to combine positive Western values with Korean traditional values of ‘harmony and collaboration’ to independently modernise our nation without yielding to indiscriminate westernisation (Hwang 2011a, 276-279). This clearly shows the aporia of a national spirit inextricably linked with Western modernity. The discursive oscillation between the accusation against the Koreans’ uncivilised mind on the one hand, and the extolment of the value of tradition on the other, attests to the ambivalence of national spirit. And even in the attempt to differentiate Korean modernity from that of the West, Western-derived notions of progress and modernisation lurk below its surface. Thus, what is not challenged is a social Darwinist worldview in this ‘de-Westernised’ nationalist strategy. Furthermore, fraught with contradictions, national spirit (/culture) becomes an abstraction, incapable of tying itself to unambiguous referents. In effect, the claim to authenticity of Korea’s national spirit is reduced to the racial essentialisation of Korean national identity.

In analysing the trajectory of Korean nationalism imbued with a social Darwinist ethos, the importance of Park Chung Hee’s regime cannot be overemphasised. As

Hwang (2011b) argues, even oppositional movements against his regime, and successive ones were not free from the formidable influence of this ‘lived’ ideology (p. 179). The reproduction of ideology during this period – encapsulated in the concept of nation as an organic community for economic development – certainly has made an ineffaceable impression on Korean society.

3.4.2. The struggle for survival in the age of neoliberal globalisation

When Son Ki-chöng⁸⁴ won the gold medal in marathon at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, our *minjok* (nation) was moved to tears. Our predecessors were inspired by the fact that they could be the winner and, at the same time, they once again were greatly indignant that we were subordinate to Japan. Just half a century after liberation, we are now holding the greatest Olympics ever [...] Having overcome poverty and the devastating war, we achieved an “economic miracle” which has surprised the world. We certainly restored our war-torn nation. We also achieved democracy. Now we will work another miracle, the “miracle of civilised nation”, by making this Olympics better than any other Olympics. This will let us belong to the advanced world, which our *minjok* (nation) has longed for throughout history. The Olympics will also give us an opportunity to better South-North relations and take us one step closer to national unification. (President Roh Tae Woo’s speech on the 14th of September, 1988, my translation)

Following the hosting of 1986 Asian Games in Seoul, Korea came to host the world’s biggest sporting event, the Summer Olympics, in 1988. Roh’s speech encapsulated this overwhelming moment for the Korean ‘nation’ by contrasting Korea’s past agonies (colonisation, poverty, war) to its current developed status

⁸⁴ Under Japanese colonial rule, Son Ki-chöng participated in the Berlin Olympic as a member of the Japanese delegation being forced to use his Japanese name, Son Kitei. He became a national hero when he won the gold medal, particularly because of his strong national consciousness expressed in his interviews and attitudes. Ever since, he was an inspirational figure for all Koreans. As a national symbol, he carried the Olympic flame into the arena at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. (Lewis 2002)

(economic development, democracy, political stability). Korea was no more a small country divided in half, dependent on US aid, but a country powerful and civilised enough to host such a high-profile sporting event. The Seoul Games, first conceived and prepared for during the Park Chung Hee government, finally blossomed into national pride (E. Hong 2011, 982). Many media assessed that the increase in international recognition and national pride/confidence was far more valuable than any economic gain (e.g. Kong 1989). North Korea, previously viewed as a major threat, became more of an object of ‘pity’, mainly because of the widening socio-economic gap between North and South.⁸⁵ Indeed, this is remembered as the first time in Korea’s modern history that Korea ‘encountered the world’ with joy and confidence. To reap the rewards of all their hard work, Koreans were called to keep the Olympics spirit alive and make progress in globalisation (*Segyehwa*) (Yi 1988).

The vision of globalisation (Kor. *Segyehwa*) became a major government policy framework during the Kim Young Sam government (1993–1998). In his new year’s speech of 1995, Kim Young Sam urged:

The new global system, WTO (the World Trade Organization) will be launched this year. The world has entered an era of limitless competition, among countries and regions, within which we must carve out our future. This is the reason I took a decisive step towards globalisation (Kor. *segyehwa*) and restructured the government to be “small but strong”. Our nation (Kor. *minjok*) has no choice other than globalisation in order to make Korea a central player on the world stage. No time for hesitation [...] As the end of the twentieth century nears, I recall our

⁸⁵ This tendency became dominant particularly after communist governments began to collapse in 1989.

ancestors' enthusiasm for Enlightenment (Kor. *kaehwa*)⁸⁶ in the late nineteenth century. Since this great ambition was only shared among a few elites, we couldn't help but lose our sovereignty. Thus, this time, we need every single person within the nation to work for globalisation. Globalisation should be a nation-wide movement which we all – the central and local government, various social organisations, and the entire population – dive into. Globalisation should be the collective spirit of all, uniting us as one, setting aside differences between social classes, political factions, and generations... (President Kim Young Sam's New year's speech on the 1st of January, 1995, my translation)

Here, globalisation was certainly not used as a descriptive term to explain increasing worldwide interconnectedness in every aspect of human relations and transactions including economic interdependency (S. S. Kim 2000a, 18). Globalisation was presented as an ultimate national goal to make Korea more competitive in the new world community represented by the WTO.⁸⁷ Following this announcement, a Presidential *Segyehwa* Promotion Committee was established in January, 1995.

As the first democratically-elected civilian President since the military coup in 1961, Kim Young Sam also needed to deconstruct the discourse of nationalism which had been tainted by previous military dictatorships (J-H Kim 2000, 184). Moreover, the South, already having achieved successful economic growth, no longer perceived the North as a major threat. Thus, instead of exploiting the rhetoric of inter-Korean competition or/and setting the binary of East and West (which was deployed, as we have seen, by the Park Chung Hee government), Kim Young Sam juxtaposed nation

⁸⁶ Here, he seems to indicate that the core of *kaehwa* was to modernise the nation by opening up ports to the world.

⁸⁷ Since the Korean term for globalisation was strongly tainted with this strong nationalist sentiment, many scholars prefer to use its Korean Romanisation *seyehwa* in order to signify its specificity. For a detailed account of both objective and subjective dimensions of the term, *seyehwa*, refer to S.S. Kim 2000a.

(*minjok*) with the world in order to mobilise the public (*ibid.*). This globalisation discourse, on the one hand, played a role in boosting national pride for what it had already achieved. On the other hand, it constantly incited Koreans to equip themselves with a new growth mentality for the benefit of their nation (Kang 2000, 448). As *seyehwa* became a buzzword and a standard to judge the performance of various social, economic institutions, the government put its utmost energy in getting its passport into the OECD (the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), which was finally granted in 1996. That Korea secured the membership of the OECD and became a first-class country in the world was publicised as the fruitful outcome of Kim Young Sam's globalisation policy (K-Y Shin 2000, 431). However, despite its grand and desperate pronouncement, 'globalise or perish', many scholars assess Kim Young Sam's globalisation drive as a failure, noticeable in the deterioration of its globalisation performance indicators during his term (cf. S.S. Kim 2000b) and culminating in the economic crisis which led to the IMF intervention in 1997. In the 1997 Presidential election, the opposition party castigated the Kim Young Sam administration for 'maintaining a high value of Korean won against the US dollar' in order to pump up Korea's per capita GNP in its haste to join the OECD (K-Y Shin 2000, 433).

In attempt to mobilise its human resources to strive in the global economy, *Seyehwa* policies did not only target Koreans inside but also Koreans outside the national borders, which reveals the paradoxical aspects of Korea's new nationalism in a globalised world. In his 1994 speech, Kim Young Sam called upon *tongp'o* (indicating overseas Koreans) to become 'the pioneers of Korea's internationalisation' by stating that the 'New Korea' and its world class status would

be ‘shared among the entire Korean nation (*hanminjok*) including *tongp'o*'; ‘the success of five million *tongp'o* will be also the success of Korea' (Kim 1994). This usage of the term, *tongp'o* has since become popular connoting ‘blood-kin', invoking a strong sense of nationhood while substituting for the word, *kyop'o* which indicates the same but ‘signifies a separation from those who remain in Korea' (Park 1996). This attempt to include overseas Koreans in the name of nation (*minjok*) was materialised in the establishment of the *Chaeoe Tongp'o Chaedan* (Overseas Koreans Foundation) in 1997. Despite the overarching inclusive rhetoric, overseas Koreans were conceived first and foremost as resources for national economic development.⁸⁸ Such recognition inevitably engendered a hierarchy among the Korean diaspora; the right to nation for overseas Koreans came to be valorised depending on their economic status. This tendency of in(/ex)clusion was legally sanctioned in the *Chaeoe Tongp'o Pōp* (*Act on the immigration and legal status of overseas Koreans*), enforced in 1999. This *Act* defined *tongp'o* as ethnic Koreans who moved abroad after the establishment of the Republic of Korea in 1948⁸⁹: this mainly included relatively wealthy and powerful ethnic Koreans in the US and Japan while excluded ethnic Koreans who settled in China and Russia during the colonial era. Park (1996) aptly claims:

Ethnicity suffices for membership in the national economic community, since both labor and capital use ethnic ties in expanding opportunities for job and investment. But the economic community is itself hierarchical and divided.

⁸⁸ This centrality of economic integration in *seyehwa* discourses accords with the aforementioned attempt to provide Koreans (residing within Korea) with a new growth mentality.

⁸⁹ The definition of *tongp'o* was extended in 2004 after a long struggle by Korean Chinese migrants and activists.

This tendency is also revealing in contemporary in/exclusion of the *Chosōnjok* (Korean Chinese) migrants in Korea, which I will examine in depth later (Chapter five). The emergence of *seyehwa* (globalisation) policies has not dispelled Korea's strong ethnic nationalism but surely, transformed it by creating a 'borderless' but 'hierarchical' economic community.

In December 1997, Korea's economic crisis resulted in the IMF's (International Monetary Fund) intervention only ten months after Korea proudly joined the OECD. This unprecedented economic crisis shocked the entire nation and impaired collective pride concerning its economic development (K-Y Shin 2000, 431-432). That the government had never expected such a crisis and had been totally unprepared, created strong doubts about the reliability of the state among people, which naturally disconcerted Korea's state-centred nationalism (Cho 2008, 85).

However, nationalism proved its persistence and resilience once again as can be seen in the 'Gold Collection Campaign'. To put it simply, this economic crisis was caused by the shortage of foreign currency in Korea which made it impossible for Korean companies to repay their foreign loans. In this context, the 'Gold Collection Campaign' started. This campaign was often associated with the 'repay debt movement' of 1907, a nationalist movement, which was carried out to protect Korea's sovereignty against Japan's colonial aggression (J. Song 2009, 8). First initiated by Korea's *Chaebōl* (family-owned and managed conglomerates) such as Samsung and Daewoo encouraging their employees to donate their gold, the Gold collection campaign quickly became a nation-wide movement (Kim and Finch 2002, 125-126). Many NGOs, religious organisations, and the media actively participated

in this campaign persuading the public to ‘save the nation’ by donating and selling their gold at cheap prices.

The simultaneous outpouring of love for the country and selfless public spirit are so overwhelming and inspiring that the national morale, dealt a hard blow by the woes brought on by deep financial problems, inviting the IMF loans, received an emotional and moral shot in the arm. Koreans can unite to rise to the occasion in aid of their troubled nation [...] In this worthy endeavor, our fellow citizens are advised to keep a low profile while pursuing the most efficient results, for they are liable to indulge in issuing loud slogans and showy demonstrations, which are unnecessary and superfluous. (The Korea Herald 1998)

As written in this newspaper editorial, those who did not participate in the ‘Buy Korean products’ or ‘Gold Collection’ campaigns and who dared to protest against layoffs and budget cuts became enemies of their own nation. Though the gold collection campaign was short-lived (about three months) and it is doubtful whether this type of campaign actually had positive effects on the economy⁹⁰, more than \$2 billion worth of gold was collected. And more importantly, with the help of the media exaggerating the impact of such a campaign, it is still remembered and re-narrated as a symbolic story of how Koreans overcame the economic crisis (cf. Kwōn 2007). It might not be true to say that people actually bought such a nationalist rhetoric wholeheartedly. Nevertheless, this narrative became part of the Korean collective memory – another national myth. Moreover, it still seems to be acknowledged as an exemplary case among conservative voices in the world as the world economy is deteriorating. For example, Stephen King, a HSBC’s group chief

⁹⁰ Some claimed that such campaigns focusing on ‘tightening belts, cutting household spending, buying Korean products’ did not help boost the Korean economy but rather had an adverse effect on the market (cf. Pollack 1997).

economist, commended Korea's gold collection campaign for strengthening national unity and overcoming the crisis while also lamenting the 'the politics of blame' and pervasive individualistic attitudes of European countries that face dire economic conditions (King 2012).

Korea's economy rebounded in 1999 as its foreign exchange reserves went up to \$74 billion and the GDP growth rate reached ten per cent (C-K Lee 2000). Korea paid off the IMF loans by 2001, which had been unexpected considering the drastic plunge of its economy at the end of 1997 (Lee and Kim 2010, 310). Leaving aside the question of whether Korea, indeed, successfully reformed its economy, Korea's case is representative in revealing that globalisation does not necessarily weaken nationalism. In Korea, globalisation, the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of capital and peoples, 'transformed' the modality of nationalism, rather than replace it. Indeed, by co-opting neoliberal ideas such as free market and global competition, nationalism still functions as an effective governing ideology in the production of neoliberal citizen-subjects.⁹¹ In this sense, in Korea, nationalism may not be deemed as 'a constraint, but rather as a primary mover in promoting a particular approach toward globalization' (G-W Shin 2006, 208). This resilience of Korean nationalism seems to stem from its strong social Darwinist nature, which has consistently shaped the way the nation has been imagined and the ways in which nationalism has served that very nation.

⁹¹ This will be further examined in Chapter six in relation to the politics of multiculturalism.

Conclusion

As already mentioned, this chapter has not attempted an orthodox form of historical analysis. Thus, what I have analysed here will not function as direct evidence to prove certain logical points when later examining the nature of today's multicultural discourses. The reason why this chapter has focused particularly on the conceptual history of nation and social Darwinist-influenced identity formation is that these themes kept cropping up in the analysis of the interviews conducted with various actors who actively engage in today's multicultural discourses in South Korea. Hence, this chapter can be seen as a journey to identify 'symptomatic moments' of history which have shaped the characteristics of Korean nationalism, particularly its racialised nature. In other words, by exploring important historical events in national identity formation (which, at times, my interviewees also recall, explicitly or implicitly, to back up their arguments), this chapter aimed to see how 'nation' has been conceived and to what extent this conception has been transformed over time.

Contrary to common belief, the very concept of 'nation' was introduced to Korea just over a century ago. Interestingly, the Korean concept of nation has been bifurcated into two, *kungmin* and *minjok*. Passing through the colonial period, these two concepts competed, complemented, and contradicted each other. And this conflation certainly has not ended, as will be seen later in the thesis, in my interviewees' conflated usage of *kungmin* and *minjok*. Invented as Korea met the outer force of modernisation, this concept of nation was strongly influenced by social Darwinism and interlocked with 'race'. Furthermore, nationalism (*minjokchui*) has functioned as the dominant ideology in the construction of others in postcolonial Korea. Heavily affected by national division, nationalism functioned

as a hegemonic ideology while its focus turned to the ex(/in)clusion of internal others, as seen in the examples of camptown sex workers, the mixed-blood, and communists. Though social Darwinism as a strand of thought was studied and circulated widely in the early twentieth century and the terminology itself has since barely appeared in public or intellectual discourse, I argue that it fully blossomed when Korea started to adopt the economy as its new language of nationalism in the 1960s. From the Park Chung Hee government's developmental state to the 1990s' national doctrine of globalisation, the state has constantly mobilised the population to fight the international economic war in the name of the 'nation'. As Korea's economy grew enormously, this social Darwinist ethos of economic development became central to nationalism in the form of national pride which, at times, articulated itself as subimperialist practices (e.g. the Vietnam War) and hierarchical re-construction of the 'nation' as an 'economic community' (e.g. Korean diaspora in the context of globalisation).

Contrary to the common belief of Korea's racial irrelevance, this chapter examined how Korea's national identity – simultaneously racialised and racialising in its historical articulations – has been constructed by constantly reconfiguring the boundary of the 'nation', and defining the Other according to the collective national aim of the time. In the following chapters, I will examine how and in what forms this historical practice of constructing the 'nation' in a social Darwinist way has constituted Koreans' collective memory and has influenced today's multicultural discourses as they develop in contemporary Korea.

Chapter 4

The silence about ‘race’ in multicultural Korea

As explained in the previous chapter, the concept of nation in Korea bifurcates into two – *minjok* (connoting a racial and cultural community) and *kungmin* (signifying a member of a national polity, the state). Having undergone Japanese colonisation (1910–1945), the division of an ethnic nation, and turbulent modernisation, these notions of *minjok* and *kungmin* competed, but more importantly became tightly entangled with each other constructing a racialised nationalism (*minjokchui*) that is seen as a trans-historically ‘good’ ideology. This grammar of nationalism has compelled internal consolidation by filtering out its racial and political impurities. Due to such aggressive control of internal differences, not only the number of racial minorities within South Korea itself remained small, but these racial others were rendered invisible through social exclusion. Thus, contrary to the commonsense assumption that Korea was free from racism because racial minorities were virtually absent from the nation, racial thinking has been normalised throughout society. Indeed, the racial understanding of the world which flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has never been challenged. The reason why racism did not surface as a serious social problem paradoxically lies in such naturalisation of racial thinking.

Then how has race politics changed after the Korean state formulated multicultural policies and discourses? This chapter examines the understanding of ‘race’ and racism in contemporary Korea where the visibility of racial differences has rapidly

increased and ‘multiculturalism’ has become the language to discuss this phenomenon of diversity. In many Western countries, the term multicultural (or multiculturalism) has been used, on the one hand, to define a society empirically diverse, particularly one that is ethnically diverse. On the other hand, it has represented the ideology and policies developed to manage and advocate such diversity. As Malik (2005, 362) describes, this concept has come to be conflated by meaning ‘both a *description* of a society and a *prescription* for controlling that society’. In Korea, this conflation also exists. But, adding to that, a different type of conflation concerning the term ‘multicultural’ is worth investigating. Besides the aforementioned usages of the term, ‘multicultural’ is also used as a qualifier for certain people in Korea. Indeed, this use of ‘multicultural’ is becoming a dominant application of the term. This chapter explains in what ways this appropriation of ‘multicultural’ as a qualifier for people is predicated on a discomfort with ‘race’. Instead of presuming the enhancement of racial equality as a predictable epiphenomenon of the proliferation of multicultural discourses, this chapter probes whether this is actually the case by looking into the ways in which multicultural discourses influence the understanding of racism. To this end, anti-multiculturalists’ conception of ‘race’ and racism will be juxtaposed to that of multiculturalists by drawing on the comments of my interviewees who are vocal on migrant issues.

Given the euphemistic appropriation of multiculturalism, this chapter continues to examine the ways in which culture is essentialised as a proxy for ‘race’ and exploited both for the inclusion and exclusion of migrants. In this regard, multicultural policies are scrutinised as a practice of reconstructing the reality of ‘race’. In investigating what motivates and follows the silence about ‘race’ and the culturalisation of

differences, I will look into not only policies of social integration, but also practices that promote cultural awareness. From this chapter onwards, I will mainly resort to my interview data for analysis.

4.1. ‘Race’/racism, foreign, discomfiting and divisive languages

Koreans do rarely use the term race. Well... Concerning migrants, Chinese migrants take the largest portion, followed by Vietnamese workers. They look like Koreans. The majority of migrants are almost indistinguishable by appearance. Probably that's why we do not need the term, race. If the majority of migrants were black, then “race” might have become an important issue... (SH, a migrant rights activist)⁹²

As is exemplified here, the majority of my interviewees immediately associate ‘race’ with people’s physical traits. According to SH, since Chinese and Vietnamese have a similar phenotype to Koreans, they are not considered to belong to a different race. This understanding accords closely with the dictionary definition of race. *The National Institute of the Korean Language* defines race as follows: firstly as a breed of human beings; secondly as a classification of human groups according to regions and physical characteristics, mainly categorised into three groups – White, Yellow and Black.⁹³ While the first definition had become obsolete since the late nineteenth century⁹⁴, the second meaning, based on largely three representative groups is dominant in understanding ‘race’.

⁹² Interview conducted on 07/01/2012

⁹³ <http://stdweb2.korean.go.kr/search/View.jsp>

⁹⁴ This reveals that the meaning of ‘race’ was quite different before social Darwinist doctrines were introduced to Korea. Indeed, as explained in Chapter three, the term race itself was rarely used within the Korean peninsula until the late nineteenth century (Kang 2005).

In the aftermath of the Jewish Holocaust, postwar anti-racism (a largely Western initiative) was brought about to repudiate the concept of ‘race’ as having no scientific validity. As examined in Chapter one, such efforts to reject ‘race’ and thereby racism became a central principle of postwar anti-racism, being labelled as the ‘UNESCO tradition’ of anti-racism by Martin Barker (Barker 1983). Though ‘race’ is socially and historically constructed, this UNESCO tradition is problematic not because it has led to the denunciation of races as false scientific categories, but because it has had the effect of individualising racism, culturalising differences, and delinking racism from the politics of modern nation-states and the history of colonialism (for a detailed critique, see Lentini 2005). This type of liberal problematisation of ‘race’ has been virtually non-existent in Korea. However, the lack of a race discourse does not mean that the modern history of Korea was free from racism. Rather, due to this non-discourse of ‘race’, racism has come to be understood as something foreign. Thus, in the Korean context, the understanding of the post-war rejection of racism has been reduced to the interpretation of racism as evil deeds committed by Whites (largely in the past). This leaves unchallenged the concept of ‘race’ strongly entangled with a social Darwinist worldview and the ideology of White supremacy.

Interestingly, while conceiving ‘race’ as broad visual differences – White, Yellow, Black, and associating racism with discrimination against ‘Blacks’, many multiculturalists point out that discrimination against migrants in Korea is partly caused by shadism, that is, discriminating people on the basis of their pigmentation: the majority of respondents named it as ‘discrimination based on skin colour’ rather than, for example, using the term, racial discrimination. One interviewee stated:

I found that discrimination based on skin colour is pervasive in Korea [....] Vietnamese or Cambodian marriage migrants seem free from this kind of discrimination. But Filipinos, Africans, Sri-Lankans...people who are black told me a lot about discrimination they've experienced. (KH, a TV producer)⁹⁵

Hesitating to address such discrimination as racism, KH explained it by associating the fairness of skin colour with nationalities.⁹⁶ Indeed, the majority of migrant rights activists often explained that discrimination against migrants took a combined form of ‘discrimination based on one’s skin colour’ and ‘discrimination based on one’s nationality (often assumed to be directly linked to one’s economic capital)’. Although such forms of discrimination certainly are indicative of racism, what is interesting is that my interviewees considered them as something different from (or not as ‘dreadful’ as) racial discrimination.

While ‘race’ itself has rarely been discussed as a socio-political issue, the meaning of ‘race’ has permeated society taking up other signifiers such as ‘Black’, ‘Africa’, ‘mixed-blood’, and recently, terms such as ‘*Chosŏnjok* (Korean Chinese)’ and ‘South East Asian’. Taking the example of ‘South East Asian’, I will illustrate how this seemingly objective category has been turned into a racial category, collectively racialising migrants in general. Aside from China – the highest ranking source of migration to Korea – the majority of migrant workers and marriage migrants come from South East Asia. Consequently, migrants are collectively recognised as South

⁹⁵ Interview conducted on 14/02/2012

⁹⁶ Here, Africans were addressed as a regional collectivity while other Asian countries were specified. Africans are collectively understood as ‘Black’ while other Asians are considered to have different fairness of their skin colour based on their nationalities. This might be caused by the fact that most migrants come from South East Asia and China but fairly few come from African countries. Yet there seems to be the underlying assumption that Africa is ‘black’ and generalisable. Furthermore, though many South East Asian countries are composed of various ethnic groups, Koreans tend to think that they would look the same if they come from the same country.

East Asians (or even more broadly as Asians). Indeed, this identification of migrants as South East Asians has become generic, cancelling out internal diversity among migrants. For example, a Pakistani female worker who has never felt any kind of belonging to South East Asia can easily be identified as a ‘a foreign bride from South East Asia’ in Korea. Furthermore, strongly grafted onto the racialised conception of South East Asia as a poor and primitive region where darker-skinned people live, the appellation South East Asians has a demeaning connotation. The derogatory use of the term ‘South East Asia(n)’ is so pervasive that many variety shows in mainstream media often employ this term to describe a person’s undesirable appearance. For instance, a dark-skinned, not-so-good-looking Korean actor is often teased by other show guests, being called ‘South East Asian’ (Ha 2010). This type of appellation is deemed offensive but also humorous when it is applied to Koreans. Thus, the identification of migrants as South East Asians not only racialises them as a collective entity but puts them into a lower slot of racial hierarchy in Korea.

Before the term ‘multicultural’ became the dominant qualifier for migrants (e.g. ‘multicultural children’, which will be discussed later in detail), the appellative ‘Kosian’ was used as a label for a child born of an international marriage between a Korean and someone from an Asian country. It was first coined by an NGO influential in formulating multicultural discourses (Park 2006, 36). By essentialising migrants’ ‘Asianness’ and insinuating that Korea is not the same as other Asian countries, this label played a role in drawing distinctions between Korean and migrants (Liem 2010, 55). Moreover, the fact that the term was used by migrant

rights groups uncovers that this form of racialisation was also deeply implicated in well-meaning discourses of multiculturalism.

By looking into how the concept of ‘race’ is understood in Korean society, I am by no means suggesting that ‘race’ has an immutable, substantive content to it, or that racialisation or racist practice stems from the definition of ‘race’. Conversely, the concept of ‘race’ is flexible and non-consistent, acquiring its meaning from the social contexts it is situated in, as seen in the aforementioned signifiers of ‘race’ in Korea. Racism is truly ‘a plastic or chameleon-like phenomenon which constantly finds new forms of political, social, cultural or linguistic expression’ (MacMaster 2001, 2) and which thereby hardly disappears notwithstanding the fact that the biological notion of ‘race’ has been discredited.

4.1.1. Multicultural as a qualifier for racial others: euphemistic racialisation

In order to analyse the noticeable discomfort generated by the term ‘race’ (which many interviewees share), it is worth looking into how the term multicultural has been introduced in relation to mixed race. The most characteristic form of migrant incorporation in Korea legitimised by the state is through international marriage (mostly between an ethnic Korean man and a migrant woman); other forms of migration are highly restricted with regards to long-term settlement and the right to citizenship. In effect, in South Korea, the majority of the second-generation immigrants is and will be mixed race. One respondent expressed uneasiness with the term ‘race’ by insisting that this specificity needs to be taken into account.

I am not sure whether racial discrimination is an important issue to tackle. And do we really need to use the term, “race”? *Multicultural youth* is racially vague. In terms of race, what are they, then? (WJ, a staff member at the government funded organisation supporting youth with a migration background, emphasis added)⁹⁷

For WJ, the racial hybridity of the second generation makes them unclassifiable into a fixed racial category and hence discrimination against them is not really about ‘race’. Yet, that they are presumed not to belong to a single group of distinctive race does not mean that they do not experience racism. In their research on mixed-blood people in Korean society, D-S Kim et al. (2003) chronicle discriminatory state policies towards the ‘mixed-blood’ and explore the everyday racism they face. Based on historical and empirical data, they argue that the ‘mixed-blood’ have not been recognised as members of the national community, have been racialised and deprived of human rights and social rights, and consequently experienced persistent poverty (*ibid.*).⁹⁸

What is noticeable is that WJ employed the term *multicultural youth* to indicate the mixed-race second generation. This reflects the dominant usage of the term multicultural in Korea as a form of qualifier for certain people. Though many migrant rights activists and multiculturalists rejected such usage of the term ‘multicultural’, they acknowledged the difficulty of avoiding such use in communicating what they do, since expressions such as ‘multicultural family’, ‘multicultural child (youth)’ and ‘multicultural woman’ are highly conventionalised and widely circulated via government policies and the media. In fact, such usage of

⁹⁷ Interview conducted on 27/01/2012

⁹⁸ See also Seo 2008 for mixed-race children’s stories about the everyday racism they experience. For migrant children’s experience of discrimination in school, see H-W Lee et al. 2010.

the term has even gained its legal basis after the legislation of The *Support for Multicultural Families Act* in 2008.⁹⁹

The Act originally defined the ‘multicultural family’ as a family comprised of a Korean citizen who acquired his/her nationality *by birth* and a marriage immigrant. As criticisms on problematic aspects of the Act, including the narrow definition of ‘multicultural family’, mounted, a bill for a partial revision was passed in March, 2011. The major change in the Act was to extend the definition of multicultural family to include a family comprised of a marriage immigrant and a Korean citizen who acquired his/her nationality not only by birth but by naturalisation, or by being acknowledged to have citizenship by a Korean national parent while still a minor (under 20 years old). According to this revised definition, a family comprised of, for example, an ethnic Chinese who acquired Korean nationality through naturalisation and a Vietnamese immigrant can become a beneficiary of the Act.¹⁰⁰ Though this revision indicates that the criteria of social provisions have become more inclusive towards non-ethnic Koreans, these families are still differentiated as a specific group in need of help from the state, by being collectively called, ‘multicultural’. And more importantly, ‘multicultural’ gets deemed as an attribute of racially (ethnically) different people.

⁹⁹ See Appendix 2 for the full text of the Act (partial amendments since 2011 are not reflected in this version). In particular, see Article 1 and 2 to understand this labelling of ‘multicultural’.

¹⁰⁰ One interviewee, a migrant right activist who had participated in writing the draft of the Act explained that some migrant right activists had agreed to have ‘multicultural’ included in the title for strategic reasons. Though these activists thought this use of the term multicultural was not ‘precise’, they preferred the term ‘multicultural’ over for example, ‘marriage immigrants’ since they did not want to limit the beneficiaries of the act from the beginning. JM, the interviewee claimed that the fuzzy nature of the term, ‘multicultural’ was deemed advantageous at that time since it could allow them to demand for the expansion of the boundary of the beneficiaries in the future.

This usage of the term ‘multicultural (or multiculture)’ was initiated in 2003 by a coalition of NGOs, *Citizens United for Healthy Families*, which proposed that the discriminatory term ‘mixed-blood child’¹⁰¹ should be replaced with the term, ‘child of a multicultural family’ (Choo 2011, 67). This suggestion started to gain momentum in 2007 particularly after the CERD (UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination) advised the Korean government to refrain from using the term ‘mixed-blood’, by insisting that the term is derogative, inevitably predicated the opposite, ‘pure-blood’, to be superior (E-M Kim et al. 2009, 196). Before multiculturalism began to be discussed as a social doctrine or political ideology to address increasing diversity, the term multicultural was accepted as a politically correct nomenclature to address racially different people. While the government and educated multiculturalists were trying to be more sensitive in drawing distinctions about ethnicity, mixed race children loathe the term since they get abused by being classified as ‘multicultural’ at schools and negatively differentiated from ‘normal’ Korean kids (cf. B-S Kim 2009; Ch’oe 2013; Paek 2013; A. Park 2013).

Indeed, this euphemistic usage of the term ‘multicultural’ seems closely related to a general disinclination to use the word ‘race/racial’. A journalist who has written many articles about multicultural inclusion, when interviewed, stated:

Basically, I think the term multicultural is not accurate. Because...you know, the conception of culture itself includes a mixture of many differences. There is no such

¹⁰¹ Although ‘mixed-blood’ can be roughly understood as ‘mixed-race’, the term ‘mixed-blood’ is the literal translation of the original Korean word, *honhyōl*, which connotes the strong sense of Korean bloodline as an integral constituent of the Korean nation. Long before mixed-race children became dubbed ‘multicultural’ children in the context of increasing international marriages, ‘mixed-blood’ had been used to indicate mixed-race people, particularly Amerasians, born to American servicemen and Korean women during the Cold War period (see Chapter three).

thing as monoculture [...] But we have been using this term too long. ha ha... we cannot change it to multiracial or multiethnic. If we use such terms, multiracial or multiethnic, we will end up in provoking racial issues [...] Practically, the term multicultural is better than other terms because it *sounds better* and *safe*. *Giving us a sense of comfort*... I met many scholars and discussed this matter. Though many of them see the term multicultural as problematic, they seem to believe that its usage is inevitable. By now, there's no alternative. (PK, a journalist, emphasis added)¹⁰²

Though PK was suspicious of the usage of ‘multicultural’ as a qualifier for a certain group of people¹⁰³, he considered this euphemism as the best way to deal with diversity since it sounds *safe*. His description of the term multicultural as something *giving us a sense of comfort* clearly uncovers the way in which multiculturalism works as a euphemism and, at the same time, pinpoints the reason why ‘race’ has been silenced. Race, an inherently discomforting and divisive notion, is thought to be dangerous because it inevitably addresses issues of racism! In fact, the idea that racial conflicts are socially disruptive destabilising social/national cohesion is not specific to Korea. Yet if such an idea is generally employed to urge the need for anti-racism (Bonnett 2000, 4-5), it seems to have the opposite effect in Korea. Here, PK’s fear of racial tensions came down to diverting attention from racism by not talking about it. Indeed, this type of resistance to the idea of ‘race’ (not necessarily to racism) is rooted in the belief that racial issues are explosives that ought not to be triggered for the sake of society at large.

Interestingly, such a pragmatic approach on the part of multiculturalists in hushing ‘race’ resembles anti-multiculturalists’ logic for advocating assimilation instead of

¹⁰² Interview conducted on 03/02/2012

¹⁰³ A representative counterargument raised by migrant rights activists concerning such usage is based on a reading of ‘culture’ as a complex and inherently diverse concept. They often sarcastically responded by saying ‘if she (a migrant woman) is multicultural, then am I mono-cultural?’

multiculturalism. Accusing multiculturalists of instigating racial tensions, one anti-multiculturalist said:

In a multicultural society, conflicts between individuals easily turn into huge conflicts between groups. Racial and ethnic conflicts [...] We do not claim that Korea should close its door to the outside completely. But we should take them [migrants] in gradually and naturally by maintaining public order. I don't hate foreigners. I can totally accept them to be part of our society. But racial discrimination inevitably grows if they cause damage to our citizens [Koreans]. In this sense, current multicultural policies and media are the ones who instigate racism against migrants. (HM, a member of an anti-multiculturalist group)¹⁰⁴

In a similar vein, another anti-multiculturalist firmly rejected being called racist by drawing a line between being a racist and favouring the idea of assimilation.

We should discard multiculturalism; it is the seed of conflicts. Assimilation is the answer [...] Do I sound like a racist? No way. I abhor racists. I think our activities [of anti-multicultural groups] enhance the rights of foreign residents and prevent xenophobia. Migrant right activists themselves are the ones who provoke anti-migrant sentiment. We, by making foreigners stick to the rules of our society, help them successfully integrate into our society. Our activities eventually contribute to ameliorating any negative perception on migrants. (SW, a member of an anti-multiculturalist group)¹⁰⁵

As can be seen here, anti-multiculturalists claim that their activities – which make foreigners stick to the rules of our society – would eventually ameliorate prejudice towards foreigners since Koreans will have no reason to discriminate against foreigners if they ‘behave well’. Thus, anti-multiculturalists present themselves not

¹⁰⁴ Interview conducted on 08/02/2012

¹⁰⁵ Interview conducted on 22/01/2012

as self-interested bigots but as pragmatic patriots who try to prevent the horrendous possibility of racial conflicts.

Though there seems to be differences between multiculturalists and anti-multiculturalists, on who (or how many) can be rightfully considered to become part of *our society*, multiculturalists and anti-multiculturalists share the same fear that ‘unmanaged’ racial diversity will harm *our society*. Such convergence in identifying social stability as a primary concern, out of the fear of ‘race’, in fact reveals the fragility of current multicultural discourses in recognising racism, not to mention confronting it.

Some multiculturalists and migrant rights activists who disfavoured the idea of advancing the anti-racism agenda¹⁰⁶ provided me with a logical chain of their rationale: anti-racism initiatives would blame Koreans as racists; this would intensify antagonism towards migrants; this in turn would not be helpful for migrants trying to settle in Korea. The exact identical rhetoric was offered by anti-multiculturalists when asked why they fiercely opposed preliminary attempts to legislate the *Anti-racism Act* (literal translation of Korean title: *Prohibition of Racial Discrimination Act*). Anti-multiculturalists claimed that the *Anti-racism Act* would make Koreans avoid foreigners because Koreans would not want to be accused of racism, which in turn would result in increasing separation and animosity between Koreans and foreigners.

¹⁰⁶ It needs to be mentioned that a small number of my interviewees (activists) were eager to work on the anti-racism agenda. But here, I am discussing a more general tendency symptomatic of current multicultural discourses.

The *Anti-racism Bill*, which was proposed by MP Jun Byung-hun, was confronted with a great deal of opposition from public opinion in 2010 and failed to be submitted to the National Assembly (T-H Lee 2012). YM, an assistant to the MP who had worked on this bill, when interviewed,¹⁰⁷ stated that one of the main reasons that the bill had been fiercely disputed lay in its title, which included the word ‘race’. He said that a bill with similar contents would not cause that much resistance if the title was softened, that is, if the term ‘race’ was replaced with the word ‘multicultural’. He continued to say that ‘this hostility towards the word, race is understandable because it makes the bill sound like it is dealing with a matter of “oppression”.’ Indeed, the government announced its plan to draft the bill under the name of ‘prohibition of discrimination against multicultural people’ which will be phased in over time, targeting discrimination against foreign workers, marriage migrants and North Korean refugees (Chön 2012). This fuss over the title of the bill clearly shows that both multiculturalists and anti-multiculturalists conceive that ‘race’ and racism are discomforting ideas to talk about. And the void left by this reticence is filled with multiculturalism, a euphemism for ‘race’.

To sum up, there are two conceptions of ‘race’ operating in a closely intertwined way: one which perceives ‘race’ as a foreign and irrelevant concept to Korea; the other which sees ‘race’ as a negative and dangerous concept that, if widely used, can potentially increase tensions between Koreans and migrants. Such understandings clearly prevent multiculturalists and migrant rights activists from engaging with prevalent racism in reality and in effect, deflect migrants’ rightful anger at racist

¹⁰⁷ Interview conducted on 25/01/2012

exclusions. The following sections will examine the central tenets of the dismissal of racism further.

4.2. Essentialising racism

One of the main ideas which constantly underplay racism is that racism is a property of individuals. Such individualisation of racism can be largely categorised into two main essentialist understandings of racism. Firstly, racism is perceived as an attribute of individual pathology, particularly among a certain group of people. When talking about the emergence of anti-multiculturalist groups, there was a strong tendency among my interviewees to confine racism to irrational beliefs and behaviours belonging to a certain group of people whom they think of as racists. While racism was described as ‘a product of ignorance’, anti-multiculturalists (or racists in general) were associated with ‘people in the rural area’, ‘old people’, ‘the jobless’, ‘poor people’, ‘people who fear mixing blood (miscegenation)’, and simply ‘nutjobs’.¹⁰⁸ Some respondents were more sympathetic with people whom they supposed to be racist: they ascribed such behaviour to lack of education, native Koreans’ economic disadvantages (allegedly generated by cheap migrant labour), and/or little exposure to cultural/ethnic differences. Others firmly rejected holders of racist views as pathological beings who do not deserve our attention at all, while asserting that such people are small in number. Regardless of the degree of sympathy, the majority of multiculturalists and migrant rights activists consider racism as individual prejudice that only ignorant, biased, irrational people share.

¹⁰⁸ The expressions within inverted commas are direct quotes from respondents’ comments.

The other tendency towards individualising racism, which is seemingly opposite to the aforementioned elitist perspective, claims that racism is a natural belief we all share as human beings. One contributor who discredited the idea that racial discrimination is an important social issue commented:

Migrant women themselves have prejudices against other migrants... the majority of migrant women are from China and they also have strong cultural prejudices against others. While they are very generous towards Koreans and Westerners, they look down on South East Asians [...] There are cases the other way around. [Other migrants] often show prejudices against Chinese by saying that they are dirty. (WJ, a staff member at the government funded organisation supporting youth with migration background)¹⁰⁹

Though he did not frame these various prejudices as racism¹¹⁰, WJ emphasised that such cultural prejudices are not a Korean problem but a ‘sad’ yet ‘natural’ disposition, which many non-Koreans also share. Thus, by saying that everyone is racist (or in his words, ‘culturally prejudiced’), the implied conclusion is that racism is *everywhere*, thereby *nowhere*. Ironically, but not surprisingly, a very similar rationale was provided by anti-multiculturalists when they complained of being targeted as racists. One anti-multiculturalist respondent argued:

They say we are racist? ha ha... Migrants talk badly about Koreans. Cussing at us all the time. Koreans do not understand because they don’t know the languages [...] You should know [because you study abroad] that racism is everywhere, in other countries, in Europe. (HD, a member of an anti-multiculturalist group)¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Interview conducted on 27/01/2012

¹¹⁰ Instead, he insisted that ‘we should discard the belief that there is a hierarchy among cultures.’

¹¹¹ Interview conducted on 11/01/2012

That migrants are also infected with racial bias is indeed an oft-recurring theme that dumbs down racism. When asked about what she sees as racism during the interview, one Korean artist who worked with migrants fed me a story of a South Asian female migrant who was afraid of darker-skinned people. According to the artist, this migrant woman used to tell her that she felt afraid when she bumped into Nigerian male migrants in a gym from her neighbourhood because they are ‘too black’. By referencing this story, the artist was evasive about how serious she thought racism against migrants was. Indeed, migrants are not free from racial prejudices. No one really is. What is interesting about racism is that in everyday speech it is immediately grafted onto the moralistic binary of good versus evil. While racists are deemed evil, victims of racism are thought to be inherently good, even if there is nothing that makes a person good just because s/he is subjected to racism (Hage 2002a). Here, in the Korean context, what is more interesting is that the existence (or significance) of racism against migrants is discredited because of the fact that some migrants themselves tend to share similar racist tendencies as some Koreans do. According to this logic, in order to be qualified as victims, migrants are supposed to be *good* without having any racial bias in themselves, which of course, cannot be true in reality. This leads to the essentialisation of racism inherently as ‘human’ and the disavowal of racism as a serious social problem. Such a tendency, that fails to understand the operation of racism with respect to power relations, is shared by both multiculturalists and anti-multiculturalists. In a similar vein, another migrant rights activist revealed her scepticism about bringing racism on the table by juxtaposing overt racism with covert racism. During the interview with this person, I brought up a well-known racial harassment case which led to South Korea’s first conviction of an individual for racial harrassment and the subsequent establishment

of a *Joint Action Committee against Racial/Gender Discrimination* by some activists.

In 2009, Banajit Hussain, an Indian university researcher, and a female Korean companion were verbally harassed by a Korean man while riding on a bus. The man called Hussain ‘dirty’ and ‘smelly’ and insulted his female companion for ‘dating a black man’. When Hussain and his friend took the perpetrator to a nearby police station, a police officer advised them to forgive him and not press charges while saying that ‘there is no racism in Korea’ (see An 2009 for a detailed account of the incident). To my question about the interviewee’s opinion about the newly formed anti-racism initiative in light of this incident, she said:

Hmm... I don’t think putting forward an agenda of racial discrimination is very helpful for the migrant rights movement. What is racial discrimination? [...] hm... you know, Westerners have racist thoughts but educated people do not overtly act as racists... because they think they need to be polite. The perpetrator was a very ignorant person. And he openly revealed his ignorance. What’s the difference between the two? (JM, a migrant rights activist)¹¹²

Interestingly, the respondent renounced to address migrant issues in relation to racism because she thought it is pervasive and everyone cannot but be a racist deep down. She rightly pointed out that racism cannot be eliminated by being polite and civil. Yet this acknowledgement became entangled with a hasty generalisation of racism as a natural belief concurrently inducing pessimism about the effectiveness of anti-racism.

¹¹² Interview conducted on 19/01/2012

4.2.1. Multicultural optimism

The tendency of naturalising and individualising racism not only results in pessimistic attitudes such as the ones described above, but often leads to naïve optimism about future changes. A common-sensical conception of racism is restricted to extreme forms of overt violence, i.e. lynching, genocide, etc. Many multiculturalists and anti-multiculturalists seemed to share this notion and, at the same time, did not consider this form of obvious, violent racism to be part of Korean culture: Koreans are insensitive to differences (mainly because of their ignorance) but fundamentally non-violent, warm-hearted people. This image of racism as a violent act is precisely the outcome of a globally translated discourse of racism which confines racist practices to certain forms of ‘extremism’ or ‘exceptionalism’ such as slavery, genocide, the Jewish Holocaust, and apartheid - all acts of the *past* (Hesse 2004, 14).

The surprisingly short definition of racism provided by *The National Institute of the Korean Language* says that ‘racism is an ideology which justifies racial contempt, persecution, discrimination based on the idea of genetic hierarchy among races’; it continues to say that ‘typical examples of racism are the Nazi party’s anti-Semitism and anti-Black racism based on White supremacy.’¹¹³ Not only does this definition indicate that racism is an ideology of genetic differences, which is not relevant to Korea’s history (as can be seen from the examples provided), but it also strongly connotes a sense of extremity in listing the examples of racism. Since these are the examples that have been circulating in Korea as archetypes of racism, many

¹¹³ http://stdweb2.korean.go.kr/search/List_dic.jsp

respondents often associated racism with such forms of extreme violence and subsequently denied the existence and/or the possibility of racism in Korea. One anti-multiculturalist said that they were demonised as racists for no reason.

I've never done anything remotely racist. I've never lodged a protest to kill Pakistanis, never bashed migrants... I've never heard anything like, for example, that a single migrant worker was beaten to death by Koreans... I've read many news articles which reported migrants' crimes against Koreans though. (RS, a member of an anti-multiculturalist group)¹¹⁴

Multiculturalists also tend to understand racism as insensitive, overt discriminatory behaviours, which is not very different from the view through which the aforementioned anti-multiculturalist denied being a racist. Thus, while racism is being reduced to certain forms of extreme behaviours, what appears in Korea is not so much racism but 'cultural prejudices' or insensitivities, which are presumed to gradually disappear with increasing contact.

Our *minjok*¹¹⁵ has not lived with other ethnic groups for long. Hmm... One day, eight Chinese migrant workers who sought for shelter in my church stayed with us for a couple of months. At the beginning, Korean members of the church did not understand why we needed to protect them in our church by saying things like... they are illegal and taking our jobs [...] But as Koreans got to know them by living together...you know, Chinese are good at making dumplings...they came to understand they are same human beings like us. Racism is not a big problem. (PÜ, a pastor who works for migrant rights)¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Interview conducted on 04/02/2012

¹¹⁵ As explained in Chapter three and briefly in the introduction of this chapter, the term *minjok* is inextricably linked with the notion of racial and cultural homogeneity.

¹¹⁶ Interview conducted on 03/02/2012

This comment clearly shows the ways in which multicultural optimism de-emphasises racism as ‘teething problems’. From this perspective, Korea has long been a homogenous nation where Koreans have not experienced differences; but in time, Koreans will get to know the Other and become familiar with it, which will bring about an increased amount of tolerance and understanding.

4.3. Multiculturalism as euphemism: reconstructing racial reality

Though multiculturalists and anti-multiculturalists seem to have different levels of tolerance to increasing diversity, they share what Charles Mills identifies as an ‘epistemology of ignorance’ regarding race (Mills 1997, 18). Indeed, constant production of this ignorance is, in part, the workings of racism. Mills argues that Whites suffer from a ‘cognitive dysfunction’ which blinds them to the racially structured world from which they benefit (*ibid.*). It is important to note that this cognitive dysfunction is not just based on bad faith regarding ‘race’, so it cannot be confined to overt racists. Mills asserts that non-racist cognisers also undergo this cognitive dysfunction not because of their own racist belief but due to ‘the social suppression of the pertinent knowledge’, which requires critical attention particularly ‘after the transition from *de jure* to *de facto* white supremacy’ (Mills 2007b, 21).

In a similar vein, not only anti-multiculturalists but also colour-blind multiculturalism is subject to this cognitive dysfunction which prevents Koreans from seeing racially structured reality. No matter how well-meant the multicultural dismissal of ‘race’ (in the form of refuting the existence of biological race) is, this colour-blind ideology certainly renders the racialised invisible. Furthermore, such ignorance is not just an inadvertent not-knowing but a ‘substantive epistemic

practice' which functions to protect the racially privileged from recognising their own racism (Alcoff 2007, 39). It is a systemic way of managing a racial hierarchy without pinning down 'race' as the basis of differentiation. Thus, contrary to multicultural optimism exemplified in the comments of the aforementioned pastor, racism does not just go away as interactions with racial others increase. Rather a question should be asked whether the language of multiculturalism, indeed, reproduces this cognitive dysfunction and if yes, in what ways it does so. As revealed in its use as a qualifier for racial others, 'multicultural' is deployed as a euphemism. Here, 'culture', a word deemed to carry far less ideological baggage than 'race' does, is utilised to treat others with decorum. Yet, the effect of multiculturalism as euphemism goes beyond an allegedly 'politically correct' way of naming. This euphemistic installation of multiculturalism has captured culture as a framework through which differences are labelled, imagined, celebrated and disputed.

4.3.1. Culture and civilising mission

As mentioned already, the term multicultural as a euphemism for racial diversity has circulated widely as female marriage migrants and their families have become the centre of the Korean government's attention in the mid-2000s. Korean 'multicultural policies' have been implemented as policies of social inclusion targeting this specific group of migrants rather than to accommodate the different needs of migrants in general. In fact, the Korean government still strictly regulates the flow of labour migrants, restricting their status as temporary guest workers. Many scholars pinpoint that the state's special interest in this group stemmed from the growing concern over

Korea's demographic change represented by its low birth-rate and aging population (e.g. H-J Kim 2007; H-M Kim 2007).

Indeed, the Korean government has not only justified the need for multicultural policies in this instrumental manner, but has been playing a significant role in increasing international marriages in the first place. In the 1990s, local governments actively partook in creating an 'international marriage brokerage system' jointly with commercial marriage brokers as evidenced in their campaigns aiming at 'getting rural bachelors married'¹¹⁷ (H-M Kim 2007). In rural areas, local governments see such a policy as a way to address the problems of population decline caused by young people's outmigration to cities.¹¹⁸ For example, *Kyōngsangbuk* provincial government, in its 2006 policy implementation guide for 'promoting international marriages of rural bachelors', states its rationale as follows:

The higher level of deprivation of rural areas compared to that of cities leads to Korean women's reluctance to marry rural bachelors, and population ageing in rural areas. This policy measure is to tackle this problem and revitalise rural communities. (Quoted from Mo 2007).

Such state intervention on birth policy, which has utilised 'foreign women' as an instrument to solve the nation's reproduction problem, continues to be the core rationale of support for multicultural families. The main aim of multicultural policies lies in effectively assimilating these female marriage migrants into the Korean *family*

¹¹⁷ Approximately a quarter of the total number of marriage migrants lived in rural areas in 2005 (Seol et al. 2006) and 28 per cent in 2009 (S-K Kim et al. 2010), and more than one third of men working in the farming/fishing industry was married to a foreign woman in 2005 (Seol et al. 2006).

¹¹⁸ The imbalance of sex ratio within the potential marriage population is particularly serious in rural areas where more women have outmigrated to cities than men (cf. J-T Kim 2005; N. Sung et al. 2012).

(and thereby the Korean *nation*) since they are recognised as ‘potential’ Korean citizens and, more importantly, as potential ‘mothers’ of Korean children. This tendency of perceiving (female) marriage migrants as a member of the Korean ‘family’ rather than as individuals explains why the implementation of multicultural policies officially falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, which is epitomised in the establishment of nationwide ‘multicultural family support centres’.

It surely is impressive that state-funded ‘multicultural family support centres’ have now increased to more than two hundred in total since their first establishment in 2006.¹¹⁹ And the installation of these centres has certainly done some good to ease the difficulties that marriage migrants face in a new environment. I neither intend to argue whether this rapid increase of support centres provides value for money, nor assess the policy impacts of these centres. What I want to point out is that the sheer scale and speed of the central government’s involvement, in fact, proves how strong the will of the state to integrate this specific group is. And more importantly, I attempt to examine the ways in which this determination for assimilation captures *culture* as the source of problems.

The majority of support programmes for female marriage migrants have focused on providing Korean language classes and facilitating their adaptation in Korean families by educating these women in Korean culture (H-S Kim 2008, 57-8). This so-called Korean cultural education, often delivered via Korean cooking classes and

¹¹⁹ The name of the centre was ‘marriage immigrant’s family support’ centre when it was first established in 2006.

etiquette lessons, is criticised due to its gendered nature; these women are trained to play the role of the traditional wife, mother and daughter-in-law in their families (Y-S Kim et al. 2006; H-J Kim 2007). As mentioned earlier, the Korean state encouraged international marriages to tackle its low fertility rate and to meet the needs of certain Korean men who are disadvantaged in the domestic marriage market due to their low socio-economic status. And this view of seeing migrant women as an instrument of reproduction, indeed, is reflected in its inclusion policy, imposing traditional gender roles on these women and thereby confining them to their family.

In this context, the immigrant wives' lack of Korean language proficiency and ignorance of Korean culture are pinned down as a source of family conflicts. Their *cultural deficiency* is perceived as a barrier to their integration. Though there are, in fact, many other more fundamental causes for such conflicts (such as the way the international match-making system works¹²⁰, Korea's patriarchal family structure and racist culture), the efforts have been concentrated on redressing migrant women's *cultural deficiency*. Indeed, one interviewee who worked in the Multicultural Family Division of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family suggested we should distinguish 'multicultural policies' implemented by the Ministry from 'multiculturalism' of a theoretical kind.

¹²⁰ According to statistics from 2009, the most popular way of getting married for international marriages, accounting for a quarter of the total number, was through private marriage agencies (S-K Kim et al. 2010). These agencies provide photos and profiles of foreign women to Korean men and arrange trips for these men to go abroad to meet and select potential brides. The extreme commodification of marriage engenders the gender hierarchy between Korean men and foreign women, making Korean men think that they 'bought' young and submissive wives (H-M Kim 2006, 30-2). In 2007, the CEDW (UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) expressed concern about the practices of mail-order marriages and domestic violence towards migrant women in South Korea. In effect, the Act to regulate marriage agencies was legislated in late 2007 and has been enforced since 2008 (H-S Lee 2012).

It is not multiculturalism which current multicultural policies aim for. Yes, like many people say, these policies might be closer to assimilation. But then, I think we need to ask whether assimilation is necessarily a bad thing. I don't think so. Perhaps the best outcome which can be achieved through the state's policy measures is assimilation. All state policies, anyway, are to serve the taxpayers' interest, the interest of Korean citizens [...] Personally, I think we should treat female marriage migrants as individuals rather than as part of a family. However, since they come to Korea in the first place through marriage, as a member of family, it's pragmatic to make policies for helping their settlement within the framework of the family. (AM, a government official in the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family)¹²¹

From this 'pragmatic' viewpoint of policy-making, assimilation of these migrant women to Korean culture is the best way to *help* them. As criticisms have mounted towards such an assimilationist tendency, mostly by NGOs for female migrants' rights, policy programmes which target Korean partners and family members have been launched, and the discourses of *cultural deficiency* seem to be gradually losing strength. However, ironically, the discourses of *cultural deficiency* have an even stronger presence as a *discourse of praise* than a *discourse of blame*. The mainstream media previously inclined to present migrant women as 'young, helpless victims' who were 'sold' to Korea thus needing the care of Koreans (H-S Kim 2008, 52). And this tendency is still very much alive. Yet, as criticisms towards such negative representation of migrants have increased, a discourse of praise has become salient in the media. One TV producer, when interviewed, stated that he tried to emphasise the positive impacts which migrant women had brought to Korea when making a TV show about multicultural families.

¹²¹ Interview conducted on 09/02/2012

In the late 1990s, when I was making a show about rural areas, I barely saw young people there. It seemed that our farming villages were dead. But it's totally different now. You can see young migrant women cooking dinner for their families and hear their babies crying. It's much more lively and seems like a place where people actually "live". I started to make this TV show to capture such changes in our rural areas. I'd like to show many migrant women who overcome many difficulties such as cultural differences. Indeed, there are many of them to whom we should be grateful. They serve their mother-(father-)in-laws with respect and enjoy happy family life with their Korean partner and children. (HS, a TV producer)¹²²

Indeed, in the media, migrant women who speak Korean fluently, cook Korean foods or have knowledge about and endorse Korean culture, such as respect for the elderly, are highly praised. They are often praised as *nearly Korean* and exhibited as an exemplary case that proves *cultural deficiency* can be overcome through one's efforts. In this sense, the *discourse of praise* treats these women as 'childlike' subjects. Ashis Nandy (1983), when explaining in what ways British colonialism projected the Western modern idea of childhood and development¹²³ onto its colonial subjects, illustrates the distinction between 'childlike' Indians and 'childish' Indians drawn by colonisers. While 'childish' subjects are perceived as 'savage, ungrateful, ignorant but unwilling to learn' who need to be repressed by the law, 'childlike' subjects are deemed 'innocent, ignorant but willing to learn', and can be reformed through modernisation, i.e. Westernisation (*ibid.*, 16). This colonial distinction is strikingly analogous to the differentiation drawn between (female) marriage migrants and migrant workers in contemporary Korea. While migrant workers are posited as 'childish' and thus in need of a firm hand (that of their

¹²² Interview conducted on 17/02/2012

¹²³ Resorting to Philippe Ariès' claim that the modern concept of childhood was invented in the seventeenth century Europe, Nandy explains that the modern doctrine of progress began to understand childhood as an immature and inferior stage which needs the guidance of adults (*ibid.*, 14).

employers, the border agency, and the Korean state), migrant women in the *discourse of praise* are narrated as ‘childlike’ subjects who can be *Koreanised*. Therefore, as even progressive minds of Western society deemed colonialism as a necessary step to civilise the barbarians (*ibid.*), Korean multicultural discourse carries out its cultural mission propagating that one day these *culturally deficient* migrants might be properly civilised as Koreans. However, what is a subtle but non-negligible difference here is that this *Koreanisation* of marriage migrants does not necessarily mean modernisation. Rather this *Koreanisation* projects what is believed to be *traditionally* Korean onto these women. Yet, the traditional gender roles that are imposed onto these migrant women have been in fact constantly challenged by Korean women, as female labour market participation has increased, and such celebration of traditional images of women is no more a dominant discourse when it comes to the representation of contemporary Korean women (Y-S Kim et al. 2006, 218). In this sense, it can be said that this mission to civilise the multicultural others is predicated on the Korean state’s masculine nostalgia for its *lost* self.

This paternalism, in fact, goes beyond the tactics of assimilation. Though assimilation is still a dominant mode of dealing with these *cultural others*, there have been suggestions that migrants’ own cultures should be recognised and valued, along with the claims that the state should create a two-way traffic in multiculturalism by enhancing understanding of diverse cultures among native Koreans. In this respect, educational programmes designed to promote multicultural awareness are typically centred around themes such as the value of cultural diversity, and the brief histories and traditional cultures of different countries from which migrants come from. To elicit positive feelings about different cultures, ‘presentable’ diverse cultures are

selected and each culture is matched with each country. However, this simplification often conflicts with migrants' cultural identities. According to a survey that aims to find out to what extent migrant groups identify with nation, regional community, ethnicity, religion, language and culture, most migrants showed stronger feelings of belonging to their regional communities than to their countries (Borderless Village 2007, 66). In other words, migrants do not necessarily think there is only one common culture that represents their countries. Furthermore, it is highly possible that each individual migrant has a different cultural identity, one that cannot be reduced to their ethnicities or nationalities. By presupposing that people of a certain nationality consist of one culturally homogenous group, such multicultural education reifies cultural and ethnic differences neglecting the complex and ever-changing nature of cultures (Phillips 2007). In this sense, allegedly diverse cultures are invented and objectified from a Korean perspective in order to be easily consumed.

In the past five years, the majority of such multicultural education programmes have been taught by migrants themselves. Aside from the underpinning assumption that migrants are more qualified to teach such courses (because the content is about their own cultures), the recruitment of migrants for such teaching jobs gives them a chance to earn money and boost self-confidence by putting them in the position of the teacher.¹²⁴ However, this endeavour to promote diversity hardly escapes the snare of paternalism, given that different cultures are deemed to be on the verge of extinction and need to be preserved by the intervention of liberal multiculturalism.

¹²⁴ Migrants typically experience social relationships in a lower position than Koreans; for example, they are students in many Korean language and culture classes, low-ranked workers in their workplaces, or wives in the patriarchal family structure.

One interviewee who worked long on developing this type of multicultural education programmes stated:

We had trained these migrant women for at least ten weeks before they actually were assigned to work as tutors for ‘multicultural awareness promotion workshops’. Migrant women who get married to rural men or work in a factory are poorly educated. So *they often do not know about their culture or realise the value of their own culture*. What we do is *to instil a sense of confidence in them and make them understand their own culture*. (IS, a pastor who runs a multicultural mission centre at a Presbyterian church, emphasis added)¹²⁵

Before making the comment above, the pastor had proudly claimed that some of the programmes he participated in designing attempted to avoid simplistic depiction of migrants’ cultures by taking thematic approaches instead of ethnic (national) reductionist ones. He differentiated his programmes from typical multicultural programmes, which, he thought, were ‘multicultural in name only’. Yet it is interesting that he tacitly indicated *a lack of cultural capital* in migrants as an obstacle for his project of promoting intercultural awareness. According to him, migrants need to be trained before being allowed to teach because they do not have sufficient knowledge about their own culture and do not know how to value it. While migrants’ cultures are valued, migrants themselves are discredited. As was stated above, IS pitied migrants because they were ignorant of cultures supposedly their own. Thus, a multiculturalist, who appreciates diverse cultures, selflessly carries out the task of *enlightening* migrants on their own precious cultures. Not only are migrants chosen for transmitting their alleged cultures on the basis of their racial and thus cultural differences, but they are also tacitly presumed to be a blank slate on

¹²⁵ Interview conducted on 18/01/2012

which Korean multiculturalists may write the value of these diverse cultures. In this sense, even learning about other cultures, which supposedly promote mutual understanding, does not necessarily dislodge paternalism. Joon K. Kim (2011) argues:

[C]ultural paternalism is premised on the idea that dominant society knows what is best for the minority group, thereby categorising the latter group as passive objects to be studied and acted upon rather than as active agents of social change. (Kim 2011, 1597)

It is surely not my intention to criticise all kinds of cultural practices that aim to promote mutual understandings between cultures. In fact, migrants whom I interviewed often told me that they had enjoyed cultural festivals and multicultural education courses in which they had taken part. They often reminisced about the moments they cooked and shared foods together and made friends in this type of events. For many of them, this kind of cultural event means a relaxing day off, in a safe environment, where they feel like they are together with nice Koreans who appreciate what they eat, how they dress and so on. Through this experience, they often feel good about themselves. So this cannot be all bad. What I stress here is that such a cultural approach, however well meant, most often is not free from paternalism. Indeed, some migrants have collectively voiced objections against multicultural festivals because they constantly emphasise differences and treat migrants with benevolent condescension, and this has hindered Koreans from recognising migrants as ‘equals’ (M-Y Lee 2012).

Hence, racial others are framed as *culturally different* objects whose very difference is defined and selected by multiculturalists. On the one hand, paternalistic

assimilation is practiced, postulating a lack of competency in Korean culture as a problem. On the other hand, culture – written on migrants’ bodies – is studied and celebrated by multiculturalists who know better about the value of diversity and thus help migrants learn about their own roots.

4.3.2. Culture as an emanation of ‘race’: a case of anti-Muslim racism

Multicultural policies and discourses craft a lens to see individual differences, i.e. culture. Yet this concept of culture is hardly free from racial connotations either when culture is deemed as the problem or deployed as the solution. Indeed, culture becomes ‘a respectable proxy for race itself’ (Mills 2007a, 94). Being subjected to paternalism, racial others are told to assimilate into a certain form of Korean culture or to display their different cultures that are inscribed in their bodies but needed to be realised with the help of multiculturalism. Either way, the value of migrants as human beings is not denied. They are just *culturally different*. The following conversation I had with two writers, who were working on a TV show about multicultural families, indicates the ways in which culture is picked up as a measure of difference while being racially imagined.

CU:

While making this programme, I felt for migrants. Many of them live a tough life here. We’d like to make people know that they are humans just like us [...] But I reckon I won’t like the idea of my brother getting married to a foreign woman.

Interviewer:

So you mean... though your perception about migrants has changed while making this programme, you still don’t like having one of them as part of your family?

HS:

Yes. As CŪ said, I learned a lot about them [migrants] too and had a chance to dispel my old prejudice against them, thanks to this programme [...] However, I would be reluctant to accept them as part of my family.

CŪ:

Even if my brother wants to get married to a white woman, I will not be pleased.

HS:

Me neither.

Interviewer:

Why?

CŪ:

Hmm. Don't get me wrong. I am not against multiculturalism. I *like multiculturalism*. I am okay with it. But if 'multiculture' *becomes something to do with me, I feel uneasy*.

Interviewer:

But you said that people should see migrants as equal human beings. Then what aspects of international marriage particularly bother you so you can't have them part of your family?

CŪ:

Hmm... Hard to explain.

HS:

They have different cultures. *No matter how long they live with us, we cannot become absolutely familiar with them because of cultural differences.*

(CŪ and HS, female TV writers, emphasis added)¹²⁶

These writers are genuinely sympathetic with the plight of migrants. And they claimed that they tried to depict them in a positive manner telling the stories of migrants who made efforts to overcome difficulties and led a happy life in Korea. Yet, when it comes to the question of the extent to which migrants can be accepted, these Korean women, who said they are *fond of* multiculturalism, feel reluctant to have immigrants as part of their families. This tendency is also shown in the results

¹²⁶ Interview conducted on 13/01/2012

of the 2010 Korean General Social Survey (KGSS)¹²⁷. Regarding the question to what extent one can accept different migrant groups,¹²⁸ respondents show a high acceptance level for migrants in general, when they remain their colleagues, neighbours, or friends, whilst showing relatively low level of acceptance for migrants as Korean citizens (K. Chung et al. 2011)¹²⁹. Most vividly, when it comes to the question of willingness to accept migrants as a family member (a spouse or spouse of one's child), respondents show high level of reluctance to do so (*ibid.*).

What is more interesting, in the aforementioned interviewees' comments, is the interviewees' explanation of the source of their reluctance; that they do not want to have a migrant as a member of family not because migrants are racially inferior, but because they are culturally different. It is particularly intriguing to see that CŪ states Whites are no exception in this sense. By saying that, she attempted to differentiate herself from racists. In her statement, 'even if my brother wants to get married to a white woman', the conjunction *even if* signifies that 'race' is impinged upon the hierarchical understanding of human value, and that culture is presumed to free us from this type of hierachal idea of differences. Yet, being imagined as a fundamental difference that cannot be resolved, such cultural difference keeps triggering worries and fear deep down. Culture is what stigmatises these racial others as eternal strangers.

¹²⁷ Responses given by 1,576 Korean adults of age 18 or older (nationwide) were analysed. Part of this survey was about the current perceptions of Koreans on national identity, migrants' rights, overall migration policy, and multicultural policy.

¹²⁸ Groups were divided into North Korean refugees, the Korean Chinese, Chinese, Japanese, Southeast Asians, Americans, and Europeans. The question is about whether one can accept each group as a 'Korean citizen', 'colleague', 'neighbour', 'friend', 'spouse', or 'spouse of one's child'.

¹²⁹ As for 'North Korean refugees', the result does not accord with this general tendency. A willingness to accept them as Korean citizens slightly outnumbers accepting them as colleagues, friends, and neighbours (K. Chung et al. 2011). This surely is an interesting result to be tested further but beyond the scope of this thesis.

This culturalisation of ‘race’ in multicultural discourses, in effect, occludes us from seeing pervasive racism. Furthermore, it paradoxically provides a fertile ground on which anti-immigration and anti-multicultural politics can flourish. I will examine the ways in which racist discourses latches on to the notion of ‘culture’ by particularly focusing on how Muslim (male) migrants are racialised in anti-multiculturalist discourses within the Korean context. There is no accurate, up to date, statistics of the number of Muslims in Korea. According to the 2011 estimate published by *Hankyoreh*¹³⁰, the number of foreign Muslims who currently stay in Korea amounts to 92,059 and that of other Muslims (including marriage migrants, Muslims who became Korean citizens by naturalisation, Koreans who converted to Islam after getting married to Muslims and native Korean Muslims) is approximately 45,000 (Song and An 2011). This is only 0.2–0.3 per cent of the entire population (though it continues to increase). Despite such minimal presence of Muslims, anti-Muslim sentiments have grown rapidly particularly among Christians and anti-multiculturalists. Indeed, one of the major anti-multiculturalist groups, named *Victims of Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrants*, specifically focuses on the problems caused by Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim male migrants. The representative of this group, who claimed that he had helped many Korean women get away from their marriage or relationship with ‘evil’ Muslims, when interviewed, emphatically warned against the danger of Islam.

Interviewer:

Why do you think they [Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrants] are particularly problematic?

YJ:

¹³⁰ http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/478232.html

Hasn't it already been proved in Europe that Muslims can never be integrated into a host society? I have no religion. But I reckon the nature of this religion, Islam, has a fundamental problem. It's the same all over the world. They ghettoise themselves and trample upon women's rights. In recent years, Islam has infiltrated into Korea rapidly through migrant workers. And it has spread its roots since these migrants seduce Korean women and marry them in order to permanently live in Korea. After marriage, they force their wives and children to convert to Islam. You know, they've got a plan to Islamise Korea by the year 2020. Who can guarantee that extreme violence such as suicide bombings will not happen in Korea? I think if we don't prevent this religion from spreading, we will see terrible consequences in the near future.

(YJ, a member of an anti-multiculturalist group)¹³¹

Certainly YJ's view on Islam impinges on the globally circulated images of Islam that equate Muslims with terrorists, a self-segregating lot, and violent oppressors of women. Korean mainstream media heavily influenced by Western (especially American) media's worldview often reveals highly racist views on Muslims. For example, one popular variety show has recently got into trouble for a parody of Muslims by actors dressed like terrorists and a veiled woman; this was accompanied by a pitiful comment on a Saudi-Arabian girl who wanted to become a singer, which suggested she would not be able to achieve her dream in Saudi-Arabia because of that country's conservative Islamic tradition (Yang 2011). Indeed, all the anti-multiculturalists I have met shared the idea that Islam is a dangerous and primitive religion, incompatible with the Korean way of life, though each of them felt differently about the urgency of such an anti-Islamic agenda. Out of fear and hostility, anti-multiculturalists continue to petition the government to stop accepting

¹³¹ Interview conducted on 17/01/2012

migrant workers and students from Islamic countries and not to give construction permits for mosques.

In fact, even education materials designed to promote multicultural understanding among pupils implicitly propagate this typified image of Islam. Issues of cultural diversity are taught in courses such as ‘Moral Education’ (for middle school students) and ‘Society and Culture’ (for high school students).¹³² Putting aside the fact that these courses are often considered insignificant because they are not major courses which get you into university, some supposedly Islamic traditions and cultures are often included in course books as a means to discuss how far cultural relativism can go. For example, honour killings in association with the Taliban, and the burqa as a symbol of oppression against women are typical examples used to discuss to what extent different cultures should be tolerated (Cho et al. 2012). While being juxtaposed with other examples such as diverse traditional costumes of the world, different table manners and different traditions of marriages and funerals that are deemed ‘good’ diversity one needs to appreciate, alleged Islamic cultures are singled out as what cannot be endorsed in the name of cultural diversity. Hence, the image of Islam as a violent and misogynist culture is not only recited by anti-multiculturalists but constructed as common sense.

What is particularly prevalent in Korea’s anti-Muslim discourses is a narrative of Korean men who feel threatened by Muslim sexual predators. The story of Muslim male migrants who specifically target *damaged goods* (often elaborated as disabled,

¹³² In Korea, middle school students are of age between thirteen and fifteen and high school students are of age between sixteen and eighteen.

ugly or old Korean women, divorcees, or prostitutes) in order to get a visa through marriage has become an *urban myth*. It keeps being *recited* in anti-multicultural online communities and even in some conservative mainstream media (e.g. Paek 2008). This paranoia of losing their women to manipulative Muslims is activated whenever there is a crime committed by South Asian male migrants (regardless of the fact that not all of them identify themselves as a Muslim). Such a racialised urge to protect women against foreign men, of course, is not confined to the case of Muslim men. One anti-multiculturalist revealed his uneasiness about miscegenation between Korean women and foreign men in general, during the interview.

HM:

If a Korean woman who got married to a foreign man moves next door, I don't think I will like that at all. I cannot, of course, force her not to make such a choice. But to be honest, I am a man. How can I be happy to see such things?

Interviewer:

Why? As you said earlier, it's their business. Why does this bother you?

HM:

You might think that I am bit traditional. But well... To be honest, it feels like *I am losing my woman to another man* [...] If my daughter does such a thing [having a relationship or getting married to a foreign man], I would burst with *shame and anger*.

(HM, a member of an antimulticulturalist group, emphasis added)¹³³

Losing women of his nation to racial others, HM feels invaded and ashamed. In constructing national identity, women's bodies are inextricably linked to the imagination of the nation as pure motherland. As 'symbolic bearers of the nation' (McClintock 1995: 354), women need to be protected from foreign invasion. Thus

¹³³ Interview conducted on 08/02/2012

men are called to protect these vulnerable subjects in order to keep the core of their nation alive. Indeed, this is the discursive construction recurring in the history of intercultural and inter-state politics not only when the situation is extreme (e.g. a war between states), but whenever the need to sort out the enemy within and to reinvigorate national identity is provoked. As examined in Chapter three, the idea of women as agents of national body politics is not unprecedented in Korea. The Korean state, in its relations with the U.S., exploited and policed women's bodies under the name of national interest. In so doing, Korean women who had relations with foreign men were collectively stigmatised as prostitutes who shamed the nation and thereby needed to be segregated. And through both symbolic and physical segregation of these violated bodies, the purity of the rest of Korean women was protected.

In this sense, contemporary anti-Muslim discourses are also predicated on Korean patriarchal nationalism that tends to defend national integrity via women's bodies. Yet the level of fear that Korean masculinity is experiencing seems unrivalled in confronting these Muslim others. This is not merely because these foreign invaders are deemed to violate Korean women but because these men even attempt to become Koreans themselves, through this violation trespassing on the realm of Korean men and their women. The paternalistic gaze, that at least tried to *enlighten* female marriage migrants, is not applied to these male others. They are excluded from this project because they are deemed impossible to be domesticated.

Furthermore, fuelled by the global discourses of Islamophobia, these Muslim males are considered as recalcitrant racial others whose culture is toxic to the Korean

nation. Though I encountered many overt and disturbing racist comments against Muslims (or alleged Muslims) from my interviewees and also from the Web, what best reveals the nature of this anti-Muslim racism, in fact, is found in a comparably toned down article on the webpage of the aforementioned anti-multiculturalist group, *Victims of Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrants*. The anonymous writer of this article claimed that s/he intended to provide an ‘objective’ view on Pakistani men.

I don’t have any whatsoever prejudice against a marriage or relationship between Korean women and foreign men. Also I don’t have any prejudice against certain countries. I do not look down on people just because they come from a certain country. So what I am telling now is not coming from some sort of a prejudiced view. These are facts about Pakistani men, not evil ones but standard, normal ones [...] Pakistani men who are now in Korea can be best described as Korean men in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when foreign culture was flooding into our country. Though Koreans became more open-minded, the remnants of Confucianism, patriarchal culture and superstition still affected the minds of Koreans of the time. [The writer named these Korean men as *sinnamsōng* (literally translated into the ‘new man’, meaning a ‘modern’ man).] [...] These Pakistani *new men* experience huge culture shock when they first come to Korea, just like what Koreans would have experienced when they went to the States in the 1950s. These Pakistani *new men* try to bend some of their rules to adjust themselves to this different culture, regarding sexual relationships and so on [...] Yet the fundamental ways of their life can never change. As soon as they get married [to Korean women], they get ill-mannered and treat women like their properties. Like our fathers in the past did to their women [...] Let me explain more in detail. 1) Since they are *new men*, they might not force their partners to convert to Islam [...] 2) Yet they would definitely force you to raise your children as Muslims. Moreover, they don’t like girls [...] 3) They don’t spend money on Western style cultural activities which many Koreans enjoy [...] 4) They never help with household chores. Conclusively, if you still want to marry a Pakistani man, despite all that: 1) you first need to completely understand the lifestyle of Muslims; 2) you need to learn how to cook Pakistani foods; 3) you need to give up your children’s education [in a normal sense] and be fully aware of the consequences, especially in case you have a girl; 4)

and lastly, you need to prepare to lead the life of a Korean women from the 1900s.
(extracted from the abovementioned article¹³⁴ by the author)

Edward Said (1979) explains that the Orient has been established as a site of backwardness, irrationality, despotism and misogyny – an antithesis of the West. The passage above internalises the same understanding of the Orient, when narrating Korea's modern history as a process of being enlightened by *foreign culture* (read Western civilisation). However, as clearly seen in the aforementioned analogy between Korean men of a hundred year ago and Pakistani new men, Muslims (represented by Pakistani men here) are still enslaved by their own primitiveness while Korea has been fully civilised now. Pakistani new men are still part of the Orient. They are our past – not the past that evokes nostalgia. They are the *bad past* that we overcame, the history that contemporary Koreans should not repeat again. Furthermore, contrary to Koreans who have modernised their outdated values, such as sexism, Muslims are perceived incapable of changing themselves precisely because of their religious culture. Thus, anti-Muslim racism poses Islam as the culture of the ‘wrong kind’, one that not only defines Muslims’ current primitiveness but also contains them forever in the *bad past*.

Conclusion

As shown in this chapter, Korea, thought to be *a nation with one race*, clearly has become baffled by the unprecedeted presence of racial others. While the concept of ‘race’ is deemed not only foreign but also discomforting, multiculturalism is adopted

¹³⁴ <http://cafe.daum.net/leavingpakistan>, written by a person whose user ID is *zooni* on the date of October 7, 2012.

as a solution to address this bafflement and name these others. ‘Multicultural’ has become an ultimate indicator to signify otherness. Migrants are *euphemistically racialised* by the Korean state through the language of multiculturalism. What is behind this is an aversion to addressing pervasive racism. Despite the proliferation of multicultural discourses, racism has not been discussed as a serious problem, embedded not merely in our minds but in the structure of our society, institutions, and culture. Confronting the emergence of anti-multiculturalists, racism has started to be mentioned as a vexing issue in the media, in the past five years. Yet it is easily dismissed as a problem of ignorant and pathological individuals, and thereby delinked from the state. Or it is essentialised and universalised as unchangeable human nature; this logic tacitly denies racism as an impending issue in Korea.

In this chapter, the silence about ‘race’ in Korea is analysed as a cognitive dysfunction that paradoxically sustains a social epistemology of ‘race’. Refuting biological race does not automatically rectify the social reality of racism. Rather, in the case of Korea, racism disappears from our sight when ‘race’ is dismissed. In addition to that, this chapter has examined the ways in which the multicultural substitution of culture for ‘race’ effectively manages racial hierarchy. As culture is provided as a legitimate lens to discuss differences, it is used as a tactic of inclusion and exclusion. On the one hand, the different cultures of migrants are seen as a problem for their integration into the Korean nation. On the other hand, display of their cultures is encouraged for enhancing Koreans’ multicultural awareness. Either way, the decision on which cultures need to be valued and in what ways they should be treated rests with benevolent Koreans. Furthermore, the culturalisation of differences goes far beyond the paternalistic partial inclusion of migrants. It provides

a fertile ground for the rationalisation of the exclusion of cultural others. As can be seen in the case of anti-Muslim racism, cultural differences, written on others' bodies, provoke intense anxiety over contamination of the nation. An incompatible and non-transformable culture is put forward as a rationale for the complete exclusion of certain migrants.

Following the arguments presented in this chapter, it seems possible to conclude that the politics of multiculturalism have not dismantled racism, but do reconstruct racial reality, by deploying culture as an emanation of 'race'. With culture as the only language left to us, we are incapable of articulating racial inequality. The following chapter will further interrogate the workings of cultural racism in relation to national boundary making, by focusing on discursive representations of Korean Chinese migrants.

Chapter 5

The rise of cultural racism: A case study of the Korean Chinese

Globalisation, *Tongp'o* and the *Chosōnjok* (Korean Chinese)

I dedicate this chapter solely to the analysis of *Chosōnjok* discourse on the grounds that this is a compelling case that illuminates important causes and also effects of the silence about ‘race’ and racism in multicultural discourses. According to the prevalent tendency of confining ‘race’ to a biological concept, which I critically examined in the previous chapter, discrimination against the *Chosōnjok* is considered to be completely irrelevant to racism due to their blood kinship. This chapter intends to deconstruct this belief by scrutinising the racialised nature of prevalent discourses about the *Chosōnjok*.

As explained earlier in Chapter three, *Segyehwa* (Korea’s globalisation drive), became a major state policy framework during the Kim Young Sam government (1993–1998). During this period, *Segyehwa* was presented as Korea’s ‘sole’ strategy to national survival in the new world economy. And this *Segyehwa* discourse became the yardstick for measuring both individual merit and the value of an individual contributing to their nation. Meanwhile, these *Segyehwa* policies did not only target Koreans inside but Koreans outside the borders by attempting to form a global ethnic Korean network. This would be a de facto ‘economic’ community that the motherland may cash in on, by utilising them for international trade and market

expansion, attracting foreign direct investment from them, and adopting the knowledge and skills they acquired from more developed countries. The right to the nation of overseas Koreans is ipso facto qualified through this economic rationale, despite the inclusive rhetoric of *tongp'o* (blood kinship of overseas Koreans) discourses. Whilst wealthy and powerful ethnic Koreans, mostly based in the US and Japan, came to enjoy the *tongp'o* status officially since 1999, when the *Chaeoe Tongp'o Pōp* (*Act on the immigration and legal status of overseas Koreans*) was introduced, the majority of the *Chosōnjok* (Korean Chinese) and *Koryōin* (Korean diaspora in the former Soviet Union) were not given such legal recognition until 2004.

Particularly considering the fact that the *Chosōnjok* (Korean Chinese) had been (and still is) the largest group of foreign migrant workers and also of ethnic return migrants among overseas Koreans, such lack of recognition functioned as a tool for regulating (certainly not blocking) their immigration. Without the *tongp'o* status, the *Chosōnjok* were treated no different from other foreigners in Korea's immigration system. This exclusion made their stay in Korea precarious and consequently turned them into easily exploitable labour. In 2004, after a long struggle staged by the *Chosōnjok* and activists, the legal definition of *tongp'o* was extended to include ethnic Koreans who moved abroad before the establishment of the Republic of Korea in 1948, in effect, including the *Chosōnjok* who are mainly descendants of Koreans who migrated to China before and during the Japanese colonial rule of 1910–1945. Yet, the status of the *Chosōnjok* was not improved much in real terms since the F-4

visa¹³⁵ for overseas Koreans was limited to skilled workers, which in effect, largely excluded *Chosŏnjok* manual workers (Seol and Skrentny 2009, 158).

Since 2007, *Chosŏnjok* migrants have entered Korea with an H-2 visa ('visit and employment' visa), which provided the *Chosŏnjok* a better status and much more freedom of mobility than other foreign migrant workers coming to Korea under the *EPP* (*Employment Permit Program*). This is often acknowledged as a substantial enhancement of *Chosŏnjok* rights by many *Chosŏnjok* rights activists.¹³⁶ However, this H-2 visa, specifically targeting ethnic Koreans in China and the former Soviet Union countries as cheap, low-skilled labour, clearly differentiates the *Chosŏnjok* from other overseas Koreans (e.g. Korean Americans) while at the same time drawing a line between the *Chosŏnjok* and non-Korean migrants. The analysis presented in this Chapter will argue that such a stratified system of immigration control is predicated on ethnic nationalism inflected by the priority of economic interests.

How have *Chosŏnjok* migrants responded to this contradiction between an inclusive *tongp'o rhetoric* and the restrictive immigration system? Piao (2011), in his study on

¹³⁵ This F-4 visa, called the Overseas Korean visa, is a multiple-entry visa that allows up to three years of residence per visit and can be constantly renewed. F-4 visa holders can freely enter and depart the country and also seek employment. Although, theoretically, all overseas Koreans ('Korean nationals residing abroad' and 'Foreign nationality Koreans' defined by the Overseas Koreans Law) can apply for this visa, overseas Koreans from China and the former Soviet Union face different conditions (stricter regulations) according to the Article 76 of Immigration Law Enforcement Regulations. Thus, the majority of the Korean Chinese who are manual workers cannot acquire this visa when they enter Korea. If a Korean Chinese migrant enters Korea with an H-2 visa ('visit and employment' visa for overseas Koreans from China and the former Soviet Union) and stays in the same job (with the same employer) in certain state-designated industry sectors for over two years (one year for people who registered their workplace before July 31, 2011), then he or she can apply for the F-4 visa. Yet, with an F-4 visa, they can no longer work as manual workers. This, in fact, means that the change of visa status can be practically useless for many migrant workers. (KIS 2011a; also see KIS webpage, www.immigration.go.kr)

¹³⁶ From the interviews with *Chosŏnjok* rights activists

Korean-Chinese organisations and their struggle for recognition in Korea, explained that, from the early 1990s to 2002, when the majority of the *Chosŏnjok* came to Korea under the *Industrial Technical Training Programme* (ITTP, 1991-2004) or lived without papers, *Chosŏnjok* churches became the main actors in the fight for *Chosŏnjok* workers' rights by insisting that the *Chosŏnjok* should be recognised as *tongp'o*, not as foreign workers. Indeed, *Chosŏnjok* churches have been a focal space where the Korean Chinese not only help each other to settle by exchanging information but also mobilise protests for *Chosŏnjok* rights against the Korean state. The *Chosŏnjok* rights movement has always emphasised blood-kinship and castigated the contradictoriness of the ethnic nationalism proclaimed by the Korean state, which is evident in the differential treatment of ethnic Koreans depending on their countries of origin. Since their struggle was mainly shaped by the demand for recognition of their blood-relatedness and thereby inevitably appealed to the reinforcement of ethnic nationalism, the *Chosŏnjok* rights movement was not able to show solidarity with (non-ethnic Korean) migrant workers' movement in general, even though the number of *Chosŏnjok* amounts to more than half of the total number of migrants. As for migrant rights groups, except some churches that embrace both *Chosŏnjok* and non-ethnic Korean migrants, the majority do not work on the issue of *Chosŏnjok* rights. Several (mostly non-religious) migrant right activists whom I interviewed cautiously stated that the entire *Chosŏnjok* rights movement had made a rightward shift because of the influences of *Chosŏnjok* churches that had focused solely on their blood-kinship, i.e. their differences from other migrant workers. The examination of the development of the *Chosŏnjok* rights movement and its conflict of interests with migrant rights movement in general is beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, my interest lies in looking into *Chosŏnjok* discourses in order to find

out in what ways the racialised concept of nation is complicated by being imbricated with the notion of culture. In other words, this Chapter aims to unravel the ways in which the *Chosōnjok* become racialised and subject to racism despite their blood-kinship with the Korean majority.

It seems that both in the seemingly all-embracing *tongp'o* discourse and within current multicultural discourses, *Chosōnjok* migrants take up an ambivalent position – somewhere in between *us* (Koreans) and *non-racially Korean others*. On the one hand, this ambivalence has been addressed as a problem that needs to be corrected by furthering and materialising nationalist inclusion in real terms, i.e. full inclusion of the *Chosōnjok* as Korean through the enhancement of their socio-legal status. On the other hand, this ambivalence is often absorbed into the rhetoric of multiculturalism; *Chosōnjok* migrants are both implicitly and explicitly considered as part of multicultural diversity. Here, I am not discussing the ambivalence of *Chosōnjok*'s cultural identity¹³⁷ but the ambivalence of the rationale for their inclusion into the polity. To this end, the first section of this chapter examines the topography of justificatory discourses that aim at in(ex-)cluding the *Chosōnjok*, where the boundary of nation is debated and redrawn, by means of racial, cultural, ideological and economic logic. In the second section, the prevailing discourse of the *Chosōnjok* as a cultural Other, is explored in depth by particularly analysing the practice of storytelling with respect to the criminalisation of the *Chosōnjok*.

¹³⁷ For an analysis of the fluidity and flexibility of the identity of *Chosōnjok* marriage migrants, see Hong et al. 2013.

5.1. Unravelling *Chosŏnjok* discourse

5.1.1. The boundary of nation

As can be seen in the aforementioned concept of *tongp'o* itself, the first and foremost rationale for including the *Chosŏnjok* is based on a blood-based notion of nation: the *Chosŏnjok* should be recognised as Koreans because they share the same Korean blood. This logic was taken as a self-evident truth by my *Chosŏnjok* interviewees, and expressed in phrases such as ‘from the same root’, ‘*Chosŏn* root’ and ‘*hanminjok* (Korean nation)’. However, anti-multiculturalists whom I interviewed often challenged this rationale. One respondent, despite thinking that the Korean government might need to treat the *Chosŏnjok* better than other foreign migrants, still did not consider the *Chosŏnjok* as Koreans:

They are not Korean in their soul and culture. Concerning bloodline, many of them are partial [not pure]. Should we treat them as Korean? (HD, a member of an anti-multiculturalist group)¹³⁸

As can be seen here, not only was *Chosŏnjok*'s racial Koreanness contested (because some of them are mixed-blood, having one parent who is not ethnically Korean) but they were considered ‘not quite Korean’ because they were ignorant about Korea’s history and culture. Indeed, the notion that the *Chosŏnjok* have a different ‘culture’ was a recurring theme among my interviewees. Another anti-multiculturalist made this clear by insisting that ‘culture’ is a decisive factor in distinguishing *authentic* Koreans from others.

¹³⁸ Interview conducted on 11/01/2012

Though they [the *Chosōnjok*] speak Korean, their way of thinking is totally Chinese [...] They lack any kind of understanding for our traditional values, and community spirit such as mutual help [...] They don't feel any belonging to Korea whatsoever. They just *pretend* that Korea is their home. If they've got any national consciousness, they would not behave that badly in Korea. They are like *bats*¹³⁹ [...] the *Chosōnjok* have no respect for the law. That's why there were so many illegal *Chosōnjok* migrants. (RS, a member of an anti-multiculturalist group, emphases added)¹⁴⁰

In RS's view, the fact that the *Chosōnjok* have a different way of life that is distinctly Chinese sufficiently disproves their right to stay in Korea. 'Opportunistic', an oft-used pejorative term to describe *Chosōnjok*'s behaviour and mindset, connotes that they 'fake their love' for Korea merely to get a job.¹⁴¹ Such perception is linked up with the criminalisation of the *Chosōnjok*. The perception that they are opportunistic and immoral is backed up – as far as people who hold these views are concerned – by the fact that many of them stayed in Korea 'illegally' (this for RS, amounts to a serious crime in its own right) and also committed other crimes. Pitted against this type of logic, a pastor of the *Chosōnjok* church insisted that we, Koreans, should sympathise with the *Chosōnjok*.

If we condemn the *Chosōnjok*, it's like spitting in our own faces. In China, the *Chosōnjok* have never had the chance to learn our national history and culture. No one taught them [...] Though the Chinese government allowed them to establish *Chosōnjok* schools and to use the Korean language, the Chinese government filled their brains with *Han* culture [assimilated them into Chinese culture]. They don't

¹³⁹ For those who are not familiar with this metaphorical expression, two-faced, cunning and unreliable people are often compared to bats in everyday conversations in Korea. This analogy probably stems from the fact that bats are mammals but have wings unlike the majority of mammals, and also because they become active at night.

¹⁴⁰ Interview conducted on 17/01/2012

¹⁴¹ See Yang 2010 for how this type of negative perceptions of the *Chosōnjok* is circulated through the media.

know [about our history and culture] because of such Chinese government policy. So we shouldn't blame the *Chosōnjok* for that. We should understand the historical context where the *Chosōnjok* have been situated in. (SK, a pastor of the *Chosōnjok* church)¹⁴²

Even to his eyes, the *Chosōnjok* do not share our ‘culture’. But since this is not their fault, he continued to argue that they should (and can) be ‘re-educated’ in order to be reborn as *proper* Koreans. For him, as it does appear to the aforementioned anti-multiculturalist, cultural difference and the lack of understanding about ‘our’ history are viewed as a ‘problem’. The fine difference between them is, that SK urges for the resuscitation of Korean culture embodied in the *Chosōnjok*, appealing to the notion of blood kinship.

Interestingly, my *Chosōnjok* interviewees tended to address their cultural identity as something ‘in-between’ while expressing that it could not be equated with either Chinese or Korean culture. Two female respondents, upon marrying Korean men, said that they were ‘shocked’ when they found out that Korean culture was far more patriarchal than *Chosōnjok* culture; especially, since in China they thought that *Chosōnjok* culture was more patriarchal than mainstream *Han* Chinese culture. Yet, this ‘cultural’ difference was not seen as a significant problem by these respondents, though it had been causing some conflicts at home and at workplaces where they negotiated their differences. When talking about her identity, one female *Chosōnjok* contributor stated:

¹⁴² Interview conducted on 05/02/2012

I was a *Chosōnjok* who lived in China....I'd like to say that I am Korean now. But they [Koreans] refuse. (RM, a *Chosōnjok* woman who married a Korean man and, at the time of the interview, had been living in Korea for seven years and eight months, emphasis added)¹⁴³

The hesitation of self-identification, or the discrepancy between the self-identification which she desires, and the social identification which pins her down to a non-Korean category, reveals the social construction of *Chosōnjok* identity: no fixed, essential *Chosōnjok* identity makes them *Chosōnjok*; but being 'positioned' as the Other in the 'dominant regimes of representation', they become 'subjected' to the 'knowledge' about them, and their cultural identities function as 'unstable points of identification' (Hall 1990, 225-226).

Another justification for in/excluding the *Chosōnjok* refers to the history of modern Korea to assert their (il/)legitimacy as Koreans. One contributor claimed:

The Republic of Korea should have accepted all the overseas Koreans who took part in the independence movement. We didn't. So, if they [overseas Koreans] want to come to Korea and live here, then the government should allow it without any condition. That's what the nation-state should do. (PÚ, a pastor who works for migrant rights)¹⁴⁴

During the Japanese colonial era, some Koreans fled to Manchuria in order to establish a base for Korea's independence movement. On the ground of this historical fact, *Chosōnjok* people who have since lived in the Northeast area of China are often recognised as descendants of anti-colonial resistance fighters. As explained

¹⁴³ Interview conducted on 11/02/2012

¹⁴⁴ Interview conducted on 03/02/2012

earlier in Chapter three, nationalism, throughout Korea's modern history, has provoked a strong feeling of victimisation and was used as a means to strengthen internal solidarity by jogging the memory of Japanese colonisation. The justificatory discourse of the *Chosōnjok*, as descendants of anti-colonial resistance fighters, resorts to this nationalist ideology; it argues that the recognition of the *Chosōnjok* is a way of fixing the moral deficit of the Korean government that was not able to fulfil its duty of taking care of its own flesh and blood, who fought for the nation. Another pastor told me a narrative that the *Chosōnjok* had created, when fighting for the enhancement of their status.

The *Chosōnjok* made an analogy to explain their situation: One day, a burglar broke into a house where two brothers lived; the elder brother dared to escape in order to seek help and rescue his brother; when the elder one came home, the burglar had already gone away; but his younger brother firmly locked the door refusing to let him in. (SK, a pastor of the *Chosōnjok* church)¹⁴⁵

This analogy is interesting in many aspects but, most importantly, it tries to reverse the image of the ‘selfish’, ‘opportunistic’ *Chosōnjok* by constructing the image of the *Chosōnjok* as the ‘elder brother’ who sacrificed himself for the family (nation). Here, the selfish, immature person is the younger brother (South Koreans) whom the *Chosōnjok* brother felt betrayed by. However, anti-multiculturalists flatly denounced such rationale, by simply making a factual point that not all *Chosōnjok* are descendants of resistance fighters or by alleging that some are in fact descendants of pro-Japanese collaborators. Furthermore, while discrediting the linkage between the anti-colonial movement and the *Chosōnjok*, anti-multiculturalists (and a small

¹⁴⁵ Interview conducted on 05/02/2012

number of multiculturalists) raised questions about their connection to North Korea which was woven into a question of their ideological unreliability for being citizens of ‘socialist’ China.

During the Korean War, the *Chosŏnjok* fought for the North killing South Koreans. You know, one *Chosŏnjok*, being recognised for his slaughter of South Koreans, got promoted to General [...] They are opportunists. I hate opportunists. Compared to Korean Americans and the Korean Japanese, the Korean Chinese (*Chosŏnjok*) are the most opportunistic. (SW, a member of an anti-multiculturalist group)¹⁴⁶

As can be seen here, the *Chosŏnjok* is considered ideologically ‘dangerous’ because they supported the North during the War. According to Jung (2004, 243), approximately 70-80 thousands Chosŏnjok people participated in the Korean War and the majority of them, on the side of the North. During the war, the Communist Chinese government supported its North Korean Allies, by sending troops, approximately 63 thousand Chosŏnjok included (ibid., 251). The reason for such participation, on the part of the Chosŏnjok, is seen to have various reasons. Among ethnic Koreans who were living in China at the time of the War, most of them resided in Manchuria (particularly in Yanbian which shares its southern border with North Korea). Indeed, this part of China was an important base-camp for the Korean anti-colonial movement and also for the joint struggle with Chinese communists against Japanese colonisation during colonial times (ibid., 246). Such ideological, historical and geographical reasons (among other factors) can explain the Chosŏnjok’s participation in the war on the side of the North. Yet, as detected in the anti-multiculturalist’s comment above, such a complex context is often erased in

¹⁴⁶ Interview conducted on 22/01/2012

regard to the Chosŏnjok's siding with the North during the war time. Instead, the Chosŏnjok's past affiliation with the North is used to ideologically delegitimise them. Furthermore, it is given as proof of their highly 'duplicitous' mentality – now siding with the South, as it has become economically developed. A less resentful but highly instrumental view on the *Chosŏnjok* was provided by one pastor of a multicultural church:

Hmm... I think they are foreigners. They have Chinese passports. I don't think they deserve any special treatment just because they are *tongp'o*. Hmm... we share the same blood though... I think that the Korean government cannot help but [treat them better than other foreigners] considering the South-North relations. In fact, they [the *Chosŏnjok*] all supported the North in the past. ha ha... I guess the South Korean government is now trying to win them over. (IS, a pastor who runs a multicultural mission centre at a Presbyterian church)¹⁴⁷

Hence, the 'cultural', 'ideological' boundary of the nation operates as a double-sided justificatory discourse, of accepting (through assimilation) or blocking the ethnic return of the *Chosŏnjok*. Furthermore, in conjunction with the present restrictive immigration system, the discourse of 'cultural' differences (and incompatibility) keeps racialising the *Chosŏnjok* as a collective entity, thereby situating them in an ambiguous space within the multicultural nation.

5.1.2. The *Chosŏnjok* as instruments/obstacles for national development

From its beginning, the *Segyehwa* (globalisation) discourse was primarily about recognising the economic value of overseas Koreans for Korea's success in the

¹⁴⁷ Interview conducted on 18/01/2012

global market. Though *Chosŏnjok* workers were regarded as cheap, expendable labour in this new hierachal economic community of nation, this rhetoric of ‘economic value’ is still powerful in discourses in favour of accommodating the *Chosŏnjok* and investing in their future potential. A pastor of a *Chosŏnjok* church argued:

We need to make them [the *Chosŏnjok*] learn and maintain our language and culture. Our *minjok* [Koreans] needs the huge Chinese market of 1.3 billion people. We need to sell our products there. For this, we need the *Chosŏnjok* more than ever. We need to use them as interpreters for our business. Their existence is directly related to enhancing our nation’s power. (SK, a pastor of the *Chosŏnjok* church)¹⁴⁸

Here, *Chosŏnjok* migrants are portrayed as a means to connect *us* to the world’s largest market, China. This economic instrumentalisation of the *Chosŏnjok* is not only performed by the media but by the *Chosŏnjok* themselves, to prove their ‘usefulness’ in terms of today’s ultimate tenet – economic development. Indeed, the discourse of the economic value of migrants is prevalent in multicultural discourses in general: multicultural inclusion of migrants is necessary to turn them into Koreaphiles, who will directly and indirectly contribute to our economic growth in the global market as consumers, business partners, or workers. Yet, the economic instrumentalisation of the *Chosŏnjok* differs in that this rhetoric of justification is performed through the comparison between the *Chosŏnjok* and other migrant workers. In demanding change in the current immigration system towards equal treatment of the *Chosŏnjok* with *tongp’o* from developed countries, the *Chosŏnjok*’s economic potential is emphasised particularly in relation to the increase in economic

¹⁴⁸ Interview conducted on 05/02/2012

cooperation with China (e.g. So 2011). Such justification goes further by arguing that the *Chosŏnjok* cannot be treated as if they were ‘foreign workers’, but should be recognised as ‘valuable human resources’ for the future economic development of the nation (Kwak 2011). In other words, the suggestion here is that investment in supporting the *Chosŏnjok* ought to be prioritised over multicultural support for foreign migrants, who are merely to be contained in certain low-skilled sectors as expendable labour.

However, in the eyes of anti-multiculturalists, *Chosŏnjok* migrants, mainly composed of unskilled workers and small business owners at the present time, are an economic threat to economically deprived Koreans. From this perspective, anti-multiculturalists insisted that the *Chosŏnjok* took *our* jobs, particularly from the most economically vulnerable Koreans, and exerted a strong downward pressure on wages in some sectors such as construction. However, the majority of anti-multiculturalists I interviewed did not argue that the *Chosŏnjok* ought to be treated the same as foreign migrant workers. Indeed, some even sympathised with the *Chosŏnjok* in that they did not receive equal recognition compared to other overseas Koreans, but when it comes to the issue of the labour market, many revealed hostility to the *Chosŏnjok*.

The jobs Korean Americans take in Korea are not the same ones which Korean working class people might get. They do not cause a problem to the Korean labour market. But the case of the *Chosŏnjok* is different. I used to work as a payroll manager for a construction sector where 80 per cent of workers were *Chosŏnjok*. They received 70 thousand KRW (approx. £41) per day compared to 90 thousand KRW which Korean workers made. They take away jobs from Koreans [because they are cheap]. It’s ludicrous to compare them with Korean Americans or Korean Japanese. They’ve done much harm to us and will continuously do so. We should amend policies for the *Chosŏnjok* [to preclude them from exacerbating the life of

Korean working class.] (RS, a member of an anti-multiculturalist group, explanation in parentheses added)¹⁴⁹

Here, RS distinguishes the *Chosŏnjok* from other overseas Koreans from developed countries and justifies this distinction based on his experience and belief that economic harm is caused by the *Chosŏnjok*. Along with this line of argument, another interviewee argued that Korea should open its door to high-skilled workers for its economic development, instead of further marginalising deprived Koreans by accepting low-skilled *Chosŏnjok* migrants. According to him, *Chosŏnjok* workers are ‘obstacles in reforming industries in decline’ which is preventing Korea from fully modernising its economy and improving its work conditions.¹⁵⁰

As examined in this section, rationales for excluding the *Chosŏnjok* often share the same ground as rationales for including the *Chosŏnjok*, which leads the justificatory discourse of the *Chosŏnjok* into a logical impasse. Particularly with the ascendance of multicultural discourses, the rhetoric of supporting the *Chosŏnjok* provided both by the state and the *Chosŏnjok* rights groups themselves is bound to stagger. This is precisely because this rhetoric heavily relies on the ethnic homogeneity of the nation for its first and foremost rationale which ostensibly contradicts the rhetoric of multiculturalism. Indeed, this muddled position of the *Chosŏnjok* discourse in relation to multiculturalism seems to be an easy game for anti-multiculturalists. One interviewee picked up on the ambivalence of the relationship between *Chosŏnjok* rights discourse and the overarching multicultural discourse.

¹⁴⁹ Interview conducted on 04/02/2012

¹⁵⁰ Interview conducted on 22/01/2012

Once I got into an argument over multicultural policies and nationalism with a *Chosŏnjok* woman who married a Korean man via online chatting. She insisted that her grandfather and father were true nationalists and she herself has a strong sense of belonging to the Korean nation. Yet, she argued that it is time to adopt multiculturalism in place of nationalism. So I responded that the only reason she was able to come to Korea rather freely and voice up her opinion is because she was treated as a *tongp'o*. If she wants to deny this blood-relatedness and scrap nationalism as her belief, then she has no reason to be in Korea and talk about our issues. Without [ethnic] nationalism, she is merely a Chinese national who has no say whatsoever in matters such as whether we need to choose multiculturalism over nationalism [...] It's so contradictory. On the one hand, they [here, the *Chosŏnjok* woman and the Korean state in a broader sense] advocate multiculturalism by denying the importance of *minjok*. But on the other hand, they say we need to embrace the *Chosŏnjok* because they belong to our *minjok*. It makes no sense. (HM, a member of an anti-multiculturalist group, explanation in parentheses added)¹⁵¹

Though some points HM made are unfounded and illogical (for example, the argument that the woman in question was able to live in Korea because she was regarded as a *tongp'o*¹⁵²), he made a reasoned refutation of the current multicultural discourse in relation to the *Chosŏnjok* rights discourse. Following up on this line of thoughts, anti-multiculturalists often agree with the current hierarchy in the immigration system between the *Chosŏnjok* and non-ethnic Korean workers, though they demand the tightening of the border in general. Yet, their endorsement of the *Chosŏnjok* is apparently conditional, depending on how much the *Chosŏnjok* themselves would like to uphold the idea of a racially homogeneous nation, because it is the very reason that they were accepted as part of the nation in the first place. From this perspective, the *Chosŏnjok* should be grateful for being ‘conditionally’

¹⁵¹ Interview conducted on 08/02/2012

¹⁵² Regardless of being *tongp'o* (ethnic Korean) or not, you are granted spouse status when you marry a Korean national.

accepted to the nation. As explained before, this racial homogeneity does not fully guarantee their place in Korea. The burden of proof that *Chosŏnjok* migrants bear is shown in the discourse of their ‘cultural’ differences. In this sense, the following section contributes to uncovering the fragility of the nationalist justification of the *Chosŏnjok*’s inclusion by reviewing discourses that criminalise the *Chosŏnjok*.

5.2. Cultural racism and criminalisation of the *Chosŏnjok*

5.2.1. Recitation of *Chosŏnjok* crimes stories

In this section, I will further examine the rise of cultural racism¹⁵³ against the *Chosŏnjok* by mainly analysing the creation and circulation of stories about *Chosŏnjok* crimes by the media and in what ways these stories gain legitimacy as social orthodoxies. In relation to the role of storytelling in the construction of the *Chosŏnjok* as a *problem*, Michel de Certeau, in his *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), provides an insightful observation of the ‘narrated reality’. He states:

From morning to night, narrations constantly haunt streets and buildings [...] They “cover the event,” that is to say, they *make* our legends (*legenda*, what is to be read and said) out of it [...] Our society has become a recited society in three senses: it is defined by *stories* (*récits*, the fables constituted by our advertising and informational media), by *citations* of stories and by the interminable *recitation* of stories. (*ibid.*, 186, emphasis in original)

¹⁵³ I use the term ‘cultural racism’ in order to highlight a specific mode of contemporary racism in which ‘culture’ (cultural differences) strongly overdetermines biological racial affinity. Yet, I do caution against the slippery misuse of the concept and do not intend to contrast it with ‘racism proper’. It could indeed be misleading to understand ‘cultural racism’ as only a contemporary phenomenon (since all racisms have always been, in fact, cultural) or as a rather softened and non-malignant type of prejudice.

What he tells us here is that our thoughts are constituted through stories that define the way we understand events and the world where various events are integrated within narratives. From this perspective, I first explore stories about the *Chosōnjok* repeatedly narrated by the media after a recent mutilation murder case (April 2012) whose perpetrator was a *Chosōnjok* male.

‘Foreign crimes’ (or crimes committed by foreign nationals) have been a popular theme in anti-immigration, anti-multicultural discourses. Yet, the criminalisation of the *Chosōnjok* became a nation-wide discourse particularly after the aforementioned mutilation murder case, dubbed ‘*O Wǒn-ch’un* [Chinese: *Wu Yuanchuan*] human flesh case’, reflecting the perpetrator’s name and also the alleged motivation for the murder. This event was paid specific attention because of the brutality of the crime. The perpetrator kidnapped a Korean woman in her twenties, murdered her and then mutilated her body into hundreds of pieces. He confessed that he had intended to rape her but failed and consequently murdered her. However, the way he mutilated her body into so many pieces, against the background of increased suspicion on the circulation of human flesh at the hands of the *Chosōnjok*, made his statement doubtful and the police investigated whether it was a pre-planned crime to sell human flesh or organs (C. Kim 2012). As the culprit was sentenced to death for ‘committing murder to sell human flesh’,¹⁵⁴ in the first trial,¹⁵⁵ the media started to cover other *Chosōnjok* crimes as a package and reported the alleged circulation of

¹⁵⁴ Such an allegation was raised because there were rumours of Chinese-made drug capsules which were allegedly made from powdered remains of dead babies and smuggled into South Korea. It was reported that such human flesh pills were sold disguised as energy boosters (R. Kim 2012). The Korean Customs Service first found out about the illegal drug smuggling in August 2011 and Health authorities intensified a crackdown on the drugs since then (*ibid.*).

¹⁵⁵ He lodged an appeal by denying such intentions. His sentence was reduced to life imprisonment in the second trial, based on a ruling that stated that the intention of selling human flesh was unlikely and the crime itself seemed not to be pre-planned (H-W Kim 2012).

human flesh and organs. For example, *Yi Yǒng-ton's Foods X-file*,¹⁵⁶ a TV documentary programme which investigated an allegation that human flesh pills are produced and trafficked by *Chosǒnjok* people, recorded high ratings and went viral on the web. Furthermore, prompted by media reports on this murder case, the increasing crime rate among the *Chosǒnjok* was highlighted and residential areas with a high concentration of *Chosǒnjok* were presented as problem areas, where *Chosǒnjok* gangs were active and hard core violence was committed on a daily basis (e.g. T-U Im 2012; S-J Lee 2012; J-W Park 2012). In this sense, what de Certeau (1984) astutely puts as the ‘citation’ and ‘recitation’ of stories is particularly pertinent to illustrate the media’s creation of *Chosǒnjok* stories through cross-referencing. The following news feature, sensationally titled ‘*Chosǒnjok* towns: Korean dream turns out to be Korean killing’ (C-H Han 2012), is a good example showing how new stories are mixed with stories from the past, and contribute to the criminalisation of the entire *Chosǒnjok* people. The topic of this article is crimes in *Chosǒnjok* dominated neighbourhoods; the journalist visited two major *Chosǒnjok* towns – *Yǒnbyǒn Street, Karibong-dong, Seoul* and *Multicultural Street, Ansan, Kyǒnggi province*. However, the opening of this article is about neither of the places. It starts with the citation of past murder cases:

Five days after the *O Wǒn-ch'un* mutilation murder case of 1 April, another *Chosǒnjok* killed a jobcentre manager in *Yǒngdǔngp'o*. Fear against *Chosǒnjok* migrants is spreading quickly as violent crimes committed by *Chosǒnjok* migrants are non-stop [...] Koreans who live in *Chosǒnjok* dominated areas ask for increase of patrols and CCTV in their neighbourhoods and taxi drivers are reluctant to go near *Chosǒnjok* areas. Employers do not want to hire *Chosǒnjok* migrants. (C-H Han 2012)

¹⁵⁶ Broadcasted by *Channel A* on the 27th of April 2012

By using well-known murder cases of the past as a reference point, the journalist reminds us of the dangerous reality of coexisting with the *Chosōnjok*, which has been constantly portrayed as a *fact*. Having fragments of earlier stories as its components and weaving them into his own, the narrator presents his story as a representation of what is going on here and now. What is also interesting is that he creates yet another story by telling us of his own experience. After linking his story to the earlier stories of crime and increasing fear, he writes:

Around one o'clock in the afternoon of the 16th [April, 2012], I arrived to *Namguro* metro station. Coming out of exit number three, I walked down the street for about ten minutes. The street was full of Chinese signboards of *Chosōnjok* job centres, travel agencies, restaurants and shops. Passers-by sounded *unnatural*. They looked *unnatural* too. Men were in their achromatic-coloured working clothes and shoes. A miasma of stale alcohol hung around them. Women looked tacky in their out-of-style clothes and bad makeup. Around the table outside of a 24-hour convenience store, three men in their working clothes were drinking rice wine. Aside from the five bottles of rice wine, there were no nibbles on the table. They seemed to drink off their afternoon because they hadn't found a job for the day. They were having a conversation in Chinese and sometimes poor Korean. I carefully approached them in order to ask for an interview. I didn't expect it to be easy. But their reaction was much more hostile than I expected. One of the men, presumably a ring leader, shoved me aggressively saying *cao ni ma* [motherfucker] in Chinese. I didn't understand what he said, but later on, I learned that it was a pretty obscene swear word. (ibid., emphases added)

Though the journalist eventually provides us with facts, numbers and quotes, from his interview with residents of the town at the end of his article (which are not presented above), the article initially begins with a report of his own experience and feelings. In this sense, his personal experience (that logically has nothing to do with actual crime and safety issues of the town) gives *body* to the data (interviews) he

later feeds to his readers. The street is full of signs and sounds which are not only different but *ominous* since they are *unnatural* (strange)¹⁵⁷ to his Korean eyes and ears. His discomfort with the unnaturalness comes to a climax when he approaches the *Chosŏnjok* men to ask for an interview. Through this small event of being rejected an interview, the unnaturalness of the *Chosŏnjok* becomes tantamount to a *dangerous* difference. The journalist's choice of words, 'ring leader', when he describes the man who violently rejected his request, gives the implicit notion that the three men were gang members. This story emphasises the fear and alienation of the journalist who tacitly represents an *authentic* Korean. The difference that the *Chosŏnjok* allegedly displays and constantly reminds us of is narrated as a threat of which Koreans are victims.

5.2.2. Intimate Other: *Chosŏnjok* aunties and the making of urban legends

Such discursive reproduction of racism against the *Chosŏnjok* through constant recitation is not only performed by the media. Stories about the *Chosŏnjok* are told, shared and re-created as *urban legends* by word of mouth. Urban legends, a term coined by Brunvand (1981) and used by folklorists to distinguish modern folk tales from traditional legends, are 'realistic stories concerning recent events (or alleged events)' that are subject to repetition and reproduction (*ibid.*, xi). This term reminds us of the fact that legends, myths and folklore, often considered to only exist in traditional societies, indeed, are still very much a part of contemporary socio-cultural life and function as a site for expressing and sharing collective emotions such as fear.

¹⁵⁷ The word 'unnatural' is a literal translation of the Korean word, *pujayon*. This term carries a negative connotation by meaning, here, that a certain thing is not only unfamiliar but also exists in a place where it does not belong.

In this sense, urban legends on the *Chosŏnjok* could be an important source that further illuminates the otherisation and criminalisation of the *Chosŏnjok* in contemporary Korean society.

For this, this section focuses on the analysis of the data gathered through one of the major mums' online communities from the 1st of April to the 30th of September 2012 (six months after the aforementioned mutilation murder case). The rationale behind this setup for analysis is not only the fact that *Chosŏnjok* babysitters have been increasingly viewed as a problem group, but also that *Chosŏnjok* babysitters, commonly called *Chosŏnjok aunties*, are the perfect example of the intimate Other which can be analogised with the status of *Chosŏnjok* migrants in Korea. The majority of *Chosŏnjok* babysitters are live-in domestic workers¹⁵⁸ who are working in Korea on the H-2 visa. As intimated in the term, *Chosŏnjok aunties*, the living-together relation *Chosŏnjok* babysitters have with their employers creates an intimacy dilemma concerning the boundary of family. *Chosŏnjok aunties* have become popular in this market mainly because they are cheaper than Korean nannies and because they can speak Korean (Son and Lee 2011, 116), which is not the case for other migrant workers; this gives *Chosŏnjok* workers a comparative advantage over other migrant workers. Particularly, since most Korean domestic workers do not want to live in, *Chosŏnjok aunties* are preferred by working mums (*ibid.*).

The majority of the posts on the *Chosŏnjok*, except a small number of posts that recommend their former *Chosŏnjok auntie* to other members, discuss problems that

¹⁵⁸ Most of them take a break on the weekend; go out on Saturday, sleep out and come back on Sunday. Many of them have families and friends who also work in Korea, so they meet up over the weekend and spend time together.

the members have with *Chosŏnjok aunties*, report ‘bad’ *Chosŏnjok aunties* (in order to warn people against hiring her) and share stories about *Chosŏnjok* crimes. These negative stories are believed to be true since they are based on lived experiences. In stories of conflicts with *Chosŏnjok aunties*, they are depicted as sneaky and unreliable, often demanding (unreasonable) pay raises, fixing the price in collusion with other *Chosŏnjok* babysitters in their neighbourhood and constantly breaking promises. Often the illustration of their Janus-facedness reaches its peak, and elicits emotional reactions from angry mums, when an event is directly related to their children.

My friend who hired a *Chosŏnjok auntie* told me not to employ a *Chosŏnjok*. She found out later that the *Chosŏnjok auntie* used to shout at, swear at and even hit her child [the employer’s child] when nobody was there. To her and her husband’s eyes, this *Chosŏnjok* auntie seemed to adore the child always saying “I love you”. But one day, my friend found out this *Chosŏnjok auntie* was swearing at her baby because the baby woke her up in the middle of the night. This is only the tip of the iceberg. Please think twice when you want to hire a *Chosŏnjok* nanny. (s.k.y., 05/07/ 2012)¹⁵⁹

This post was written as a reply to an original post that complained about the attitude of a *Chosŏnjok auntie*. As *Chosŏnjok aunties*’ alleged two-facedness has been recognised as a threat to their own children, the instalment of CCTVs at home has become popular.

You should install a CCTV. You can never trust the *Chosŏnjok* even though they seem nice to you. Their selfishness is beyond your imagination. If you think setting up a CCTV is a bit too much, then at least you should have several hidden cameras

¹⁵⁹ All the quotes I collected from the online community are presented with an initial of their usernames and a date the writing was posted.

inside your house. What will you do if they do something bad to your child when you are out working? (w.s.s.h., 16/07/2012)

This is a piece of advice given to a woman who has hired a *Chosŏnjok auntie* for the first time and was asking whether it is necessary to set up a CCTV. Janus-facedness is considered to be part of the essential nature of the *Chosŏnjok*, posing as a danger to the safety of the employers' children and leaving no option for mums but to keep a close eye on *Chosŏnjok aunties*. The rhetoric of the *Chosŏnjok's* two-facedness is often associated with their in-betweenness, which is reflected in their status as *tongp'o* (ethnic Korean – part of our *minjok* – but lacking Korean citizenship).

The *Chosŏnjok* no longer belong to our *minjok*. They use the rhetoric of *minjok* when they need it... But they themselves consider themselves Chinese. (r.p.g., 10/04/2012)

Such condemnation of their presumed opportunistic and dubious nature is prevalent in posts that express shock and disgust toward *Chosŏnjok* crimes such as the mutilation murder case reported in the media. Indeed, increasing media reports on *Chosŏnjok* crimes and alleged trafficking of human organs and flesh, seem to be grafted onto the previous urban legends circulating with respect to *Chosŏnjok aunties*, leading to the making of new *Chosŏnjok* legends. One of the representative urban legends created and circulated after the aforementioned mutilation murder case is a story about a runaway *Chosŏnjok* babysitter who kidnapped a child.

Have you guys heard about the kidnapping committed by a *Chosŏnjok* babysitter? I heard that the baby's body was found, but without any organs. And the baby's parents committed suicide. It might be just a rumour. But whether or not it's true,

there is nothing to lose by being careful. That babysitter was never caught and might be working in another Korean house. Scary! (y.s.m.n.l., 14/09/2012)

This is one of many versions of this legend; there are many variants as there are tellers of the story (H-M Yi 2012). Not in this post, but in many other posts spreading similar stories, conveyors tend to buttress the credibility of their story by saying it is coming from a reliable source such as the experience of a friend of a friend. But what is interesting concerning the post above is that the narrator does not care too much whether this story is empirically true or not. Rather the narrator seems to give credit to the story because it is *useful* in understanding the world she lives in and to guide her action (e.g. keeping a closer watch on her *Chosōnjok* auntie). Indeed, the truthfulness of urban legends is not derived from empirical evidence; rather ‘the stories could be true, so they are true, or, they “realistically” describe the kind of world in which we live, therefore they are true’ (Donovan 2004, 6). In this sense, stories about the *Chosōnjok* have never been only about one’s personal experience but a practice of expressing ‘group concerns’ and ‘group belief’ (van Dijk 1993b, 141).

This type of *Chosōnjok* urban legends identifies Koreans as *victims* of acts committed by the intimate Other, in betrayal of their trust. The proximity of the *Chosōnjok*, epitomised in the case of *Chosōnjok* aunties who cross the blurred boundary of public and private spheres, is deemed dangerous. The fact that *Chosōnjok* aunties become part of ‘family life’ is thought to potentially compromise the very safety of the family. And the increasing presence of the *Chosōnjok* within the nation is interpreted as a constant threat to Koreans, supposedly the owners of the nation.

A small number of posts which doubts the truthfulness of such stories or criticises the tendency of racialising the entire *Chosŏnjok* community are easily dismissed by claims that these stories are not fabricated with a racist intention, but are stating the facts. Indeed, storytellers often tone down their narratives to show they are not racially prejudiced. The following post exemplifies this type of semantic tactics, a strategic move of ‘apparent concession’ (van Dijk 1993a, 267). When it comes to the discourse of racism, for example, the tactic of apparent concession mitigates the overall racist feel of a statement, by using hedging and euphemisms.

I presume, except some extreme cases, the majority of the *Chosŏnjok* might be good-hearted underneath. But they don’t know in what ways they differ from Koreans. That’s a real problem. They always speak too straightforwardly. Too blunt. They always bluff. They are very calculative and astonishingly vulgar. If I do something nice to a Korean, s/he will thank me. But if I do the same to a *Chosŏnjok* person, s/he will ask me for more. I know it might not be that easy for them to adapt to Korea. But they first need to become culturally refined... (s.m., 23/04/2012)

The acknowledgement of the fact that not all *Chosŏnjok* are evil, and most of them are *good underneath* is embedded as a disclaimer for racism. Also some sympathy for the challenges they face in adapting to life in Korea softens down the tone. Yet, despite this concession, it is indicated that ‘there is a problem after all’ (*ibid.*). It is their ‘culture’ that causes the problem. The *Chosŏnjok* might regard themselves as equal to Koreans because they share Korean blood and speak Korean. But this post points out that it is their ignorance of their ‘cultural’ difference that excludes them from the authentic nation. Indeed, stories about the *Chosŏnjok* almost always refer to their cultural differences to justify discrimination towards them (though racism itself is denied). Together with such negative remarks, it is interesting to see how positive

presentations of some *Chosŏnjok aunties* are performed. A post recommending a *Chosŏnjok auntie* to other members highlighted the fact that this *Chosŏnjok auntie* ‘does not have a *Chosŏnjok* accent’.¹⁶⁰ By not having a *Chosŏnjok* accent, which is often considered to be a marker of cultural difference and otherness, this *Chosŏnjok auntie* is considered to be an exceptional case, similar to an ‘authentic’ Korean and thereby less dangerous and more refined. Indeed, *Chosŏnjok aunties* who are hygienic or who cook Korean foods well are presented as a (good) anomaly (e.g. although she is *Chosŏnjok*, she is not like other *Chosŏnjok* people).

Stories not only reflect the society we live in but also shape our views on reality. Considering that stories have ‘sociocultural functions’, reproducing knowledge and beliefs in general, it can also be said that they contribute to the reproduction of racism (van Dijk 1993b, 125). In this sense, stories about *Chosŏnjok* crimes, created and circulated by the media and exchanged through everyday conversations, constitute the *Chosŏnjok* as a cultural Other; therefore, denying their eligibility to be part of the Korean nation.

Conclusion

In terms of legal status, *Chosŏnjok* migrants occupy a better position than other foreign migrants but a lower position than other *tongp'o* (overseas Koreans), not to mention Koreans. This state sanctioned hierarchy effectively produces migrants as the ‘underclass’ (Gray 2004) and, at the same time, divides them according to their ‘varying proximity to the “true”, authentic nation’ (Seoul and Skrentny 2009, 162).

¹⁶⁰ i.d.a., 20/06/2012

Migrant rights movements, particularly ones led by *Chosōnjok* churches, have succeeded in improving the legal status of *Chosōnjok* migrants by resorting to the aforementioned justificatory discourse of ethnic nationalism. However, this *Chosōnjok* rights movement failed to address the commonalities that both the *Chosōnjok* and other migrants share – being subjected to structural racialisation in this hierarchical immigration regime and marginalised by society at large. Such structural racialisation reciprocally determines the reproduction of the *Chosōnjok* as a cultural Other, identifying them as poor, dirty, immoral, opportunistic, tacky and criminal.

After multicultural discourses have circulated through various policy measures, the *Chosōnjok* have become part of the discourse on multicultural others, which usually include ‘foreign migrant workers, marriage immigrants, children of international marriage, overseas Koreans and North Korean migrants, all of whom have increased the ethnic and cultural diversity of Korean society’ (Yoon 2011, 88). As indicated in the inevitable friction between the discourse of *tongp'o* and multiculturalism, the *Chosōnjok* seem to take up a precarious position in this multicultural space by not being Korean but, at the same time, not quite ‘multicultural’ either. Though the *Chosōnjok* themselves seem to be offended by the fact that they are addressed as part of the ‘multicultural’ whole (Piao 2011)¹⁶¹, the justificatory discourse based on blood kinship seems to reveal its fragility, particularly facing the rise of cultural racism.

¹⁶¹ Examining the transition of Korean-Chinese organisations in relation to their struggle for recognition, Piao (2011) argues that the *Chosōnjok* attempt to emphasise their differences from other migrants and criticise the current multicultural discourse as a totalising discourse which negates this distinction.

As discussed earlier, the criminalisation of the entire *Chosŏnjok* community has quickly caught on, particularly after the mutilation murder case in April 2012; it even led to an online signature-seeking campaign for the total expulsion of *Chosŏnjok* migrants (J-H Kim 2012). In tandem with this increasing hostility against the *Chosŏnjok*, the media have disseminated negative stories about the *Chosŏnjok* by using such hard-core crimes, explicitly and implicitly, as their references. *Chosŏnjok* crime stories, which have been recited through the media and also through everyday conversations, have not only affected *Chosŏnjok* small businesses and the employability of *Chosŏnjok* workers badly (Hwang et al. 2012), but have also reinforced cultural racism against them. The *Chosŏnjok* urban legends – particularly about *Chosŏnjok* babysitters – that I have analysed, illuminate the narrativisation of experiences and events through which the cultural otherisation of the *Chosŏnjok* is performed. The *Chosŏnjok* who have entered *too* deeply into the life of *our* [Korean] nation are narrated as a threat, consequently requiring us to remain more vigilant about their *bad differences*.

To sum up, Korea's hierarchical immigration regime provides a fertile ground for limiting the rights of the *Chosŏnjok* and, at the same time, precludes solidarity between the *Chosŏnjok* and other migrants by making use of 'race' as a basis for differentiation. Furthermore, concurrent discourses of the *Chosŏnjok* effectively construct the *Chosŏnjok* as the cultural Other, whose potential for damage must be controlled by stricter regulation and, if possible, through assimilation. In light of this development, the arguments of *Chosŏnjok* rights activists that predicate the blood kinship of the *Chosŏnjok* as the basis of their full right to nation are in a double bind. Such justification can be easily exploited for the aim of restricting the number and

the right of non-ethnic Korean migrants; this resonates with the anti-multiculturalists' claims, yet fails to tackle the process of marginalisation of *Chosōnjok* migrants. By problematising such rationale, this chapter argues that discrimination against the *Chosōnjok* paradoxically vindicates the analytical value of the concept of racialisation and racism. As in the case of the *Chosōnjok*, practices of racialisation and racism certainly go beyond the biological understanding of 'race' and these concepts still hold explanatory power in analysing the socio-cultural construction of 'race'. I argued in Chapter four that the prevalent tendency of confining 'race' to a biological concept substantially limits the ground for bringing up the issue of racism in relation to current social relations in Korea. Following on from that critique, this chapter demonstrates that the essence of racism lies in creating the *collective* other as a fixed entity, and concurrently systematising 'internal exclusion' of the Other (Balibar 2005). In this sense, the prevailing discourse of the *Chosōnjok* as the cultural Other reveals how culture is used in marking the boundary of the nation, creating internal racialised subjects, and establishing the internal exclusion of migrants. In so doing, it also corroborates the precarious nature of multicultural discourse and its paradoxical effects of creating racialised others.

To recapitulate, this chapter and the previous one have examined how racialised boundaries are (re)drawn in constructing migrants as (multi-)cultural others, and how the circulation of multiculturalism as euphemism constitutes *the politics of hush*. The next chapter will focus on what type of national self is imagined through the dominant state discourse of multiculturalism, and how it is materialised, but also contested, in relation to the neoliberalisation of Korean society.

Chapter 6

Multiculturalism, a new social Darwinist project for the nation

To make one's self vulnerable to the seduction of difference, to seek an encounter with the Other, does not require that one relinquish forever one's mainstream positionality. When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power over in intimate relations with the Other. (hooks 1992, 23)

As hooks argues, a penchant for diversity and the 'encounter with the Other' does not presuppose aspiration for more equal relationship between the self and Other but rather creates a new form of domination. If so, it is important to question what motivates one's desire for otherness, to explore how such desire is expressed, and to analyse how it reconfigures the relationship between the self and the Other. In this vein, this chapter aims to look into the nature of the renewed national self produced by contemporary multicultural discourses particularly in relation to the ascendancy of neoliberal subjectivity. For this, the first part of this chapter explores the implicit link between the production of ideal neoliberal national subjects and the valorisation of a multicultural ethos. This examination, then, leads to a critical re-contextualisation of the rise of anti-multiculturalism through which I aim to provide explanations that do not simply reduce the cause of such a backlash to either increasing competition in the manual labour market or prejudice held by a poor and 'uneducated' population. Lastly, by analysing the nationalist rationale underpinning

multicultural discourses, this chapter questions the purported ideological distinction between anti-multiculturalists and multiculturalists in Korea and explores the ways in which they are conditioned by, and complement each other.

The preceding chapters four and five have looked at the ways in which multicultural discourses use ‘culture’ as a means of differentiation by driving the dynamics of in/exclusion amid the silence about ‘race’ and racism. The apparent discomfort and concurrent avoidance of bringing up the issues of racism have managed to slip into the promotion of a liberal tolerance of multiculturalism. Despite its fundamental premise on equality and diversity, the promotion of multiculturalism paradoxically diverts attention from racism, and flattens out complex racial realities in Korea by framing the emerging change of social reality with fuzzy and (seemingly) politically correct language. In tandem with playing such a euphemistic role, the language of multiculturalism has come to signify racial (and racialised) differences, as a result of creating discourses on racial others and implementing particular policies for their social integration.

In other words, whilst on a surface level diverse cultures are completely distanced from the dirty word ‘race’, this cultural rhetoric of multiculturalism has never been able to fully escape racialisation, however celebratory it is. Rather, culture proves to be a ‘legitimate’ and justifiable means for racialisation. As racial (/racist) discourses become more ‘civil’ through such culturalisation of differences, racism is hardly identified as such (if fortunate enough to be even remotely discussed as a problem) but as something else, something less damaging and serious. Indeed, the simple truth, which can be observed from the pushing and pulling between ‘race’ and

culture, is that racism is never only biological but always cultural, contrary to popular belief in Korea. This is particularly evident if the interlocking of ‘race’ and culture is examined in concert with the practice of national boundary making, which constantly involves the politics of belonging. For example, the racialisation of the *Chosŏnjok* (Korean Chinese) investigated in Chapter five shows how culture plays a deciding role in constructing discourses of in/exclusion by modulating the boundary of the (racially imagined) nation.

Up until this point in this thesis, the construction of others in multicultural discourses has been scrutinised by looking into the ways in which they are defined and put into hierarchical slots, justified and delegitimised, racialised and culturalised, included and excluded. This chapter turns its focus to the kind of self-making project that multiculturalism involves. Needless to say, the task of defining the Other is part of what constitutes the self. In this sense, what is often neglected in critical approaches toward contemporary multicultural policies in Korea is the fact that the politics of multiculturalism engages in moulding a new national self, as much as it is concerned with managing the internal Other. As mentioned in Chapter one, one of the major criticisms against multicultural policies has been levelled at its lack of effort to increase ‘multicultural acceptability’ among the majority, which inevitably results in a one-way assimilation of migrants into Korean society. Though such an assessment is largely fair, it overlooks the fact that multicultural discourses have indeed communicated certain values and ethos to the majority. In fact, the very concern about the inadequacy of multicultural awareness among the general public itself actively engages in informing the public of what type of individuals can be and should be valued in contemporary Korea.

6.1. Neoliberalising multiculturalism

As I noted earlier in Chapter one, apart from the most common use of the term ‘multicultural’ as an appellation for migrants, ‘multicultural’ also modifies the word ‘society’ to describe the broader empirical change of Korean society. When it is used in this sense, the rhetoric of ‘multicultural society’ is often deployed with a ‘temporal’ ambiguity. Besides its use to describe the current condition of societal diversity, it also indicates a future state with a transitional connotation. In other words, in implying the racial/ethnic diversity that Korea will face in the future, such a rhetoric points to the societal condition which is *not yet achieved*, but *must be reached in the future*. This empirical transition is designed and supported partly by state multicultural policy. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the first and foremost rationale for governmental involvement in multicultural policy-making was fear of a population crisis. And this fear has helped to frame female marriage migrants as important agents of crisis management, who are expected to increase the fertility rate.

Whilst Korea’s active recruitment of migrant women for the reproduction of the nation was brought about by a certain fear of the future, their presence itself also has started to raise a concern that is closely related to the fear of racial/ethnic/cultural heterogenisation. Thus, this transition to multicultural society is deemed inevitable (in order to prevent a population crisis), but also invokes another fear of the future with respect to the threats and costs that such diversity may impose on Korean society. The normative (and futuristic) connotation of the state’s rhetoric of multiculturalism needs to be understood within this context. Multiculturalism is promoted as an important social value, not just because we cannot do away with the

set of values that multiculturalism posits, such as recognition and equality. Rather, it seems that multiculturalism needs to be the social norm in order to *pre-empt* future tensions and costs incurred by diversity. In addition, a very nationalist concern, which is well summed up in the following statement, can be detected.

While there are both the costs and benefits of multiculture (multiculturalisation), this phenomenon is happening because we [Korea] have become a member of advanced nation-states in the world. So it needs to be seen as an opportunity to better ourselves. (Yi 2010, 10)

This extract is taken from a prologue to a book written by a government official who has handled multicultural family policy-making and policy implementation in the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. As can be seen here, ‘multiculturalisation’ is celebrated as a badge that only advanced countries can wear. As such, ‘multiculture’ indicates the ‘evolution’ of Korea, something Koreans must feel proud of. Despite its potential costs (or rather, because of these costs), the author insists that Koreans need to be more tolerant of migrants and open to multiculturalisation, precisely in order to minimise incurring costs and maximise benefits. In this sense, the catchy title of the book, ‘multicultural code (Kor. *tamunhwa code*¹⁶²)’ is telling. On the one hand, a ‘code’ can mean a secret language which needs deciphering. That is, the true meaning of ‘multiculture’ which is unfamiliar to *us* (Koreans) needs to be unravelled. And once it is deciphered, it becomes valuable. On the other hand, a ‘code’ can also mean ‘a conventionalised set of principles, rules, or expectations’¹⁶³. Indeed, in line with this latter sense, the

¹⁶² Here, ‘code’ is written in English because in Korean, it is also written down as 코드 (Romanized Korean: *kodu*), following the way it sounds in English.

¹⁶³ From *Collins online dictionary*.

English word ‘code’ is often used without translation in contemporary Korea in the sense of ‘ideological disposition’. For example, one of the most widely used phrases, ‘share the same code’ implies that two or more people share similar dispositions about many things, i.e. they ‘speak the same language’. In this sense, what can be extrapolated from this coining of the phrase, ‘multicultural code’ is that ‘multiculturalism’ is proposed as a desirable social ethos which *we* as Koreans all need to share. What I focus on in this chapter is the contention that the vindication of this ‘multicultural ethos’ is imbued with neoliberal and nationalist rationality. As discussed in Chapter three, neoliberal globalisation has not necessarily led to the weakening of nationalism in Korea. Rather, it is correct to say that the modalities of nationalism have been transformed in the process of neoliberalisation. Elaborating on such dynamics of neoliberal nationalism, I will examine the ways in which multicultural discourses are devised as part of a governing technology that seeks to construct neoliberal national citizen-subjects.

6.1.1. Neoliberal development in South Korea

Before undertaking an investigation of how multiculturalism is subsumed under the project of constructing neoliberal national citizen-subjects, the ways in which I interpret neoliberalism and the specificities of neoliberalisation in the Korean context need to be explained. Put simply, the essence of neoliberal thinking and its political economic practices lies in the premise that ‘individual freedoms are guaranteed by freedom of the market and of trade’ (Harvey 2005, 7). And the history of neoliberalism is considered to begin with a shift towards post-Fordist and post-

Keynesian frameworks through which the renewal of international capitalism has been implemented (*ibid.*). While it is hard to question the fact that neoliberalism is a ‘global’ project centred on the reinvention of the political economic system, as well as social and cultural life, we also need to bear in mind that the application and articulation of neoliberalism are different in different societies. In this vein, I agree with Ong’s (2007) view on neoliberalism as ‘a migratory set of practices’ (p. 4), i.e. ‘a logic of governing that migrates and is selectively taken up in diverse political contexts’ (p. 3). In looking at the Asian milieus of neoliberal development, she emphasises:

[T]he very conditions associated with the neoliberal – extreme dynamism, mobility of practice, responsiveness to contingencies and strategic entanglements with politics – require a nuanced approach, not the blunt instrument of broad categories and predetermined elements and outcomes. (Ong 2007, 3)

Thus, rather than simplifying neoliberalism as a totalising/totalised system with predetermined consequences (in Ong’s metaphor, an ‘economic tsunami’), I aim to address the particular articulations of neoliberalism from this more nuanced perspective, especially with respect to its coupling with other ideologies in Korea.

Beyond economy

[N]eo-liberalism is not simply a set of economic policies; it is not only about facilitating free trade, maximizing corporate profits, and challenging welfarism. Rather, neo-liberalism carries a social analysis which, when deployed as a form of governmentality, reaches from the soul of the citizen-subject to education policy to practices of empire. Neo-liberal rationality, while foregrounding the market, is not only or even primarily focused on the economy; rather it involves *extending and*

disseminating market values to all institutions and social action, even as the market itself remains a distinctive player. (Brown 2005, 39-40, emphasis in original)

Seen from this perspective, neoliberalism indeed is a ‘constructivist project’ (*ibid.*), not an already finalised system. And it does not certainly limit its power as a governing ideology within the terrain of economic development. The process of restructuring capital prompts the need to restructure labouring subjects and seeks to gain consensus on the reorganisation of economic, social and personal life by making subjects *voluntarily* engage in this process. In this sense, the widely circulating leftist rhetoric that neoliberalism is a repressive reality runs a risk of misconstruing and over-simplifying neoliberal rationality as if it were imposed against the will of the people.

As noted earlier in Chapter three, the neoliberalisation of Korean society has rapidly accelerated since the Asian financial crisis in 1997. Mass layoffs and casualisation of work were immediate effects of a series of neoliberal economic reforms, which were implemented by the state in accordance with the demands of international financial organisations such as the IMF (cf. Shin 2011). In order to deal with inevitable social unrest and instability that such radical restructuring created, the Korean state needed to adopt a minimal welfare system (which was indeed unprecedented)¹⁶⁴ and at the same time, to mobilise the population to adapt themselves to this new mode of living. As Seo (2009)¹⁶⁵ perceptively pinpoints in his work, which examines the new

¹⁶⁴ Contrary to the neoliberal dismantling of welfare state in many Western developed states, in Korea, the state’s involvement in welfare programmes first started as a response to such neoliberal reforms in the historical absence of a ‘classical liberal welfare regime’ (Song 2009, 1).

¹⁶⁵ A short version of this book is available in English as a book chapter: Seo, Dongjin (2011) "The will to self-managing, the will to freedom: the self-managing ethic and the spirit of flexible capitalism

science of self-management by analysing companies' various techniques of human resources management and self-help literature, the discursive proliferation of 'self-management' and 'self-empowerment' after the crisis has produced entrepreneurial, self-sufficient subjects who actively participate in the process of neoliberalisation by *their own free will*.

However, these self-managing individuals are not cold-hearted, egoistic 'economic animals' who are only interested in self-improvement based on cost-benefit calculations and profit-maximisation. In this sense, the idea that neoliberal subjects are an amoral, asocial, and dispassionate individual is misleading. On the contrary, the neoliberal promotion of an entrepreneurial citizen cannot be understood separately from its emphasis on the affective subject. In this vein, Vrasti (2011) argues:

This shift in production [post-Fordist capitalism] is accompanied by a shift at the level of political subjectivity: today's "new entrepreneur" has to complement economic rationality with emotive dispositions and social competencies that were once ornamental, adverse even to capitalism [...] flexible accumulation requires new political animals, such as the social entrepreneur, the creative worker, the frugal consumer, and the volunteer tourist – actors who use corporate social responsibility, continuing education, ethical consumption or charitable contributions to lend capitalism a "human face." (Vrasti 2011, clarification in parenthesis added)

Thus, what is distinctive in neoliberal rationality is not that it hollows out our soul, but that it requires us to become a 'caring' individual. In this sense, the contemporary multicultural discourse of tolerance in Korea takes no conflicting

in South Korea." In *New Millennium South Korea: Neoliberal Capitalism and Transnational Movements*, edited by Jesook Song, New York: Routledge.

position to neoliberal subjects. Rather, the celebration of diversity and tolerance can be seen as part of *neoliberal governing through affect* as will be elaborated later in section 6.1.2.

Neoliberal co-option of outcries for freedom and democracy

What Brown (2005, 46) calls the ‘Janus-potential of liberal democracy vis-à-vis a capitalist economy’ is revealing in the convergence of liberal aspirations for democracy and neoliberalisation in the Korean context. This is particularly so because in Korea, the actual political system of liberal democracy was established concurrently with the development of a neoliberal society, quickly closing the ‘modest ethical gap between polity and economy’ which the traditional model of liberal democracy is supposed to maintain (*ibid.*).

In 1987, the democratisation movement (Kor. *minjuhwa undong*) culminated in historic mass protests against the state’s political oppression and finally ended the three-decade-long military dictatorship that had lasted since 1961. While the constitution of electoral democracy was obtained as a result of this movement, the liberal ethos of freedom and equality rapidly began to be co-opted by the transformation of political economy and the state – from the authoritarian developmental state to a neoliberal regime of accumulation. And indeed, liberal democratic values once advocated by oppositional politics have been transmuted into a neoliberal ethos. Hence, what was achieved at the end of the long standing authoritarian regime is indeed ‘neoliberal democracy’ (Chomsky 1998). One of the most politically symbolic events of such neoliberal democracy was Kim Dae Jung’s

presidential victory and successive neoliberal reforms, during his government (1998–2003) (Jang 2011, 47). As an eminent anti-authoritarian opposition leader of the past, Kim's victory was interpreted as a victory of liberal democracy, a victory of people over conservative forces that were political descendants of past authoritarian governments. Thus, it may sound paradoxical that under his government, the polarisation of Korean society was aggravated to an unprecedented level – for example, as seen by the fact that the Gini index (a measure of income inequality) hit a historic high during this period – in conjunction with soaring unemployment and a rise in the poverty rate (Sonn 2006, 208). However, according to Jang (2011, 49), his image as a guardian of democracy and his past antagonistic relationship with Korea's *Chaebol* (family-owned and managed conglomerates) worked successfully to gain public consensus for neoliberal reforms such as the ‘inducement of foreign capital’ by representing them as conducive to a more accountable and democratic system. Jang (2011) notes:

[R]reforms representing a radical departure from the historical past were construed as part and parcel of democracy in post-crisis Korea. Democratic claims made by the new ruling group in turn legitimized neoliberal reforms, thus mitigating public resistance, which might have been massive. (Jang 2011, 49)

Under this radical change, neoliberal self-managing individuals were discursively constructed as the bearers of this democratic ideal who would pave a new way forward for the nation, after having dismantled the nation's authoritarian past. As such, neoliberal democracy framed collective political actions against neoliberalisation as anti-liberal, anti-democratic forces that would bind Korea to the past. To recapitulate, as the discourse of the ‘knowledge-based economy’ gained

hegemony and became almost unchallengeable in this neoliberal sea change, the state recognised its citizens as ‘human resources’ and concomitantly, produced policies and discourses with the aim of forging competitive, creative and self-serving citizen-subjects (Seo 2009). As such, the liberal democratic project, which aspired to free individuals from the subjection of the state and from the authoritarian disciplinary society, was sutured to a neoliberal ethos (*ibid.*). Indeed, as will be analysed later in detail, the state’s investment in the production of such neoliberal subjectivity is an important rationale that underpins contemporary multicultural discourses.

The intersection of nationalism and neoliberalism

Contrary to the simplistic diagnosis of the effacing of the nation-state under complete market domination (cf. Ohmae 1995) and the rhetorical opposition between the global and the national, nations have nevertheless remained functioning as ‘economic, cultural territorial or governmental entities, sites of action, or objects of attachment’ (Clarke 2010, 384). This is particularly the case in Korea where the historical developmental state was not totally displaced under the dominance of global capital, but was reconfigured in neoliberal terms by changing its modes of intervention. From this perspective, some commentators name this specific mode of neoliberalisation in Korea as ‘developmental neoliberalism (or developmental neoliberalisation)’ (e.g. Choi 2007; Yoon 2009). For example, Yoon (2009, 55) argues that the Korean case of neoliberalisation is deeply intertwined with developmentalism, as evidenced by the fact that the state has implemented neoliberal policies not only to maximise market efficiency but also to achieve Korea’s global

competitiveness by setting up strongly developmentalist goals such as ‘economic growth’, ‘export promotion’, and ‘catching-up’. Particularly considering that neoliberalisation accelerated in Korea during the period of ‘national crisis’ with the implementation of the IMF doctrine, the state – a powerful political agent for neoliberalisation – has constantly presented neoliberal economic reforms, and concomitant needs to change the modes of life accordingly, as a *national* priority to survive. Indeed, as Clarke writes, while the crisis is understood as ‘global’ in its ‘scale, scope and even causes’, ‘the effects of, and responses to it, have been primarily defined in national terms’ (Clarke 2010, 387).

Seen from this perspective, nationalism, which is often considered as an obstacle to neoliberal globalisation or rhetorically discredited as archaic by neoliberal advocates, is in fact effectively imbricated in the process of neoliberalisation. In this sense, the 1997 crisis played an important role in reasserting the social Darwinist formulation of Korean nationalism and posing neoliberal imperatives as the only alternative for national survival. By all means, I am not arguing that such a nationalist appropriation of neoliberalism is the only mode of nationalist mobilisation with respect to neoliberal globalisation. There are various articulations of nationalisms in relation to neoliberalism. Relatively common are the framings of nationalism as counter-globalisation responses (whether it is conceived as a progressive political alternative against neoliberal institutions and government, or illiberal mobilisations of ethnic nationalism). Yet it is often forgotten that neoliberalism, a truly cost-effective logic in *its own practice*, does flexibly appropriate other ideologies such as nationalism, which may seem to contradict its own theoretical assumption and, as such, is also ‘selectively taken up in diverse political contexts’ (Ong 2007, 3). Thus, it is

important to heed the intersection of nationalism and neoliberalism rather than to presuppose their antagonistic dynamics. From this point of view, the binary division between multiculturalists and anti-multiculturalists as that of multiculturalists versus extreme nationalists (or racists in a more morally flawed sense) can be indeed misleading, since it neglects the interplay between multiculturalism and the construction of neoliberal national subjects. As already indicated, the ideal citizen-subject under neoliberal governmentality is not an atomic, free-floating (nationally-unbound) individual but a self-managing subject who also serves Korea's global advancement – i.e. neoliberal national subjects. In the following section, the ways in which contemporary multicultural discourses intersect with the construction of neoliberal national subjects will be closely looked at.

6.1.2. ‘Multiculture’ for neoliberal renewal of the self

Freedom from military dictatorship and an authoritarian disciplinary society in the late 1980s certainly liberated individuals from the subjugation of the state to a certain extent. Yet, this liberation is paradoxically reduced to and essentialised as ‘freedom to participate in the market’ in the context of neoliberalisation, as noted earlier in the concomitance of democratisation and neoliberalisation. Individuals are no longer told what to do by the state but are obliged to constantly pay attention to what the market wants (and will want) and develop themselves accordingly. Conformity, once a fundamental principle to be a good citizen in Korea, started to be seen as antithetical to self and organisational development in the ever-changing market. Creativity becomes valued over conformity, and entrepreneurial spirit over complacency. Even before the term ‘multiculture (/multicultural) started to circulate

in relation to the phenomenon of contemporary migration, ‘diversity’ became a key buzzword of the twenty-first century, particularly in the milieu of business management. And these two terms are often used interchangeably. For example, the ways in which ‘diversity’ is seen in the managerial context are illustrated well in *Manpower as competitiveness, in the age of change* (Sung et al. 2004), a report published in 2004 by the *Samsung Economic Research Institute* (SERI) – one of the most influential think-tanks in Korea. Including ‘diversity management’ as one of seven global trends in human resource management, this report emphasises diversity management as an important means for companies to achieve global competitiveness. Interestingly, the report classifies three stages of conceiving diversity and explains these stages in an evolutionary manner. In the first stage, companies recruit a diverse workforce in order not to expose themselves to liability for discriminatory hiring practices. The second stage deploys diversity as part and parcel of market expansion strategy. And lastly, diversity comes to be understood as an educational tool for improving organisational culture, given that learning about/through differences stimulates creativity. According to this formulation, companies in the third stage best utilise ‘diversity’ by creating a profitable culture (*ibid.*, 10). As can be seen here, diversity is instrumentalised, ultimately for capitalist profit. Furthermore, the cultural impacts of diversity become central to this process of instrumentalisation, while the rhetorical collapse between creativity and diversity is produced.

As explained in previous chapters, multicultural discourses in Korea started to proliferate in the mid-2000 narrowly as a means to address (female) marriage migrants and their children and to help them integrate into Korean society.

Accordingly, multicultural policies, at best, perceived this group as a helpless minority, or at worst, framed them as a (potential) source of familial, social problems. As criticisms of such a negative approach mounted, the state's multicultural programmes and rhetoric seemed to take a different turn in the late 2000s. A representative case is the promotion of bilingual education. In 2009, the Ministry of Education (then, Ministry of Education and Science Technology) implemented policy to train bilingual teachers to cater to the needs of multicultural students (H-R Kim 2011). The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, in 2011, also launched a bilingual education programme for multicultural children and delivered it through *Multicultural Family Support Centres* (*ibid.*). This policy interest in bilingual education should not be merely understood as a policy shift towards 'multiculturalism proper' (see Chapter one), i.e. an effort to truly live up to the policy label. In other words, the launching of bilingual programmes does not simply imply the weakening of the assimilationist nature of Korea's multicultural policies (that were typified by their assimilationist focus on Korean language and culture education). Instead, I suggest that we pay heed to the rationales and rhetorics of such promotion of bilingual education. Minority language rights are typically conceived as an essential element of cultural rights in liberal multicultural theory (cf. Kymlicka 1995). Yet the rationale for bilingual programmes in Korea's multicultural policies does not seem to subscribe to this viewpoint. Rather, in relation to the distinctive composition of the 'multicultural family' (which presupposes a family made of a female migrant, a Korean male and their children), the rationale is predicated on the concerns for foreign mothers' incompetence in Korean, which is believed to result in their incapacity of childrearing, and concurrently the relatively low-level of cognitive, emotional, and linguistic competency shown in children of

multicultural families (cf. Jin et al. 2010 [Ministry of Gender Equality & Family document]).

This logic in fact is not much different from the rationale for Korean language education provided for (female) marriage migrants, particularly in a sense that both rationales problematise their learning abilities and locate the cause of the problem in the lack (/difficulties) of communication between female marriage migrants and their children (KIHF 2013). In this sense, such rationales precisely reflect the gendered nature of multicultural policies that place the responsibility for child development disproportionately on mothers. Working alongside these concerns for ‘multicultural children’ is the framing of these children as globally competitive human resources. Indeed, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family states its aim for the bilingual educational policy programme, *Class for linguistically gifted children*, as follows:

To teach marriage migrants’ languages and cultures to their children in order to support them to become globally competitive individuals with multicultural sensitivity (MGEF 2013)

Here, (potential) bilingual ability is framed as the prerogative of these ‘multicultural children’ in the context of globalisation. While ‘multiculture’ is presumed to be almost the bodily nature of these mixed-race children, this *multicultural nature* is no longer just considered as a deficiency but increasingly framed as an asset. This positive turn in policy rhetoric is also found in the Ministry of Education’s¹⁶⁶ *Global Bridge Project*. As part of its 2011 *Multicultural Students Support Plan*, the Ministry of Education introduced the *Global Bridge Project* in order to ‘help multicultural

¹⁶⁶ the then, Ministry of Education and Science Technology (2008 – Feb. 2012)

students develop global competencies by teaching them about their parents' home countries and enhancing their leadership skills' (ME 2011, 4). Under this rhetorical guise of 'global competence', this project promotes four subject areas as its key programmes – math/science, language, arts and sports, and leadership (ME 2012, 13). In practice, the Ministry puts this project out to tender and appoints several colleges/universities (e.g. seven nationwide in 2012) as service providers for each subject. These universities, then, recruit talented multicultural students in their respective regions and offer them educational programmes that cover at least 100 hours per year. The project, and particularly the labelling of *global bridge*, reveals a 'new enthusiasm around migrants as development agents', in the age of neoliberal globalisation (Faist 2009, 174). Yet it is not difficult to figure that there is a substantial gap between such rhetoric and actual possibilities for these children to become 'global leaders', particularly considering the structural reality which constitutes them as second-class citizens. According to the statistics reported by the Ministry of Education in 2009, only 59.6 per cent of 'multicultural children' between the age of seven and eighteen were enrolled in the Korean school system (cited in B-H Chung et al. 2011, 178). Such poor access to education seems not only related to their parents' precarious immigration status and low income level¹⁶⁷ (among many other possible factors) but also has the potential to develop into a poverty trap (*ibid.*, 275) This reality indeed shows stark contrast with the overly celebratory rhetoric of the aforementioned programmes.

¹⁶⁷ In 2005, 52.6 per cent of female marriage migrants' households earned less than the minimum cost of living (Seol et al. 2005, 162).

Nonetheless, this rhetorical collapse between *the global* and *the multicultural* is effectively performed in making multiculturalism also relevant to native Koreans and, by extension, Korea as a nation. As an overall policy framework for education, the Ministry of Education's plan for creativity and character education,¹⁶⁸ *Developing Talent, Creative and Caring Individuals* (ME, 2009) epitomises educational values in the age of neoliberal globalisation. The report explains its rationales as follows:

The fundamental purpose of education is to **prepare citizens for the future**. The state is obliged to prepare its young citizens for the opportunities and challenges they will face in the future. In order to make them survive in a knowledge-based, globalised and pluralistic society, education should **not cram their head with knowledge** but aim to **discover their talent, bring out their potential and nurture it**. For this, education should focus on **creativity** and **character development**. Through such education, one should be able to discover one's talent and develop desirable values in order to contribute to the development of one's own family, community, nation and the world. In the past, human resource development in Korea was **limited to creating by imitating**. But future growth depends on our ability to produce **creative human resources**. Only creative talent can make our nation more competitive. Companies, the final consumers of human resources, also need **experts who are both creative and morally competent** [...] Diversity awareness and compliance with common rules are also important **social capital** since such character development of citizens is necessary for our country to enhance national competitiveness and join the group of advanced nation-states. Hence, producing creative and caring individuals is not simply a matter of making education more desirable. It is a **national and individual imperative to survive** in the future. (ME 2009, 1, emphasis in original)

¹⁶⁸ It is called *Ch'angūl Insōng Kyoyuk Kibon Pangan* in Korean. While *Ch'angūl* means creativity, *Insōng* is tricky to translate into English. Some may translate it as humanity, personality or morality. I translate it as *character* in the sense of moral and character development.

This text is tremendously rich for exploring the neoliberal narrative of human resources in education, the neoliberal emphasis on creative and caring citizens, and also a social Darwinist frame in which individual development is entwined with national renewal. The following analysis particularly focuses on the ways in which ‘multiculture’ is included in the *skill set* for the production of creative and caring individuals.

Let me first illustrate *the conjoining of creativity and ‘multiculture’*. As mentioned earlier, when ‘multiculture’ is discursively formulated in relation to its usefulness for native Koreans, or in the context of national/regional/organisational development, ‘multiculture’ is no longer merely conceived as a racialised appellation for migrants; also, the semantic distance between ‘diversity’ and ‘multiculture’ almost disappears. For example, ‘multiculture’ is promoted as a ‘creative capital’ of the city in conjunction with the proliferation of discourses of place branding. This trend has been influenced by Richard Florida’s (2002) idea of the creative class and its role in urban development, which has rapidly gained traction in Korea (cf. La et al. 2008; Song and Kang 2010; Yi 2010). Wongok-dong, Ansan – an industrial town, southwest of Seoul, with a high concentration of migrant workers – is a good example to show how diversity is narrated and practiced as a tool for city branding. It was known as the ‘borderless village’ whose name had originated from the *Borderless Village movement* led by migrant rights NGOs (Oh 2010, 39). This multicultural community-building project was originally conceived in the mid-1990s, as a regional response advocating for alternative globalisation – a social movement that opposes the negative effects of neoliberal economic globalisation but supports the global movement and interaction of people – among Ansan-based

activists (Oh and Jung 2006, 74). Subsequently, it included various agendas such as ‘the protection of migrant workers’ labour rights, the recognition of migrants’ cultures, the promotion of interaction among different groups, mutual trust and community cohesion, and the achievement of multicultural citizenship’ (*ibid.*; Park 2006).

Paradoxically, this idea of creating an alternative form of community seems to have been rather pushed aside as the town gained more public attention. Indeed, both the municipal and central government has increasingly recognised the town’s iconic value as a symbol of multiculturalism. Since the area was designated as ‘the Ansan multicultural village special zone’ by the then Ministry of Knowledge Economy¹⁶⁹ in 2009, the town centre – particularly the high street, which is called ‘multicultural street’ – has been gentrified; the number of governmental or state-sponsored organisations for migrant supports/multicultural development has increased; and the town has attracted visitors by selling its multicultural brands: ethnic foods, festivals and various cultural programmes (Oh 2010). Indeed, the municipal government self-proclaims its ‘multicultural city’ branding strategy to have been successful (*ibid.*). Choi and Choi’s (2012) ethnographic study of Ansan’s multicultural streets, in which they adopted the fleeting and voyeuristic gaze of the tourist, shows compellingly the ways in which this town is perceived and consumed as a space where native Koreans pay a visit to discover ‘exotic others’. As such, the town’s multicultural brand represents the trend of ‘commercial multiculturalism’ that ‘sells exotic, primitive ethnicities’ in order to boost the local economy (*ibid.*, 36).

¹⁶⁹ At present, the Ministry of Trade, Economy and Energy

What deserves attention is that this commercialisation of multiculturalism often goes hand in hand with a more genuine effort to enhance mutual understanding by making multiculturalism not only about ‘them’ (migrants) but also about ‘us’ (native Koreans). In this vein, it is telling that many multicultural programmes that aim to increase ‘multicultural awareness’ among the majority put stress on cultural ‘experience’ while often having titles such as *visiting the multicultural scene*, *learning through experience* (Kor. *tamunhwa hyōnjang ch'ehōm*).¹⁷⁰ Considering that *ch'ehōm* in Korean connotes ‘bodily experience’, the rhetorical essence of these programmes can be encapsulated as *bodily experience of different cultures*. Indeed, the aforementioned Borderless Village project has also been involved in such educational programmes by developing various cultural activities under the label of *multicultural experience class* (Kor. *tamunhwa ch'ehōm kyosil*). One of my interviewees who had in the past participated in designing and delivering these programmes in Ansan states:

I don't see much sense in simply lecturing [Korean] students about migrants' cultures, you know, theories and all that. *Multiculture is part of culture*, which means that *it needs to be experienced* [...] The courses which I provided are about developing *multicultural creativity*. It's about bringing cultural, participatory, and creative dimensions to multicultural learning. It's not merely about imitating what's been taught. For instance, there is a craft course taught by migrant women. First, these women introduce students to their traditional crafts and show them how to make it. Then, students re-interpret these products from their own perspectives and re-create these. By doing so, they not only learn about different cultural traditions

¹⁷⁰ Of course, there are many different variations of titles for such programmes. Yet what I emphasise here is that they most often include terms such as *(multi-)cultural experience* (Kor. *(ta-)munhwa ch'ehōm*).

but also enhance their creativity. (IS, a pastor who worked for a migrant support centre in Ansan, emphasis added)¹⁷¹

In relation to this comment, IS later summarises the ways in which he conceives multiculturalism as follows:

Korean multiculturalism should be about fusion. Actually, we have a long history of fusing cultures [...] You know, in a way, they [migrants] are here because we [Koreans] need them. We should fuse these different cultures and *create a new culture, Pibimpap*¹⁷² culture. So in the end, we don't need the term multiculturalism or multicultural coexistence. The point is to create a new culture. What we need is *multicultural creativity*. It's a *change for the future*. (IS, emphasis added)

Despite his well-meaning intention to increase mutual understanding in a more inter/trans-cultural sense, it seems that 'multiculture' is still objectified as something inherent to migrants' bodies/cultures. What makes this emphasis on 'multicultural creativity' all the more striking is the idea that 'multiculture' is hardly of use if it is not 'experienced' by *us* [Koreans]. Thus, underpinning this position is the logic that by *experiencing* their [migrants'] cultures through our [Koreans'] bodies – for example, by seeing and touching their cultural artefacts, listening to their music, tasting their foods, and playing with them – *we* [Koreans] become capable of creating something new, something better than migrants' original cultures. Indeed, multiculture seems to be deemed as a 'positive resource that stimulates creativity in our society' (Ko 2013).

¹⁷¹ Interview conducted on 18/01/2012

¹⁷² *Pibimpap* is a Korean dish. Literal translation is mixed rice. It is warm rice topped with sautéed and seasoned vegetables, an egg, sliced beef and chilli pepper paste. All the ingredients are stirred together thoroughly before eating.

Let me now elaborate the *conjoining of global citizenship and ‘multiculture’*, though this is inextricably interwoven with the aforementioned coupling of creativity and multiculture with respect to moulding the new national citizen in neoliberal times. As mentioned earlier, neoliberal subjectivity does not totally dispense with the ethic of giving and caring. Rather what is noticeable is the neoliberal *reconfiguration* of socio-moral concerns and considerations: the concurrent ‘moralization of economic action’ and ‘economization of the political’ (Shamir 2008, 1). Seen from this perspective, the explosion of ‘multiculture’ as a popular theme for corporate social responsibility activity¹⁷³ and individual/organisational voluntary work reveals that ‘multiculture’ (particularly ‘multicultural people’, i.e. migrants) has indeed become a new field for the accumulation of moral capital. By framing such charitable giving and volunteering as the process of accumulating moral capital, I, by no means, crudely assume that all socio-moral considerations and actions are destined to be subsumed under economic rationality, nor would I suggest that these actions are not in fact moral because of their economic calculations. Rather, I intend to highlight how these practices are intertwined with the discursive formation of multiculturalism, which identifies ‘multiculture’ as a form of cultural capital. In so doing, I seek to illuminate how the coupling of multiculture and self-development reproduces the positioning of self and Other.

For this, it is worth taking a close look at the national promotion of multiculture within the framework of *global citizenship*. For example, the *Presidential Council on*

¹⁷³ For example, *LG Corporation* in cooperation with *Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Centre for Multicultural Education* runs bilingual education and global citizenship programmes for ‘multicultural children’, under the overarching title of ‘Multicultural school full of love (Kor. *Salang-ŭi Tamunhwak Hakkyo*)’ (see <http://hufslanglg.org/index.html>, accessed 6 May 2013).

Nation Branding (PCNB), established in 2009 with the aim of reinforcing Korea's brand power in the world, states 'cultivating global citizenship' and 'promoting multicultural inclusion' as two of its five core strategies (C-P Yang 2011). In this vein, in 2010, when Korea held the G20 global summit, the PCNB launched a campaign for practicing global etiquette in collaboration with other governmental/non-governmental organisations and private companies. *Maeil Economic Daily* (Kor. *Maeil Kyōngje*), a leading business paper in Korea that also participated in this campaign, wrote:

Last year, our economic performance surprised the world. When the crisis seemed to loom large in early 2009, Korea's 2009 growth prospect was estimated at minus four per cent by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Against expectations, we achieved positive growth levels [...] We are recovering faster than any other OECD country. Yet, the level of our civic awareness is exactly the opposite. The national brand index which the *Presidential Council on Nation Branding* (PCNB) and the *Samsung Economic Research Institute* (SERI) co-developed shows that Korea's civic awareness scored twenty seventh among thirty OECD countries. In 2010, the year we hold the G20 global summit, Korea should be reborn as a 'proper advanced country' by cultivating global citizenship. (Chōng et al. 2010a, my translation)

Indeed, this type of rhetoric that employs the tactic of naming and shaming, is typical in such campaigns for global citizenship. Here, the lack of civic awareness in Korea, in contrast to its fast economic development, is problematised as an obstacle for Korea's further development i.e. for becoming a 'proper advanced country'. In this vein, the recognition of 'socio-cultural diversity' is pursued as one of the main strategies for the development of global citizenship (Chōng et al. 2010b). Building on examples of widespread preference for white over other darker-skinned foreigners, and comparing this with other 'more' multicultural countries, this article

from the *Maeil Economic Daily* claims that ‘if Korea cannot embrace differences in the global age, we will always remain a second-class country’ (*ibid.*). Seen from this perspective, the existence of migrants is a valuable resource to capitalise on, for Koreans’ moral growth. As such, multiculturalism, presumably embodied by the very existence of migrants within the nation, is transformed into native Koreans’ cultural capital, elevating the nation’s brand value externally. The rhetorical framing of multiculturalism as the ethics of self development in a global age is also performed by grassroots migrant rights activists. One interviewee told a personal anecdote while bemoaning a general lack of awareness about racial/cultural diversity in Korea.

One day, I brought a couple of multicultural students to help them enrol. You know, the deputy head asked them which country they came from. All of them were born in Korea. They are Korean! Other teachers also kept asking the same question to them. They eventually burst into tears. Teachers asked this just because they [students] looked different. Of course, I know that they [teachers] had no malicious motive. They are just *ignorant*. They don’t know such questions could hurt children. And they don’t know about *global etiquette*. (SH, a pastor who works for migrant rights, emphasis added)¹⁷⁴

Although the interviewee expressed genuine concern about the everyday racial discrimination that these children faced, he explained that such discriminatory behaviours stem from *ignorance of global etiquette*. Not only is everyday racism downplayed as a lack of good manners, but also it comes to signify ‘our collective failure to live up to global moral standards’. In this sense, the yearning for social progress, which questions economic growth-oriented development, can easily be incorporated into the aforementioned imperative of national renewal under neoliberal

¹⁷⁴ Interview conducted on 21/02/2012

globalisation. This is particularly because the ethics of self development ultimately justifies the presence of others, on the premise that others will contribute to the growth of the self, while constantly invoking the distinction of the self and others.

To recapitulate, the positive turn in multicultural rhetoric narrativises multiculture as a source of native Koreans' cultural and moral experience, through which they can renew themselves as both cool-spirited and warm-hearted neoliberal subjects. In this construction of citizen-subjects, the celebratory discourse of multiculturalism is moulded by a social Darwinist precept that subsumes multicultural creativity and ethics, as a means to increase Korea's global competitiveness in the age of neoliberal globalisation.

6.2. Anti-multiculturalists: the ‘unfit’ in the new game of ‘the survival of the fittest’?

The neoliberal justification for adopting multiculturalism as part and parcel of a national renewal project is not without contesters. As mentioned in previous chapters, recent years have witnessed the rise of anti-multiculturalists¹⁷⁵ and their political activities both on- and offline. The group of people who identify themselves as anti-multiculturalists has not as of yet received adequate scholarly attention, mainly because the scale or the political power of this group has been considered insignificant. It is true that such development of anti-immigrant and anti-

¹⁷⁵ All my interviewees who self-identify as anti-multiculturalists were male. Moreover, there was no woman in their offline meeting, which I attended to observe. Indeed, it seems that the anti-immigration activism is male-dominated, although anti-multiculturalists themselves do not want to admit the absence of female participation. When I asked about the male-female ratio among active members, all the representatives of groups seemed to avoid the question by saying that there are many women who share our thoughts but they do not participate actively in offline activities.

multicultural right wing activism is relatively new and politically less influential in Korea compared to that of Western countries. For example, anti-multicultural groups in Korea do not have the organisational form or capacity of groups such as the EDL (English Defence League), or the BNP (British National Party) in the UK. Furthermore, as analysed in Chapter four, their thoughts and actions are not considered to be (by themselves and also by the media and multiculturalists), as extreme as that of fascist or racist right wing movements in other countries. Even when they are considered as extreme and irrational, they are dismissed as a small fraction of uncivilised political lunatics who have nothing to do with the majority of Koreans. However, it is undeniable that they do actively participate in the discursive space of multiculturalism by criticising the state's multicultural policies and developing counter-arguments. The fact that the influence and intensity of their activities are relatively less extreme than similar groups elsewhere does not make an analysis of their rhetoric and rationales unimportant. Rather, their rhetoric is worth investigating in that it shares more similarities with that of multiculturalists than one would normally think. I will get back to this point in the following section. When the mainstream media deploys the aforementioned celebratory multicultural rhetoric by using typical naming and shaming tactics, these anti-multicultural groups are addressed to point out that ugly xenophobia exists. Indeed, as mentioned in Chapter four, having been often singled out as racists (within Korean society where the term 'race'/racism is barely used), these anti-multiculturalists were disregarded as ignorant individuals by the majority of my interviewees (particularly migrant right activists and media people among my interviewees). Interestingly, interviewees who work for government agencies (particularly senior government officials and assistants to MPs) were more careful (and reluctant) in pigeonholing anti-

multiculturalists as racists, possibly because of their status as public servants. They tried to present themselves as open to every single different opinion of the entire population, so as not to look biased. Indeed, instead of condemning anti-multiculturalists as racists, some of my interviewees interpreted the rise of anti-multiculturalists as a warning for future tensions. They believed that a review of past multicultural policies was necessary because they thought them to be somewhat one-sidedly oriented – simply helping out migrants instead of strengthening social cohesion in a broader sense. However, although the emerging phenomenon of anti-multiculturalism was taken more seriously by some than others, anti-multiculturalists themselves were generally viewed as ‘ignorant’, ‘under-educated’ working class people. In order to contest this simplistic explanation, which concomitantly conceals racism by limiting its significance, this section examines the ways in which anti-multiculturalists identify themselves as a group marginalised by the neoliberal state and alienated from their own nation. By analysing their rationales and rhetoric, I seek to provide a better understanding of the modality of racialised nationalism.

Among five respondents whom I had in-depth interviews with, one ran a small-sized pub (male in his 30s), one studied for a civil servant exam (male in his late 20s) and three of them ran their own small business (males in their 50s–60s) at the time of the interview. Although I had obtained information about their current jobs and incomes, it was not my intention to gather generalisable demographic data. Not only is the sample size too small to gain any meaningful statistics, but moreover the reliability of the data is not guaranteed, considering the fact that some of them were quite reluctant to clearly state their economic status, especially in monetary terms. (This in fact can be understood as an emotional reaction stemming from their own economic

insecurity and efforts to hide it.) Thus, I rather focused on the ways in which they expressed their anxiety within their personal narratives. In other words, I do not aim to provide statistical facts and then classify them into certain socio-economic groups, but to reveal how they ‘perceive’ their socio-economic instability, how they express their concerns and whom they position themselves against. Though it is hard to generalise their socio-economic status in quantitative terms, all my interviewees who belong to anti-multicultural groups did not ‘identify themselves as economically well-off’ by telling stories of how they – but more often, people close to them – underwent hardships in their life. One interviewee, who at the time was in his 30s and ran a small pub, explained his motivation in getting involved in the anti-multicultural agenda by telling his brother’s story.

My elder brother majored in agriculture in college. However, after having lost hope in the future of Korea’s farming industry, he came to Seoul to get a job. But it was impossible for him to get a decent job in ordinary companies because he got a degree in agriculture. He decided to apply for a job at the Korea Rural Community Corporation (KRC) and started to study for the exam. But you know, these days, it’s really difficult to get a good score in such exams for government agencies. These days, it’s really competitive to get a job in the public sector. Ha ha ha... So he kept failing. In the meantime, he *ran nogada*.¹⁷⁶ He was put to lay bricks and got paid 50 KRW [approx. 3 pence] for one brick. But as soon as *tongp'o* [in this context, he meant Korean Chinese] and foreign workers came to work there, they started to get paid 45 KRW per brick. So Korean workers were also forced to cut their pay down to 45 KRW. Then foreigners started to get only 40 KRW. You know what I mean? They pushed the wage down endlessly. In 1996, I also worked at a construction site to make some pocket money from time to time. And I got paid 55 thousand KRW [approx. 31 pounds] per day at that time. Now I can get about 70 thousand KW

¹⁷⁶ It means that he worked at a construction site. *Nogada* is a modified Korean version of the Japanese word, *dokata*, which means a construction worker or manual labourer. Though it is not standard Korean, this expression is used widely in everyday conversation when indicating physically demanding jobs in a demeaning manner.

[approx. 39 pounds] a day. Considering inflation and all that, real wages have significantly gone down. (SW, a member of an anti-multiculturalist group, explanation in parentheses added)¹⁷⁷

In this narrative, the respondent's brother is a character who tried his best to make a decent living by accumulating his capitals, such as his college degree, but came to face a harsh reality that did not recognise the value of his capitals and efforts. When ending up in precarious construction work, which he previously had envisaged as the bottom of the socio-economic ladder, he felt like being forced into competition again. Disconcerted by the unexpected competition at the site, which he had not imagined himself to be part of, his frustration ran deep. Indeed, my interviewees, particularly two of them who were in their 20s and 30s, strongly expressed anxiety about entering the labour market and having a stable source of income. For example, the two relatively young respondents who both were college graduates, had kept failing to get a white collar job, had temporarily worked at a construction site, and were not sure about what they would do for a living in the future (regardless of the fact that they had a source of income at the moment).

Frustrated by constant failure in obtaining economic security and feeling marginalised, anti-multiculturalists revealed strong anti-establishment dispositions imbued with egalitarian sensibilities, which, indeed, typically appear in populism. For them, the three major forces central to this corrupt establishment are the state (politicians, government bodies, and existing democratic institutions of representative politics), the mainstream media, and capitalists (e.g., *Chaebol* [Korean conglomerates] and *Kbiz* [Korean Federation of Small and Medium Business]). They

¹⁷⁷ Interview conducted on 22/01/2012

criticised that the state's multicultural policies were mainly to serve capitalists' interests, which according to them, revealed that the state had completely succumbed to 'the logic of capitalism'.¹⁷⁸ In this vein, the *EPP (Employment Permit Program)* which accepts migrant workers on a temporary basis was identified as a tool to maximise capitalists' profits based on the exploitation of cheap labour. When confronted with the counter-claim that migrants are not taking jobs from Koreans but are working in positions that could not be filled with Koreans, my interviewees reacted emotionally. They resented the fact that such claims accused the Korean working class of being somewhat complacent and not diligent enough, compared to its own past self or to contemporary migrant workers who are grateful of those low-paid manual jobs. They argued that the government should try to improve general working conditions to the level that native Koreans could make a living out of those jobs, instead of filling them up with foreign labour forces.

While their anti-establishment rhetoric is predicated on egalitarian sentiments of economically deprived and aggrieved citizens, this does not mean that their rationale is firmly based on anti-neoliberal arguments. Displaying aspects of populism, which is often identified as an ideology that has an 'empty heart' – i.e. lacks core values (Taggart 2002, 68) – anti-multicultural activism does not commit itself to constructing egalitarian anti-capitalist alternatives, despite its deep discontent with what it identifies as, state-capital collusion. Instead, anti-multiculturalists seem to project their fear and discontent with neoliberal globalisation onto visible others – migrants – that internally signify globalisation at the local level. In this sense, the

¹⁷⁸ From the interview with SW and also conversations from the off-line anti-multiculturalists' meeting

rational explanation that, at present, migrant workers do not actually replace them in the job market, has little power in mitigating their anti-migrant sentiments, since for them, the presence of racial/cultural others seems to provoke a sense of *intensified precariousness of life*.

Hence, while such feelings of being left out, at times, prompt criticisms of unrestrained capitalism, ingrained in anti-multiculturalists' criticisms on multicultural policies, is a social Darwinist idea of competition that dovetails with neoliberal tenets. For example, they fiercely condemn the government's policies for multicultural families, particularly by taking examples of the provision of childcare benefits or partial affirmative action measures adopted by some universities or some government agencies.

The provision of free childcare for all multicultural families, which started in 2011, seems to be perceived as a 'populist policy'. Its rationale was questioned not only by anti-multiculturalists, but also by many migrant rights activists and even by government officials. In contrast to the provision of free childcare for native Korean families, offered only to those whose monthly income is below a certain limit, the government got rid of the income limit for multicultural families and publicised this policy extensively (e.g. Kim and Chōn 2010). Suspicious of the practicality of such policy, some of my interviewees (government officials and migrant rights activists) explained that the majority of multicultural families would be eligible for such benefits anyway, because generally their income level is under the limit. One government official told me, during the interview, that this policy was strongly (and unanimously) put forward by politicians, so government officials had no choice but

to deliver it. However, they thought themselves that there was hardly any justification for imposing different criteria just because one belongs to a multicultural family. Considering that there would be hardly any difference for multicultural families in practical terms, whether they receive this provision under the general scheme or the new ‘multicultural’ scheme, what this policy rather seems to do is to mark multicultural families out for their difference from *normal* Korean families and produce misrecognition of migrants as ‘benefit stealers’.

Concerning the affirmative action measures in education, one interviewee strongly argued against it by saying:

It’s bullshit. In Korea, the sole reason for getting education is to go to university and get a degree. You know, everyone wants to go to a better university than others. Why do you think Korean parents are crazy about offering good education to their children even when they can hardly afford it? It’s because education is almost the only fair way to move up the social ladder. If you try harder than others, then your efforts rarely betray you, at least in this area. The government should not mess with this. Special admission system for multicultural students?! That’s totally unfair. Korean parents won’t stand the fact that a multicultural student can go to a better university than their own kids just because they are multicultural! (SW, a member of an anti-multiculturalist group)¹⁷⁹

Seen from this perspective, multicultural policies do serious harm to meritocracy – a basis for fair (market) competition – by providing social benefits and other capitalisable advantages to ‘undeserving’ receivers. Thus, when framing multicultural policies as ‘reverse discrimination’, their rationales seem to perfectly accord with neoliberal ideas of self-management and self-responsibility. In this

¹⁷⁹ Interview conducted on 22/01/2012

sense, the anti-multiculturalists' anti-establishment sentiment is not directed at systemic socio-economic inequality and institutional reproduction of such inequality. For instance, as can be seen above, the strictly hierarchical system of universities and increasing costs of private education are accepted as inevitable and unchangeable – indeed, taken for granted as constituents or natural concomitants of meritocracy. Hence, despite their rhetorical condemnation levelled at capitalists or state-capital collusion, the normalcy of the neoliberal project is not challenged. Rather, their primary enemy is multicultural others (and the state and other organisations which allegedly prioritise their benefits over 'the people of the nation').

Anti-multiculturalists' feelings of alienation also take the form of antagonism against the mainstream media and what they call, 'media-government collusion'. All my interviewees portrayed the media as 'undemocratic' and showed strong hostility to their 'propaganda' for multiculturalism. One interviewee commented on this issue with anger:

Multiculturalism works as reverse discrimination in Korea. Why should we unconditionally accommodate foreigners? The government and the media say that we *should* yield to foreigners, we *should* get along well with Southeast Asian women... they are social minorities blah blah blah... whenever there is a slightest chance of their rights being infringed, then all Koreans are condemned as bad people. I am so unhappy with this. Why? Why should we especially take good care of foreigners? [...] *Why does the government say what we should do?* How dare the Korean government not seek consensus before carrying out such important policies [multicultural policies]? And *why does the media espouse the idea altogether?* This makes me mad really. *Why do they ignore us?* (RS, a member of an anti-multiculturalist group, emphasis added)¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ Interview conducted on 04/02/2012

As can be detected here, there are two major justifications for this antagonism. Firstly, anti-multiculturalists feel that they have been *unheard*. By juxtaposing Korean media's and government's 'overly celebratory' accounts of multiculturalism, with their lack of interests in anti-multiculturalists' voices, they question the objectivity of journalism and government policies. In addition, they often point to the fact that, compared to the amount of news about migrants' hardship in Korea, the sufferings of Koreans (caused by such a multicultural change of Korean society – for instance, Korean husbands dismayed by sham marriages and run-away brides) are rarely looked at. Secondly, they oppose the media's portrayal of them as politically incorrect and immoral by expressing their resentment towards the media and government's claim to moral high ground. They seek to reverse this moral condemnation of the elites by creating their own moralistic frame – 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite' (Mudde 2004, 543). Against the mainstream framing of anti-multiculturalists as pathological racists and uncivilised xenophobes, they are trying to reclaim their moral ground by representing themselves as 'voices of the people'.

Here, what Taggart (2002, 67) conceptualises as 'the heartland' when he analyses the principle themes of populism, is insightful to understand anti-multiculturalists' moralistic appeal to racialised nationalism. According to Taggart, as an 'idealised conception of the community' that populists serve, the heartland is 'a vision derived from the past and projected onto the present' (*ibid.*). Since the heartland points to the romanticised past –not a specific historical time in a precise and factual manner – the heartland is easily imagined as a racially and culturally homogeneous past. What is distinctive in Korean anti-multiculturalists' attempt to identify themselves as the

heartland is that, instead of merely romanticising the ‘good life’ of the past (*ibid.*, 68), they evoke memories of past wounds to the nation and link them to contemporary multiculturalisation. Anti-multiculturalists, particularly interviewees in their 50s–60s, claimed that multicultural policies are a ‘*minjok malsal* (Kor.)’ policy (a policy of annihilating the Korean nation). ‘*Minjok malsal*’ is a label which immediately reminds Koreans of Japanese colonial brutality, since it refers to a set of policies implemented by the Japanese colonial government, from the late 1930’s till the end of Japanese rule in 1945, to eradicate Korean culture and identity, and completely subjugate Koreans as Japanese imperial subjects.¹⁸¹ Thus, for anti-multiculturalists, the homogenous nation is conceived as something sacrosanct, which was retrieved through Koreans’ anti-colonial resistance and should not be questioned or challenged in the name of multiculturalism. Although the metaphor of *annihilation* sounds preposterous considering the size of the migrant population and the marginalisation it faces, such rhetorical performance marks multiculturalism as *dangerous foreign contamination*, something that they stand up and defend the heartland against. Thus, by associating the impacts of multicultural policies with those of Japanese colonial policy, and appropriating the language of a national resistance, anti-multiculturalists attempt to present themselves as the ‘true nationalists of the day’, who are genuinely concerned about their own nation’s future.

¹⁸¹ This set of policies, including policies such as banning the Korean language and forcing Koreans to choose Japanese names, is regarded as representative of Japanese imperial governance, particularly after the war against China in 1937. Yet, as can be seen in representative policies, ‘annihilation’ is a literal translation and does not mean ‘genocide’, though during this period Japanese exploitation of Koreans reached its height, involving all kinds of violence.

Compared to this blood-based notion of nation, anti-multiculturalists in their 20s–30s seemed to restrain themselves from using such distinctively racial rhetoric when interviewed. For example, they preferred terms such as ‘*kungmin*’ (a political community bound by the modern state system) or ‘*kukka*’ (nation-state) over the term ‘*minjok*’ (a historical/cultural community related by blood).¹⁸² However, such rhetorical difference does not simply mean that young anti-multiculturalists’ conception of nation is less racialised, or as some commentators may suggest (cf. H. Choe 2007), closer to civic nationalism. Rather, it would be more correct to say that they were more aware of the mainstream accusation they faced as racists/extreme ethno-nationalists, and consciously sought to present themselves otherwise. Furthermore, though they employed less racially charged terms, they were adamant that the right to decide who can be accepted as Korean citizens, how many migrants can stay within the nation, and how these migrants (or new citizens) should behave must completely lie in the hands of native Koreans, given that this nation-state was first and foremost constructed by these ‘original’ Koreans. Also, all anti-multiculturalists whom I interviewed kept bringing up the issue of national reunification (between the North and South), claiming that the specificity of the Korean context left no room for multiculturalism. They insist that if Korea ruins its ethnic homogeneity by adopting multiculturalism, there would be no justification for Koreans to work towards the goal of national reunification. This argument is indeed very similar to North Korea’s denunciation of the South’s multicultural policies.¹⁸³

¹⁸² See Chapter three for further elaboration on the disjoining and interlacing of the two terms *minjok* and *kungmin*, with respect to their relationship with the concept of nation.

¹⁸³ *Rodong Shinmun* (Workers’ Newspaper: the official North Korean newspaper of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea) published an article titled ‘Promoting Multi-ethnic, multi-

In this sense, even when anti-multiculturalists do not rely on conspicuously racial terms, their idea of national belonging remains highly racial. As such, what Hage (1998) terms ‘practical nationality’ is useful to understand the ways in which anti-multiculturalists assert themselves as ‘masters of the national space’ based on the deployment of their authentic Koreanness. According to Hage, although formal citizenship is conceived as a prerequisite for nationality, it falls short of explaining ‘what allows certain people to assume a managerial position within the nation’ (*ibid.*, 51). Thus, he suggests that we understand the workings of practical nationality as a form of national ‘cultural capital’ (in a Bourdieusian sense), which he further explains as ‘the sum of accumulated nationally sanctified and valued social and physical styles and dispositions (national culture) adopted by individuals and groups, as well as valued characteristics (national types and national character) within a national field’ (*ibid.*, 53). In this sense, anti-multiculturalists who have accumulated national cultural capital in the form of their racial Koreanness and historical and cultural dispositions, perform their sense of ‘governmental belonging’ by distinguishing themselves from *people less Korean* – migrants – and asserting that their voices take precedence over those they conceive as non-nationals (*ibid.*, 55).

Ostensibly, anti-multiculturalists’ preoccupation with and practices of practical nationality are fuelled by the increasing anxiety over not being able to adapt fast and flexibly enough to neoliberal demands of renewing oneself, and the resulting feelings of being left behind. As such, their practices of governmental belonging are an

racial society, an attempt to *minjok malsal*. In this article, Korea’s ‘ethnic homogeneity’ is identified as ‘a unique, valuable asset of the Korean nation for which Koreans shed their blood and of which Koreans ought to be proud’. In this vein, the South’s multicultural policies are framed as a ‘reactionary conspiracy’ that tends to ‘contaminate the purity of the nation’, ‘Americanise the nation’ and thereby ‘frustrate the collective goal of national reunification’ (RS 2006).

indication of ‘paranoid nationalism’ that, as Hage posits, is ‘primarily the product of the “decline of hope” in an era where the dynamics of capital accumulation no longer produces mere inequalities within society, but endangers the very idea of a national society’ (Hage 2003, 47). In this sense, anti-multiculturalists’ frustration and anxiety are by-products of the government’s positioning of itself as a facilitator of neoliberal capital expansion, which involves an abdication of its ethical responsibilities to its citizens. Similarly, such deployment of practical nationality, particularly the one performed by young anti-multiculturalists, can be identified as ‘individual anxiety type (Jap. *kobetsu fuan-gata*) nationalism’ (Takahara 2007). According to Takahara, different from ‘rapid-growth type’ nationalism that previously had a strong presence in East Asian developmental countries including South Korea, the new type of nationalism is derived from escalating individual unease and dissatisfaction with the neoliberal flexibilisation of society (*ibid.*). In this sense, anti-multiculturalists’ moralistic rhetoric of self-victimisation and attachment to the nation are inseparably intertwined with the recognition that they are constantly being sidelined as *unfit* in the new game of the survival of the fittest.

6.3. Multiculturalists: performing a refined form of racial nationalism

Anti-multiculturalists are not the only group who performs the role of *concerned patriots*. Despite the fact that multicultural discourses publicly reject extreme forms of ethnic nationalism, they also resort to nationalist rhetoric to acquire legitimacy. As explored above in section 6.1., multicultural development is justified as part of the neoliberal project for individual and national renewal. From this perspective, multiculture is conceived as cultural goods, knowledge and dispositions for the self-

development of citizen-subjects in the age of neoliberal globalisation. Alongside this, as the state increasingly invests in this neoliberalisation of multiculturalism, a multicultural ethos in society is put forward as a means to enhance the nation's global competitiveness. And as mentioned previously, civil organisations' human rights discourses developed for the aim of social progress are not free from such a nationalist rationale inflected by social Darwinism, given that the distinction between *the social* and *the national* is considerably ambiguous in envisioning multiculturalism. For instance, one interviewee, who has long fought for migrants' rights, urging the need to rectify (racially) discriminatory thinking which, in his own words, Koreans 'subconsciously' share, provided the rationale for multicultural inclusion:

Korea's birth rate is the world's lowest. If we do nothing about it, Koreans will be soon threatened with extinction. We need multicultural families and foreign workers to survive [...] If we take good care of foreign workers, Korean Chinese, and multicultural families who came to our country, they will become Koreaphiles. If we treat them badly, they will be anti-Korea [...] Some of them would become powerful elites in their own countries. Depending on their experience in Korea, their countries' policies towards Korea could change in the future. Hence, each Korean is engaging in citizen diplomacy on a daily basis. The Korean government, local governments, police and all Koreans need to embrace migrants as our neighbour. This helps Korea become a world-class civilised country. (SH, a pastor who works for migrant rights)¹⁸⁴

SH's argument in favour of inclusion is obviously different from the bluntly assimilationist or exclusionary language of the anti-multiculturalists; for him, the existence of migrants is *desirable*. Migrants need to be valued because they are good

¹⁸⁴ Interview conducted on 21/02/2012

for *us*. They (especially female migrant women) give *us* children. They work for *our* industries. They might exercise influence on *our* international relations. This ‘discourse of enrichment’ is, in fact, no different from that of anti-multiculturalists’ in that it is also predicated on a distinction between Koreans as the ‘national subject’ and migrants as the ‘national object’ (Hage 1998, 94). The fine difference is that anti-multiculturalists perceive migrants as the enemy who need to be controlled by Koreans, while multiculturalists, *embracing* others, posit themselves as the benevolent manager of the Korean nation, for example, to make their own nation *a world-class civilised country*.

By positioning racial others as objects whose inclusion is provided by civil and tolerant native Koreans, multicultural discourses ‘prescribe a racialised limit to national belonging’ in terms of who has the right to imagine what a nation should be like (Pitcher 2009, 167). In this sense, the seemingly contradictory concept of ‘multicultural nationalism’ astutely encapsulates the current state practices of multiculturalism within which racism takes up a new guise (*ibid.*). Indeed, whilst multiculturalists claim their moral high ground by shaping multiculturalism as an *enlightenment project* and singling out anti-multiculturalists as *ungovernable (but negligible)* racists, contemporary multicultural development dovetails nicely with the state’s human resource management that involves the construction of citizen-subjects commensurable with neoliberal norms and the supervision of the degree/modality of racial heterogenisation. This is evident in the state’s compartmentalisation between ‘multicultural families’ and migrant workers, and the ways in which they are differentially positioned within the national field and differently utilised for national development. Under the rubric of multicultural policy development, (female)

marriage migrants and their children have become the main target for inclusion, while migrant workers hardly have been beneficiaries of social integration policies. As examined earlier, the celebratory rhetoric of multiculturalism recognises ‘multicultural children’ and their half-Koreanness as a potential resource for Korea’s neoliberal globalisation. Yet, migrant workers, at best, are consumed as a multicultural adornment whose presence is fetishised and commodified for native Korean’s creative and moral development.

However, this is not a clear-cut inclusion of one (multicultural families, particularly female marriage migrants) and exclusion of the Other (migrant workers). A key dynamic of racialised nationalism involves the ways in which both marriage migrants and migrant workers are concurrently included and excluded. In other words, it is of utmost importance to understand the complex ‘dialectic of inclusion and exclusion’ which works to contain the racial others in their designated spaces, rather than simply to exclude them (Hage 1998, 135). For example, the current guest worker system blocks access for migrant workers to settlement, citizenship and socio-political rights. Precisely because they are excluded from these rights, they can be effectively included as cheap labour in the nation’s low-tech, labour-intensive industries. Through this process, the Korean state not only safeguards its racialised boundary of total belonging, but also constantly produces these racial others as ‘underclass’ within a nation (Gray 2004). In the case of marriage migrants, although they seem to have a better chance of settlement, their eligibility for citizenship and settlement, in fact, is not completely guaranteed, unless they maintain their relationship with their Korean partners or raise children from their marriages with Korean partners; they need someone *more Korean* than them for their belonging in

Korea to be officially endorsed. What is important here is that the state does not aim to totally exclude these racial others; in order to make things work (whether it is for biological reproduction of the nation or for economic gains from cheap labour) these racial others need to be *partially* included. And the fact that they are racially different effectively justifies such denial of full inclusion. Furthermore, this *partial right to the nation* stigmatises the racialised, thus reinforcing everyday racialisation of migrants, and legitimises the differential (unequal) treatment of migrants once again. In this sense, by regulating differential rights to the nation and controlling the degree of in(ex-)clusion, the Korean state harnesses racism.

Yet, this technology of inclusion and exclusion needs to present itself as something other than racism; in fact, something opposite to racism in order not to unsettle Korea's *multicultural others* too much, and also in order to acquire legitimacy both internally and externally. As such, multiculturalism precisely functions as a civilised language of in-/exclusion. However, despite its rhetorical association with universal human rights and cosmopolitan ideals, the rationalisation of multiculturalism is firmly based on the social Darwinist idea of individual and national development, as can be detected in the aforementioned conflation of *becoming civilised* and *becoming globally competitive*. To recapitulate, multicultural nationalism inflected by the social Darwinist ethos, firstly, interprets the increasing presence of migrants within the nation as an indication of Korea's economic success. Secondly, it urges for the need to utilise 'multiculture' for enhancing the nation's moral and creative capital. However, the fact that this multicultural nationalism is conceived within the social Darwinist framework signifies the fragility of such celebratory multicultural discourses. Seen from a social Darwinist perspective, increasing diversity under

globalisation is not only an opportunity but also a threat. Hence, what goes hand in hand with this celebratory multicultural rhetoric is an intensification of immigration restrictions which can be described as *quality control* on immigration, and also substantial reluctance to implement legal, institutional reforms such as the implementation of the anti-racism legislation, as explored in Chapter four. Underpinning multicultural development is the social Darwinist rationalisation that carefully sorts out good diversity from bad, and outlines desirable modalities of diversity within the nation in order to maximise national interests. The following comment made by one of my interviewees is highly perceptive about such desire to ‘manage’ diversity.

For Koreans, multiculturalism is like looking at *an image within a picture frame*. It’s not like they really understand or value multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is a framed picture for us. Migrants are there within the frame. Not living with us. (Y, a priest who works for migrant rights, emphasis added)¹⁸⁵

If we illustrate the difference between multiculturalists and anti-multiculturalists by following this analogy, what distinguishes them lies only in their different descriptions of *the image within a picture frame*, i.e. different *utility values* respectively assigned to this image. Yet, for both multiculturalists and anti-multiculturalists, it is still a *framed picture* – national objects that can be possibly owned or disowned by national subjects. In this sense, despite the seemingly antagonistic relationship between multiculturalists and anti-multiculturalists, both groups and their motivations are deeply entangled with racial nationalism. Anti-multiculturalists’ anti-immigration discourse – often coloured by issues such as

¹⁸⁵ Interview conducted on 14/01/2012

increasing sham marriages, illegal residency and foreign crimes – is easily thought of as racist. And indeed, it is. Yet, what multiculturalism does is deemed nothing close to racism, although it does literally racialise others by classifying them as ‘multicultural’ and predicates their inclusion and exclusion on a renewed nationalist rationale. What is often unnoticed is that multiculturalists present the same concerns as anti-multiculturalists do, but in a more confident and rationalised way by assuring Koreans that multiculturalism is a way to keep the balance right, and thereby to fully utilise others within the nation. Therefore, multiculturalists and anti-multiculturalists are in a relationship of pushing and pulling, helping each other keep *too much* or *bad* diversity at bay.

Conclusion

As examined in this chapter, in the process of the neoliberalisation of Korean society, citizens are recognised as ‘human resources’ whose value is assessed according to one’s capability to flexibly manage oneself with the aim of accumulating individual and national capital. In forging neoliberal citizen-subjects who are globally competitive, creative, self-serving and also caring, ‘multiculture’, which is considered to be essentially embedded in migrants, is seen as a valuable resource for native Koreans’ self-development. As seen in the examples of educational programmes and policy initiatives for increasing multicultural awareness among ‘native Koreans’, multiculture is promoted as a new field for the accumulation of *creative* and *moral* capital, often being enunciated through the rhetorical collapse between *the global* and *the multicultural*. By investing oneself in this multicultural capital accumulation, a new citizen-subject equipped with multicultural creativity and tolerance is expected to contribute to elevating Korea’s

status to that of a world-class civilised country. In this sense, the celebration of the enriching nature of multicultural Korea is imbricated with a social Darwinist precept of the enhancement of the nation's global competitiveness, in the age of neoliberal globalisation.

Against this background, racism – an outmoded disposition deemed incommensurate with global citizenship by multiculturalists – tends to be seen as the sole property of anti-multiculturalists who lag behind in the neoliberal competition to maximise one's human capital. Yet as argued in this chapter, the seeming antagonism between anti-multiculturalists and multiculturalists cannot be, in fact, explained as opposing views on racism; for example, as of racism of the former and anti-racism of the latter. Rather, the seemingly antagonistic relationship between multiculturalists and anti-multiculturalists is best described as a not-so-much-inimical rivalry, in that they compete with each other, but also work together in drawing the limits of multicultural nationalism. Both multiculturalists and anti-multiculturalists perform the role of *concerned patriots* in their respective attempts on the nationalisation of multiculturalism and nationalist denunciation of multiculturalism. The distance between them is indeed not very far, particularly in contemporary Korea where state politics of multiculturalism is hardly committed to substantive racial equality.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

[N]ot only does our social and political reality continue to be organized by racist ideas about race, but *even in the absence of a gene for race, the idea of race remains bound up with that of reproduction.* (Weinbaum 2004, 229, emphasis in original)

This thesis has begun with an attempt to problematise the naturalised account of the (racially pure) nation and to analyse the salience of ‘race’ as it is articulated through the silence about race and racism. In particular, the study of emergent multicultural discourses in the South Korean context has been presented as an illuminating case to reveal the contemporary workings of racial nationalism. This endeavour to take racism seriously as a historical and structural phenomenon, and to investigate the modalities of racialised Koreanness necessarily brings Korean academia’s reticence on racism and its tendency of dissociating nationalism from racism into question, as we have seen in Chapter one.

7.1. On the claim of ‘Korea’s racial irrelevance’

The starting point for this thesis was the questioning of the widespread idea of Korea’s ‘racial irrelevance’, that is, the notion that ‘race’ has no bearing on the politics of nationalism in Korea and that racism has never really been a problem in Korea. From this basis, this thesis has sought to explore the racialised constitution of Korean nationalism. As examined in Chapter three, contrary to popular belief, the Korean nation is not a trans-historical reality, but the concept of nation was historically constructed as a trans-historical fact. In looking into the historical institutionalisation of racial nationalism, I have emphasised, in particular, the

influence of social Darwinism in making ‘race’ an organising principle for understanding human differences and imagining the nation. Since the late nineteenth century when the social Darwinist worldview replaced the traditional Sino-centric worldview and became an explanatory framework to understand changing world politics and Korea’s position in the world, the conception of nation has been established as a dominant form of collective identity. Other ideologies such as transnational Pan-Asianism – an attempt, especially among Asian elites (including Korean ones), to counter-act White supremacy and Western colonial enterprises by forming solidarity among the ‘Yellow race’ – competed and also intersected with nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, such transnational Pan-Asianism did not challenge the social Darwinist division and competition among races. Rather, this Pan-Asianist thought can be seen as a simple inversion and replication of the ‘binary of “us” and “them” that is implicit in the self-image of the West’ (Bhambra 2006, 37). Such Yellow solidarity became internally ruptured as Japanese imperialism took root in Asia, subjecting several Asian countries, including Korea (in 1910), to colonisation. In this context, though Korean ethnic nationalism played an important role in countering Japanese colonial racism, it was also built upon social Darwinist ideas. For example, the rhetoric of ‘racial purity’ has been constantly put to work, throughout Korea’s modern history, to invoke national pride in its racial, cultural oneness and to mobilise the population for various agendas of national development. Furthermore, even when Korean nationalism worked as the ideology of resistance against Japanese colonialism, it did not completely subvert internalised racism. Rather, it appropriated ‘culture’ as a driving force for racial rehabilitation and national modernisation.

This thesis, despite its obvious limitations of space and scope, has attempted to investigate the relationship between colonial history and race thinking. In this regard, it contributes to postcolonial scholarship by revealing the ‘translatability’ of Orientalist structures and race thinking, and their reconfigurations in Korea, a country that was colonised by a non-Western imperial power (Japan). More importantly, this unpacking is to contest, in Lim’s (2010) word, the ‘sacralisation’ of national memories (p. 2) which constructs nationalism based on ‘hereditary victimhood’ (p. 3). As we have seen in Chapter six – representatively in the anti-multiculturalist depiction of Koreans as victims of foreign invasion – such sacralisation of the past often renders the linkage between ‘race’ and nation unquestionable and also essentialises Korean nationalism as the nationalism of resistance. By shedding light on stories that were silenced within this national narrative, this thesis shows that, borrowing Dirlik’s term (2008, 1369), the entanglement of ‘the racialisation of the nation’ (a certain racial explanation of the nation) and ‘the nationalisation of race’ (a claim over ‘racial purity’ of the nation) has been instigated during the colonial period in Korea, and implications of such entanglement are still significant today.

In post-colonial Korea, where the partition of the peninsula failed to accomplish the ‘congruence of state and nation’ (which Gellner (1983) emphasises as an important nationalist principle), racial nationalism continued to conjure up a lingering aspiration for a unified nation-state. From the 1960s, this became an effective tool for the South Korean developmental state to exercise social control. In this process, the state exploited the language of nationalism to operationalise the dynamics of in/exclusion of internal others, as seen in the cases of the production of the

sexualised/racialised Other (e.g. camptown sex workers and mixed-race people) and the ideological Other (e.g. communists). Externally, nationalism, with its strong imbrication to social Darwinism, articulated itself as a collective attempt to elevate the nation's status in the global hierarchy of nation-states. This attempt becomes apparent in the entanglement of nationalism and economic developmentalism that at times even involved violence against the racialised Other (e.g. racial politics in the Vietnamese war). Hence, throughout Korea's modern history, racial thinking and practices, initially influenced by social Darwinist ideas, have not been object of explicit critique or contestation. Rather, they have been sutured to the idea of nation. The after-effect of colonisation and national division has kept the project of nation-state building unfulfilled. This has consequently overshadowed the need to question the racialised formation of Korean national identity and the problems of its otherising practices, within and beyond the nation. Paradoxically, the fantasy of Korea's 'racial irrelevance' has been constructed by engaging with the strict control of the racial purity of the nation (emblematic in the literal expulsion of mixed-blood children from the country in the 1950s through the government's initiative to facilitate their international adoption) and manifested in the self-perception of Korea as a racially homogeneous country.

7.2. Contemporary politics of hush

Despite the concerted effort to preserve the purity of the nation, Korea's economic growth has inevitably made it harder for the country to maintain its racial homogeneity, especially in a neoliberal global economy. The rapid influx of migrants in the 2000s has created an empirical condition which challenges Korea's belief in its racial purity. Particularly, an unprecedented increase in marriage

migrants and their children (whose existence cannot be wholly denied, even within the logic of racial nationalism, because of their familiar affiliation with Korean citizens) has brought about the state's intervention to address them as part of the nation, under the rhetoric of multiculturalism. In analysing contemporary multicultural discourses in Korea, I have shown that the term 'multicultural' was adopted as a euphemism for racial others and put to work to keep racism off the political agenda. In other words, whilst such euphemistic deployment of multiculturalism is performed as a form of perfunctory political correctness under the pretence of 'racial eliminativism', it in fact works to name racial others and differentiate migrants from 'native Koreans', albeit politely.

This thesis has maintained that such euphemistic construction of multiculturalism – (the medium) through which Korea's 'racial irrelevance' is manifested today – assiduously frames differences with the language of 'culture' instead of 'race'. This has been demonstrated by the analysis of the paternalistic discourse on the integration of female marriage migrants, the emerging anti-Muslim discourse (Chapter four), and also the discursive construction of '*Chosōnjok* (Korean Chinese) migrants' as a cultural Other (Chapter five). As analysed in Chapter four, marriage migrants, on the one hand, are considered to be *suffering from a Korean culture deficiency*, which hinders their full integration into Korean families and nation. Yet, simultaneously, a certain palatable form of diversity (presumed to be) carried by migrants is picked up by multiculturalists and celebrated under the rhetoric of 'diversity for diversity's sake'. Whilst this culturalisation of differences is used for the partial inclusion of marriage migrants, it is also an effective tool for identifying 'bad diversity' and justifying the exclusion of unassimilable migrants – i.e. *migrants*

with harmful cultures – as examined in the case of anti-Muslim racism. In the case of *Chosŏnjok* migrants, their blood kinship provides them an advantageous immigration status compared to that of other racially non-Korean migrants. Yet their status does not equate to their full inclusion and has not forestalled the racialisation of the *Chosŏnjok* as a *cultural Other*, whose national belonging is contested. While *Chosŏnjok* migrants are created as a distinctive group whose culture is not only different but (potentially) criminal, their racial affinity, ironically, is used as a rationale for rejecting the notion that they might be targets of racism. Conclusively, this thesis has formulated the workings of multiculturalism as *the politics of hush*, particularly with respect to how multiculturalism, in its euphemistic guise, reconstructs racial reality by disengaging from ‘race’.

A critical and comprehensive review of the politics of multiculturalism vis-a-vis its interdependent relationship with the trajectory of racial nationalism in the Korean context has not been published yet. This thesis – a preliminary attempt to make a connection between the two – has aimed to begin to fill this gap, and to stimulate a better understanding of the multi-faceted effects of the global discourse of diversity and the idea of ‘post-race’, by contextualising a localised version of this discourse and its implications. Despite the fact that there has been constant criticism of the post-racial claim, from race critical scholars (e.g. Bonilla-Silva 2003; Brown et al. 2003; Winant 2006; Goldberg 2009; Lentin 2011), this is mostly done in the context of Euro-American societies. Thus, by taking South Korea as a case study, this thesis not only creates a new research space for the critical analysis of multiculturalism within South Korean academia, but also contributes to broadening the scope of global critical race studies, especially in relation to the increasing diversification of

migration flows. In examining the silence about ‘race’/racism in the contemporary multicultural fashioning of Korean society, I have showed how the notion of post-race is differently played out in Korea, particularly by appropriating multiculturalism as a means to sustain the idea of Korea’s ‘racial irrelevance’ as a nation. Furthermore, the Korean case of the politics of multiculturalism has been proposed as an emblematic example that prompts a cultural coding of ‘race’ and ‘the denial of significance of race to the lived experience of the racialized’ (Lentin and Titley 2011, 167). Hence, if in the past the belief that Korea is a nation of one race has led to the conviction on Korea’s racial irrelevance, this thesis has argued that the contemporary enunciation of multiculturalism, once again, makes racism invisible, as the enunciation itself is deemed to axiomatically disavow the concept of ‘race’.

As an anti-racist critique of the politics of hush, this thesis has aimed to have not only academic but also practical implications to potentially advance the migrant movement and anti-racist struggle in South Korea. During my fieldwork, and in conversations with migrant rights activists and Korean scholars, I have detected doubts about the possibility of developing anti-racist initiatives. The reason for such doubts, besides many other explained in Chapter four, is often expressed by questioning the impracticality and crudeness of anti-racism as a political slogan. However, anti-racist practices and discourses should not be understood as a claim to put the word ‘anti-racism’ in a campaign slogan. Rather an anti-racist perspective should be understood as an endeavour to acknowledge racism as a social reality that produces inequality and uneven power relations. By contesting the idea of Korea’s ‘racial irrelevance,’ both historically and in the present day, this thesis has shown that Korea was (and is) never free from the global construction of ‘race’ and racism,

and that the image of the self and others has been racially inflected. In this sense, this thesis hopes to serve as a starting point for understanding the wider debate on the pernicious effects that the claim of Korea's racial irrelevance has on the life of the racialised, and to forge antiracist initiatives that can create inter-ethnic alliances across various migrant and racialised groups.

As seen in Chapter four and five, there is also considerable scepticism about the usefulness of anti-racism, on the ground that different migrant groups are subject to different types of discrimination. Against this claim, I have urged the need to understand 'race' with reference to a 'complex structure of positions in which relationally defined groups are assigned differential statuses, burdens, and privileges' (C. J. Kim 2004, 348). In this sense, my analysis points to the importance of looking at how various groups are differentially racialised and relationally positioned, and how racialised categories are extended and segmented in this process. By examining the racial dynamics and positionality of different groups, I have attempted to explore the intersections of race with nation, gender, and class reflected in the differential racialisation processes. Yet, because the primary focus of the thesis has been shaped by the fact that 'race' has been largely absent in analysing the patterns of prejudice and inequality in Korea, this preliminary investigation invites more detailed future research on such intersections and in-depth comparison of racialised groups. In this vein, to counter the politics of hush, and to generate 'realistic and grounded strategies for coalitional politics', a 'sober evaluation of how the structure of positions works to divide and conquer racialized groups' needs to be taken further (*ibid.*, 352)

7.3. On the allotropic relationship between multiculturalists and anti-multiculturalists: discursive distinction yet practical alliance?

This thesis has also argued that the politics of multiculturalism in Korea, where the language of multiculturalism draws heavily on the idea of national development and external presentation of the self, corroborates the strong entanglement of multiculturalism and nationalism, which are often rhetorically juxtaposed as antithetical. Furthermore, in exploring the relatively recent development of multicultural discourse in Korea, where the neoliberalisation of society was already in full swing, this thesis has highlighted a strong neoliberal impulse to co-opt multiculturalism as part of a new self-making project. My emphasis on the intertwining of multicultural nationalism and the neoliberal production of citizen-subjects does not imply that multiculturalism can be simply understood as a neoliberal programme. Nor does it mean that I discount the transformative capacity of ‘everyday multiculturalism’, i.e. ‘everyday practice and lived experience of diversity’ through which ‘social actors encounter and negotiate their difference’ (Wise and Velayutham 2009, 3). Nor do I negate ‘multiple modalities of cosmopolitanism’, for example, what Werbner (1999, 23) shows in her presentation of a ‘working-class cosmopolitan’ who gains intercultural competence through experiences of other cultures. Yet, this thesis diagnoses that in the current conjuncture, the dominant modality of multiculturalism in Korea appears to be closer to what Hage (1997, 118) terms as ‘multiculturalism without migrants’ in the Australian context. This is because, as already mentioned, the politics of multiculturalism as a new self-making project is currently tuned more to the production of ‘cosmo-multiculturalists’, borrowing Hage’s (1997) term, who

accumulate their cultural and moral capital by actively consuming diversity provided by migrants.

In this vein, this thesis has argued (in Chapter six) that the seeming antagonism between anti-multiculturalists and multiculturalists, needs to be scrutinised, and the distance between them is indeed much closer than we often think. In this respect, it is worth remembering that:

Violent racists are always a tiny minority. However, their breathing space is determined by the degree of “ordinary” non-violent racism a government and culture allow to flourish within it. (Hage 2002b, 247)

Thus, in contemporary Korea, where multicultural discourses are largely imbued with neoliberal ethos, instead of aspirations for racial equality and social justice, the emergence of far-right anti-multiculturalist groups is nothing peculiar. What is actually worrying is that the rise of anti-multicultural sentiments seems to have the possibility of working as a pretext to justify government’s withdrawal from multicultural initiatives. Indeed, in the interviews I had with government officials (particularly ones in the two major Ministries dealing with migrant issues – the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family), there was a tendency to dissociate the adjective ‘multicultural’, as employed in the Korean policy context, from the normative idea of multicultural-‘ism’ and to use it for only practical reasons (such as for naming policies).¹⁸⁶ One official I interviewed even made a comment, almost identical with that of anti-multiculturalists, by associating

¹⁸⁶ From the interview with a government official in the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (09/02/2012)

the cause of anti-immigrant sentiments with the government's indiscriminate support for migrants. He believed that migrants had been given 'too much', and excessive government support had provided a 'condition for the allegation of reverse discrimination'.¹⁸⁷ He also insisted that the term multiculturalism itself was overused and to be replaced with purportedly more 'objective' terms such as *social integration*.¹⁸⁸ Hence, though further scrutiny is required to evaluate the extent to which convergence between mainstream politics and far-right anti-immigrant activism is occurring, the disenchantment with the term 'multicultural' and concomitant backlash against the political correctness of normative multiculturalism, seem to be growing as quickly as the term 'multicultural' has become a buzzword, all within the past decade.

7.4. From 'multiculture' to 'cultural diversity'?

Then, in what ways does the present study speak to the cultural policy researcher who wants to engage with 'the multicultural question', which Stuart Hall (2001, 4) defines as 'the question of how we are to envisage the futures of those many different societies now composed of peoples from very different histories, backgrounds, cultures, experiences and positions in the ranking order of the world'? It is worth reviewing recent attempts to re-frame multicultural questions by revisiting the concept of cultural diversity, a suggestion particularly made by some cultural policy researchers.¹⁸⁹ As explained in Chapter one, the ways in which the term 'multicultural' is used in Korea's policy context are variously contested among

¹⁸⁷ From the interview with a government official in the Ministry of Justice (09/02/2012)

¹⁸⁸ From the interview with a government official in the Ministry of Justice (09/02/2012)

¹⁸⁹ See, for example, Chong et al. 2011; Han and Han 2011; H. Kim 2012; Y-C Kim et al. 2013.

researchers. In particular, since the term ‘multicultural’ has been widely circulated in association with the ‘multicultural family’, through government policy, concerns over the stigmatising effects of the term, and doubts over its narrow and contorted application have grown. Indeed, this type of suspicion was also detected among some of my interviewees (most of the migrant right activists and also a government official from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism) who stated that ‘the term “multicultural” is much too abused (and misused) as a collective nomenclature for migrants.’¹⁹⁰

A similar concern over the contamination of the notion of multiculturalism is addressed by cultural policy researchers who criticise Korea’s current multicultural policy development. Their main points of criticisms include: the tendency to frame migrants as a vulnerable group who need extra help (S-H Kim 2006; Hong 2008a), the classificatory and stigmatising function of multiculturalism (H-M Kim 2008a), the prevalent assimilationist approach (H-M Kim 2008a; Y-S Kim et al. 2008), the lack of efforts towards increasing multicultural awareness among the majority (S-H Kim 2006; Hong 2008a, 2008b; R-J Yi 2008), and cultural essentialisation (Shim 2007; Y-S Kim et al. 2008). Based on such criticisms, these scholars emphasise the potential role of cultural policy in mainstreaming multiculturalism and in shaping it into a two-way process of cultural recognition and adaptation.

In line with this perspective, recent years have witnessed more explicit attempts by cultural policy researchers to employ the term ‘cultural diversity’ as an alternative for the term ‘multicultural’, which has been conventionally used as a tool to name

¹⁹⁰ They often said ‘the term multicultural is “contaminated”’, if I literally translate their comments.

‘migrants’ (e.g. Chong et al. 2011; H. Kim 2012; J-S Kim 2012). This investment in the concept of ‘cultural diversity’ appears to be gaining momentum, particularly after the UNESCO *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* was ratified by the Korean National Assembly in 2010. Though not materialised yet, the need for establishing a legal basis for the substantial implementation of the Convention was raised, at the national level, by researchers, and also the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (hereafter, MCST). Interestingly, the broad definition of ‘cultural diversity’ in the Convention (as ‘the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression’) and its focus on ‘interculturality’ are seen as having potential for rectifying the abuse of the term ‘multicultural’ and its negative effects in the Korean context (cf. H. Kim 2012; Y-C Kim et al. 2013). In this vein, one respondent stated:

The term ‘multicultural’ is used as a way of stereotyping migrants. Because such understanding of the term is too pervasive, we may need to replace it with *an alternative term*. The MCST has been thinking about this. No matter how hard we try not to use the term multicultural as a way of labelling migrants, then people, journalists, you know, they just don’t understand. For them, ‘multicultural’ policy is a policy targeting migrants. It’s never about *mutual change* [...] Considering this, we perhaps need to adopt a new policy term such as *cultural diversity*. (JY, working for the MCST,¹⁹¹ emphasis added)

She continued to claim that ‘cultural diversity’ as a concept can be more inclusive than ‘multiculturalism’ because it embraces various differences (not only ethnic ones). Also seeing as the term ‘multicultural’ is dominantly understood as an ‘identity of migrants’ and used to identify migrants as a ‘policy target’, she said the

¹⁹¹ Interview conducted on 06/02/2012

concept of ‘cultural diversity’ (which to her, sounds ‘more neutral and comprehensive’) might be more effective in implementing ‘interculturality’, through which mutual understanding between migrants and the majority (‘native Koreans’) could be promoted. This perspective is also articulated in a white paper published in 2013 that reviews the MCST’s policies during the Lee Myung-bak government (2008-2013) and sets out a vision for the arts and culture over the long term. It states:

Cultural diversity policy can go beyond the existing ‘multicultural’ policy framework that has been geared towards assimilating marriage migrants and their multicultural families into Korea. It aims to enhance cultural diversity in our society at large by nurturing the majority’s capacity to embrace and respect minority cultures [...] Until now, ‘multicultural’ policy has not included diverse cultural minorities such as migrant workers, young people with a migrant background, international students, and North Korean refugees while focusing narrowly on female marriage migrants and their multicultural families. Moreover, since most policy programmes were designed to teach migrants Korean language and culture, there has been a lack of multicultural policy that promotes *cultural diversity per se*. Cultural diversity encompasses *a wider range of diversity* – not only racial and ethnic diversity but gender, age, and generational diversity. In this sense, cultural diversity policy signifies a change from the previous policy focus on multicultural family, and seeks to *raise awareness of cultural diversity among the general public* from a comprehensive, long-term point of view. (MCST 2013, from a chapter written by G-Y Yang, 363-4, emphasis added).

Thus, ‘cultural diversity’ is considered to be the corrective to previous multicultural policy’s one-way assimilation and its narrow focus on racial/ethnic diversity. Though it is too early to assess how and to what extent such change of conceptual framework will influence policy-making and practices, the rationale behind this seems well-meaning. This proposed change in policy framework seems to take an anti-essentialist position against the current multicultural policy that pins down

migrants' identity as the 'reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits' (Bhabha 1994, 2). As such, it can be understood as an attempt to redefine diversity by emphasising the multiplicity and overlappings of various social identities, such as 'racial', 'ethnic', 'cultural', 'gender', and 'generational' ones. In other words, such a conception of diversity opens up the possibility to acknowledge the plurality of 'subject positions' (Laclau and Moffee 2001) in the process of identity formation and transformation. Furthermore, this reflection on cultural diversity seems to proffer an opportunity to expand the traditionally narrow conception of cultural policy (and concurrently cultural policy research) that has restricted its role mainly to the issues of funding and management of the arts, cultural heritage, and cultural industries. Indeed, Korean cultural policy has been 'production centric', 'product-oriented', and 'artist-centred'; it has been based on a narrow understanding of 'culture' and less interested in cultural consumption, the blurring of boundaries between cultural production and consumption, and various forms of everyday cultural expressions (B-R Lee 2006, 12). Recently there seem to be efforts to redress this imbalance in conjunction with growing policy interests in the umbrella term 'cultural diversity', as can be detected in the recent enactment of *the Basic Law on Culture* in 2013. Addressing the importance of cultural diversity and cultural rights, this law adopts the UNESCO definition of 'culture' as a 'set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses, not only art and literature, but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs' (UNESCO, 2001). Indeed, according to the aforementioned interviewee, the notion of cultural diversity brings into the picture a broader definition of culture, 'as a way of life' and involves the 'cultural dimensions of everyday life'. In this sense, the incorporation of the cultural diversity agenda in

cultural policy making not only challenges the current institutional settings of cultural policy-making and its organising principles, but also induces the cultural policy researcher not to limit the scope of their investigation to what Ahearne (2004) calls, ‘explicit’ or ‘nominal’ cultural policy, that is policy that has been explicitly labelled as such by government.

However, despite its potential merits, there is a danger that this policy re-labelling could merely result in a refinement of the rhetorical facade. Or more perilously, it might be adopted as a way to bypass the struggle over meanings created by the politics of multiculturalism, by containing the contestations within a seemingly all-embracing, less controversial framework of cultural diversity. Indeed, the preliminary research on the legal basis for cultural diversity policy (for instance, Chong et al. 2011 and J-S Kim 2012) does not seem to seriously engage with possible tensions between the conception of ‘national culture’ and ‘cultural diversity’. Rather, it is insisted that the preservation of national culture as an extension of ‘traditional’ culture, and the creation of a new Korean culture infused with diverse cultures can (and should) go hand in hand. Within this framework, proposed amendments to the existing laws seem incapable of going beyond the perfunctory references to the notion of cultural diversity. For instance, according to J-S Kim’s (2012) proposal for amendments, concerning the *Culture and Arts Promotion Act*, Article One which defines the objective of the Act can be revised as follows:

- The Act supports various activities that preserve and transmit traditional arts and culture, and create a new culture in order to contribute to the development of national culture (*minjok munhwa*). (present form)

- The Act supports various activities that preserve and transmit traditional arts and culture for the end goal of developing national culture (*minjok munhwa*), while also supporting **the creation of a new culture in order to promote cultural diversity.** (proposed amendments)

(J-S Kim 2012, 61-2, emphasis added)

The rationale underpinning this claim is that Korean ‘traditional’ culture is the backbone of Korean ‘national’ culture and needs to receive protection, since it is also one unit of distinctive culture that needs to be preserved and expressed according to the UNESCO Convention (ibid., 62). In insisting that such promotion of ‘national’ culture and preservation of cultural heritage does not conflict with the protection of cultural diversity within the nation, these studies tacitly juxtapose the traditional as a national core inherited from Korea’s (homogeneous) past, and cultural diversity as a contemporary ingredient that makes contemporary Korean culture more exciting. Thus, much-needed discussions about what constitutes *the traditional* and *the national* (and also importantly *the global*), how ‘national culture’ is conceived, practiced and institutionalised, what is remembered and missing in the existing narrative of national cultural history, again, remain unexplored. This redressing of multicultural policy with the more inclusive language of cultural diversity, therefore, fails to acknowledge the fact that culture itself is a contested space always implicated in relations of power. As a result, ‘cultural diversity’ has a good chance of becoming another euphemism, just as the term ‘multicultural’ was introduced, in the first place, as a corrective to ostensibly racist labelling practices.

In this respect, this thesis underlines the importance of looking into cultural politics within critical cultural policy studies. As Jordon and Weedon (1995) explain, cultural politics involve all sorts of questions such as:

Whose culture shall be the official one and whose shall be subordinated? What cultures shall be regarded as worthy of display and which shall be hidden? Whose history shall be remembered and whose forgotten? What images of social life shall be projected and which shall be marginalized? What voices shall be heard and which be silenced? Who is representing whom and on what basis? (Jordon and Weedon 1995, 4)

This thesis has sought to provide answers to such questions specifically with respect to the politics of multiculturalism in Korea. Seen in this light, this thesis suggests that current cultural policy research should not shy away from the unsettling questions of ‘race’ and racism. I have shown throughout the thesis how ‘cultural’ (or more accurately ‘culturalising’) Korean multicultural policy has been. Particularly, I have analysed the ways in which this policy development has appropriated ‘culture’ as a primary framework to talk about differences and identities. In this vein, criticisms put forward by many researchers¹⁹² on the fact that Korea’s multicultural policy has not been ‘properly multicultural’, and indeed has been framed erroneously as a social welfare policy, not as a ‘cultural’ policy, have their limitations. Such criticisms, until now, have urged for cultural policy interventions to create genuine cultural recognition and mutual understanding. However, without seriously taking into account the culturalisation of differences in contemporary racial politics, such an emphasis on ‘cultural diversity’ as an anti-essentialist and more inclusive concept, paradoxically runs the risk of levelling out all kinds of differences and identity politics. This would also entail a failure to capture the entrenched position of ‘culture’ in the politics of race and nation. Indeed, this attempt to substitute ‘cultural diversity’ for ‘multiculture’ is often undergirded by the rationale that the promotion

¹⁹² See, for example, Eom 2006; K. Hong 2007; Chong et al. 2011; W. Kim 2011; H. Kim 2012.

of cultural diversity and tolerance generates ‘creativity’ among the population and thus contributes to human capital production and national economic development (cf. J-D Yi 2013; KICE 2013). As I have examined in Chapter six, within this neoliberal nexus between ‘diversity’ and ‘creativity’, the cultural diversity initiative has the danger of becoming diluted into ‘personal lifestyles and cosmopolitan consumerism’ (Modood 1997, 21).

This thesis has argued that the culturalisation of policy rhetoric has played a pivotal role in legitimising the development of social policies for migrants. And in this formulation, ‘culture’ is identified as the source of the problem – not only in the sense of migrants’ ‘cultural’ differences and their lack of embodiment of ‘Korean culture’ but also as in native Koreans’ lack of multi-‘cultural’ awareness. At the same time, this thesis has shown that multi-‘culture’ is presented as a valuable resource for national renewal under neoliberal globalisation. In this regard, the cultural diversity framework is likely to fall short of intervening in the culturalisation of differences and to be co-opted by the hegemonic process of producing neoliberal subjects, at least in its current form.

Furthermore, in the current conjuncture, where the European backlash discourse of multiculturalism is fervently recited by Korean anti-multiculturalists, affecting the scholarly and policy discourse of multiculturalism, the easy dismissal of the term multiculturalism may do more harm than good. In this vein, my criticisms on the politics of hush, operating in contemporary multicultural discourse, do not suggest that multiculturalism be abandoned. In my opinion, what is more crucial than an alternative labelling of multiculturalism or a simplistic rejection of multiculturalism

as a viable political project, is not to give up critical interventions in the discursive space of multiculturalism where various ideas are debated. Indeed, the main aim of this thesis has been to attend to the laborious struggle over the meanings and impacts of differences, constructed through this space, while carefully listening to the silences and tracking down the process of silencing. In the end, what matters is not just how differences are named and how much they are valued, but to investigate what conditions and sustains such politics of naming, differentiation, and silencing, and to what extent such practices are of significance for the critical renewal of the politics of justice.

The study of cultural policy needs to grasp the simple fact that cultural policies cannot be considered as neutral forms of public intervention, but are the gate to understand ‘what a society holds to be “cultural”’ and also ‘a way of moulding values into formal shapes, and formal shapes into values’ (Simonin 2003, 116-117). From this perspective, the present study invites further investigation into how Koreanness is constantly constructed and reconstructed through cultural policies, in a manner that does not avoid the vexed question of ‘race’. Furthermore, the conceptualisation of the dominant mode of multicultural politics, as the politics of hush in South Korea, might be further tested in other contexts. In particular, East Asian countries seem to provide fruitful terrain for comparative research, in that multicultural discourse is an emerging phenomenon, and racial formations of this region seem to be based on similar (yet differentiated) socio-historical experiences. In addition, as mentioned earlier, a more in-depth examination of differential racialisation processes and their intersections with the structuring influence of other social categories (such as class and gender) ought to be conducted, in a manner that

carefully looks into migrants' articulations of their experiences and identities. Building upon this, further inquiry might be carried out on the conditions for alternative diversity politics that mobilise intersectional solidarity and defy the politics of hush and the neoliberal absorption of diversity. For this, the complexities of everyday interactions that shape actors' identities, social relations and attitudes towards otherness, and the practices of everyday solidarities that disrupt the dominant politics of in/exclusion (within and also beyond ethnic/cultural lines), ought to be further investigated.

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Appendices

Respondent Table

Respondent	Initial	Gender	Activity	Ethnic group	Nationality	Date of Interview	Interview language
1	HS	M	TV producer	Korean	Korean	17/02/12	Korean
2	KH	F	TV producer	Korean	Korean	14/02/12	Korean
3	PK	M	Journalist	Korean	Korean	03/02/12	Korean
4	IY	M	Journalist	Korean	Korean	16/01/12	Korean
5	HS	F	TV writer	Korean	Korean	13/01/12	Korean
6	CŪ	F	TV writer	Korean	Korean	13/01/12	Korean
7	HJ	F	Assistant to MP	Korean	Korean	16/02/12	Korean
8	YM	M	Assistant to MP	Korean	Korean	25/01/12	Korean
9	AM	F	Gov. official (MGEF)	Korean	Korean	09/02/12	Korean
10	NS	M	Gov. official (KIS, MJ)	Korean	Korean	09/02/12	Korean
11	JY	F	Gov. official (MCST)	Korean	Korean	06/02/12	Korean
12	YH	M	Multicultural school (Headmaster)	Korean	Korean	02/02/12	Korean
13	SH	M	Multicultural school (Chairman)	Korean	Korean	21/02/12	Korean
14	JH	F	Migrant women support centre (GO)	Korean	Korean	08/02/12	Korean
15	WJ	M	Migrant youth support centre (GO)	Korean	Korean	27/01/12	Korean

16	JB	F	Multicultural Family support centre, HQ (GO)	Korean	Korean	25/01/12	Korean
17	HS	F	Migrant women support centre, HQ (GO)	Korean	Korean	18/01/12	Korean
18	KJ	F	Multicultural Family support centre (GO)	Korean	Korean	17/01/12	Korean
19	P	M	Global Village Centre (GO)	White Canadian	Canadian	13/01/12	English
20	RS	M	Anti-multiculturalist group	Korean	Korean	04/02/12	Korean
21	HM	M	Anti-multiculturalist group	Korean	Korean	08/02/12	Korean
22	SW	M	Anti-multiculturalist group	Korean	Korean	22/01/12	Korean
23	HD	M	Anti-multiculturalist group	Korean	Korean	11/01/12	Korean
24	YJ	M	Anti-multiculturalist group	Korean	Korean	17/01/12	Korean
25	HS	F	Migrant counsellor (Migrant women support centre, GO), Marriage migrant	Korean Chinese	Chinese	11/02/12	Korean
26	RM	F	Migrant counsellor (Migrant women support centre, GO), Marriage migrant	Korean Chinese	Korean	11/02/12	Korean
27	B	F	Migrant counsellor (Migrant women support centre, GO), Marriage migrant	Thai	Korean	11/02/12	Korean, English
28	D	M	Migrant activist (NGO)	Nepalese	Nepalese	26/01/12	Korean
29	U	M	Migrant activist (NGO)	Nepalese	Nepalese	12/01/12	Korean
30	QF	F	Migrant activist	Filipino	Filipino	20/01/12	English
31	CI	M	Migrant right activist (NGO)	Korean	Korean	07/01/12	Korean
32	IS	M	Migrant right activist (pastor)	Korean	Korean	18/01/12	Korean
33	Y	M	Migrant right activist (priest)	Korean	Korean	14/01/12	Korean
34	DK	M	Migrant right activist (NGO)	Korean	Korean	16/01/12	Korean
35	JM	F	Migrant right activist (NGO)	Korean	Korean	19/01/12	Korean

36	SW	F	Migrant right activist (NGO)	Korean American	American	21/01/12	English, Korean
37	E	F	Migrant right activist (NGO)	Korean	Korean	02/02/12	Korean
38	PÚ	M	Migrant right activist (pastor)	Korean	Korean	03/02/12	Korean
39	SH	F	Migrant right activist (NGO)	Korean	Korean	07/02/12	Korean
40	SY	M	Migrant right activist (NGO)	Korean	Korean	16/02/12	Korean
41	SK	M	Migrant right activist (pastor)	Korean	Korean	05/02/12	Korean
42	SH	M	Migrant right activist (pastor)	Korean	Korean	21/02/12	Korean
43	S	M	Migrant worker	Cambodian	Cambodian	07/01/12	Korean, English
44	JS	F	Migrant domestic worker	Korean Chinese	Chinese	18/02/12	Korean
45	RM	F	Artist who works with migrants	Korean	Korean	13/02/12	Korean

Support for Multicultural Families Act

Act No.8937,Mar.21,2008

Act No.9932,Jan.18,2010

Article 1 (Purpose)

The purpose of this Act is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of multi-cultural family members and the unity of society by helping multi-cultural family members enjoy stable family living.

Article 2 (Definitions)

The definitions of terms used in this Act shall be as follows:

1. The term “multi-cultural family” means a family falling under any of the following items:
 - (a) A family comprised of a married immigrant under subparagraph 3 of Article 2 of the Framework Act on Treatment of Foreigners Residing in the Republic of Korea and a person who acquired the nationality of the Republic of Korea by birth pursuant to Article 2 of the Nationality Act;
 - (b) A family comprised of a person who obtained permission for naturalization under Article 4 of the Nationality Act and a person who acquired the nationality of the Republic of Korea by birth pursuant to Article 2 of the aforesaid Act;
2. The term “married immigrant or naturalized citizen, etc.” means any of the following persons:
 - (a) A married immigrant defined in subparagraph 3 of Article 2 of the Framework Act on Treatment of Foreigners Residing in the Republic of Korea;
 - (b) A person who obtained permission for naturalization under Article 4 of the Nationality Act.

Article 3 (Responsibilities of State and Local Governments)

- (1) The State and local governments shall develop systems and conditions necessary to help multi-cultural family members enjoy stable family living and shall establish and implement policies therefor.
- (2) With regard to matters concerning relevant policies on foreigners among policies under this Act, the State and local governments shall each comply with Articles 5 through 9 of the Framework Act on Treatment of Foreigners Residing in the Republic of Korea.

Article 4 (Fact-finding Survey)

- (1) The Minister of Gender Equality and Family shall conduct a fact-finding survey on multi-cultural families every three years and announce the results thereof to ascertain the current status

and actual conditions of multi-cultural families and to utilize the results thereof in establishing a policy for supporting multi-cultural families. *<Amended by Act No. 9932, Jan. 18, 2010>*

(2) The Minister of Gender Equality and Family may request any related public agency, legal entity, or organization to furnish him/her with data as may be necessary for the survey under paragraph (1) or to cooperate in such survey, otherwise. In such cases, the related public agency, legal entity, or organization requested to furnish data or cooperate in a survey shall cooperate as requested, unless there are any exceptional circumstances otherwise. *<Amended by Act No. 9932, Jan. 18, 2010>*

(3) The Minister of Gender Equality and Family shall consult with the Minister of Justice with regard to matters relevant to policies on foreigners in conducting the fact-finding survey under paragraph (1). *<Amended by Act No. 9932, Jan. 18, 2010>*

(4) Matters necessary for the participants and method of the fact-finding survey under paragraph (1) and other relevant matters shall be prescribed by Ordinance of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. *<Amended by Act No. 9932, Jan. 18, 2010>*

Article 5 (Enhancement of Understanding of Multi-Cultural Families)

The State and local governments shall take measures, such as education and advocacy activities for understanding diverse cultures, as necessary for preventing social discrimination and prejudice against multi-cultural families and for encouraging members of society to acknowledge and respect the cultural diversity.

Article 6 (Provision of Information about Daily Life and Educational Support)

(1) The State and local governments may provide married immigrants and naturalized citizens, etc. with fundamental information necessary for living in the Republic of Korea and may also provide them with support necessary for them to receive education for social adaptation and occupational education and training.

(2) Necessary matters concerning provision of information and education under paragraph1 shall be prescribed by Presidential Decree.

Article 7 (Measures for Maintenance of Equality in Familial Relationship)

The State and local governments shall promote programs for family counseling, couple relationship education, parenting education, family life education, etc. to help multi-cultural families maintain a democratic and gender-equal familial relationship. In such cases, efforts shall be exerted to provide specialized service, taking cultural differences into consideration.

Article 8 (Protection of and Support for Victims of Domestic Violence)

- (1) The State and local governments shall endeavor to prevent domestic violence in multi-cultural families.
- (2) The State and local governments shall endeavor to expand the establishment of counseling centers for domestic violence and protective facilities with interpretation service available for foreign languages to protect and support married immigrants and naturalized citizens, etc. victimized by domestic violence.
- (3) The State and local governments may provide married immigrants and naturalized citizens, etc. with necessary services, such as interpretation of languages, legal counselling, and administrative assistance, in making statements and finding facts when they terminate a marital relationship due to domestic violence, so that they will not be placed at a disadvantage due to difficulties in communication and lack of information about the legal system and other relevant matters.

Article 9 (Support for Health Management before and after Childbirth)

The State and local governments may provide married immigrants and naturalized citizens, etc. with necessary services, such as nutrition and health education and provision of helper service before and after childbirth, medical examination, and interpretation at the scene of medical examination, so that they can manage pregnancy and childbirth under healthy and safe conditions.

Article 10 (Care and Education of Children)

- (1) Neither the State nor local governments shall discriminate against children of any multi-cultural family in providing care and education to children.
- (2) The State and local governments shall prepare measures for educational support to children of multi-cultural families to help them quickly adapt to school life and the Superintendent of each Office of Education, whether in the Special Metropolitan City, a Metropolitan City or *Do*, or a Special Self-Governing Province, may provide children of multi-cultural families with supportive educational programs in addition to regular curricula or extra-curricular programs.
- (3) The State and local governments shall endeavor to provide children of multi-cultural families with support in care and education before entering elementary school and may provide them with support as necessary for improving their linguistic proficiency to help children develop language skills, such as support with teaching materials for education in Korean language and support for learning.

Article 11 (Provision of Services in Diverse Languages)

The State and local governments shall endeavor to provide supportive services in diverse languages in promoting supportive policies under Articles 5 through 10 to eliminate difficulties that married immigrants and naturalized citizens, etc. may have in communication and improve accessibility to such services.

Article 12 (Designation, etc. of Support Centers for Multi-Cultural Families)

- (1) The Minister of Gender Equality and Family may, if necessary for implementation of supportive policies for multi-cultural families, designate any legal entity or organization that has professional human resources and facilities necessary for supporting multi-cultural families as a support center for multi-cultural families (hereinafter referred to as “support center”). *<Amended by Act No. 9932, Jan. 18, 2010>*
- (2) Each support center shall carry out the following activities:
1. Conducting supportive activities, such as education and counseling for multi-cultural families;
 2. Providing information about supportive services for multi-cultural families and advertising such services;
 3. Interconnecting supportive services for multi-cultural families with those provided by appropriate institutions and organizations;
 4. Other activities necessary for supporting multi-cultural families.
- (3) Each support center shall have professional human resources who have knowledge and experience in related areas for carrying out its business, such as education and counseling service for multi-cultural families.
- (4) The State and local governments may subsidize fully or partially the expenses, any support center designated pursuant to paragraph (1) incurred in carrying out its business activities under subparagraphs of paragraph (2) within the extent of budget.
- (5) Matters necessary for the criteria for the designation of support centers, the effective period of, and the procedure for, the designation and other relevant matters shall be prescribed by Presidential Decree, while matters necessary for the eligibility criteria for professional human resources and other relevant matters shall be prescribed by Ordinance of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. *<Amended by Act No. 9932, Jan. 18, 2010>*

Article 13 (Education of Public Officials Involved in Supportive Services for Multi-Cultural Families)

The State and local governments may conduct educational programs for public officials who engage in any job for supporting multi-cultural families to enhance their understanding of multi-cultural families and improve their expertise.

Article 14 (Treatment of Spouses in *De Facto* Marriage and their Children)

Articles 5 through 12 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to multi-cultural family members who raise children born in a *de facto* marital relationship with a citizen of the Republic of Korea.

Article 15 (Delegation and Entrustment of Authority)

- (1) The Minister of Gender Equality and Family may delegate part of his/her authority under this Act to the Special Metropolitan City Mayor, a Metropolitan City Mayor, *Do* Governor, and

Governor of a Special Self-Governing Province (hereinafter referred to as the “Mayor/Do Governor”) or the head of a *Si/Gun/Gu* (*Gu* means an autonomous *Gu*), as prescribed by Presidential Decree. *<Amended by Act No. 9932, Jan. 18, 2010>*

(2) The State or any local government may entrust a non-profit corporation or organization with some of the business activities under this Act, as prescribed by Presidential Decree.

Article 16 (Support to Non-Governmental Organizations)

- (1) The State and local governments may subsidize any organization or private individual who carries out supportive activities for multi-cultural families, fully or partially, for expenses incurred in such activities or provide administrative assistance as necessary in carrying out such activities.
- (2) The State and local governments may assist married immigrants and naturalized citizens, etc. in organizing and operating an organization for mutual aid.

ADDENDA

- (1) (Enforcement Date) This Act shall enter into force six months after the date of its promulgation.
- (2) (Transitional Measure concerning Support Centers for Married Immigrants' Families) The support centers for married immigrants' families already designated and operated by the Minister for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, a Mayor/Do Governor, or the head of a *Si/Gun/Gu* at the time this Act enters into force are deemed to have been designated pursuant to this Act.

ADDENDA <Act No. 9932, Jan. 18, 2010>

Article 1 (Enforcement Date)

This Act shall enter into force two months after the date of its promulgation. (Proviso Omitted.)

Articles 2 through 5 Omitted.

This English translated version can be accessed at the webpage of the Ministry of Government Legislation. [<http://www.moleg.go.kr/english/korLawEng?pstSeq=52846>]