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NORTH KOREAN DIASPORA: NORTH KOREAN DEFECTORS ABROAD AND IN SOUTH KOREA

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In this article I examine empirically the state of living conditions among North Korean defectors abroad and in South Korean society, analyze the types, degrees, and causes of the problems that the defectors confront, and propose practical aid programs and poli - cies that help them adjust successfully. Findings of this study are believed to provide useful information and insights for developing policies and programs that will facilitate social integration between South Koreans and North Koreans at the time of national unification.

Data for this study came from four independent surveys of North Korean defectors con - ducted in 1998 and 2000. Additional data, which are more qualitative in nature, came from the researcher's in-depth interviews with 30 defectors. Research findings show that most defectors are experiencing both material and mental difficulties in adjusting to society, and the majority of them can be put into. the maladjustment or marginaliza - tion type of adjustment. The next prevalent adjustment type after maladjustment is isolation. There are defectors who, despite being economically stable, have not been able to take root because of the feeling of responsibility for the family left behind in the North, fear of North Korean terrorist acts, and prejudice and discrimination of South Korean residents. Only a small number of defectors can be put into the adjustment or integration type, and most of them are former students in Eastern Europe, diplomats residing in a foreign country, or workers sent out to earn hard currency. They have human resources that can be applied in South Korea, and having been exposed to the capitalist system, already have capitalist ways of thinking, which enables them to adapt quickly.

Support policy for defectors must be established with a view toward realizing their eco - nomic independence and socio-cultural integration. Until they arrive at this stage, however, they must be protected from competing with South Korean residents on the same level. Support policy at both governmental and civic levels should take into account not only economic aspects, such as competitiveness and efficiency, but also such social aspects as compensation and consideration.

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INTRODUCTION

Ever since the division of the Korean peninsula, those dissatisfied with North Korea's politics, economy and the social system or those whose very existence has been threatened have continuously fled to the South. Such a phenomenon of North Korean residents escaping the North has increased since the mid 1990s as the North's economic and food crises deteriorated and as information from the outside world infiltrated North Korean society. Although it is impossible to get an exact figure of overseas defectors, a conservative estimate would be between 30,000-50,000. Several religious groups supporting overseas defectors claim, however, that there are approximately 400-2,000 defectors in Russia and 100,000-200,000 in China (Park, 2000: 10). Because of their status as illegal residents, the overseas defectors are in constant fear of being arrested and deported by either local police or North Korean agents. Cases of human rights violations are innumerous and especially Prostitution and the trafficking of North Korean women in China have reached a particularly serious levels. Also, children 3-15 years of age move in large groups begging for food and also engage in criminal activities, creating serious problems within the Korean community in China. Having continuously experienced a series of traumatic experiences, the nutritive condition of these children is as bad as it can get. In addition, their mental status is impoverished to the extent that they do not take death seriously. The cognitive and intellectual development of these children is also seriously inhibited, due to the fact that they have no access to formal education during their wandering lives in China or Russia. Some have expressed concern that they may never function as mature members of society when they grow up to be adults (Y. Yoon, 1999).

As the number of North Korean escapees increased, so did the number of defectors wishing to enter South Korea. Until 1993, approximately 10 defectors entered South Korea annually In 1994 the number increased to 52 and more sharply to 85 in 1997. The pace of entry accelerated in the past two years: 148 defectors entered in 1990 and 312 defectors in 2000. Between January and June of 2001, 226 defectors have already entered and it is expected that 500 defectors arrive in 2001. If this trend continues, the defector population in South Korea will grow to 1,700 by the end of 2001, and will jump to 5,000 by 2005 or 2006. Given that existing defectors have difficulty adapting to a new environment, and given that the attitudes of South Koreans toward defectors have turned cold, the rapid growth of the defector population is likely to make their social adjustment more problematic

and uncertain. South Koreans have already begun using the term 'the defector problem' to refer to various issues ranging from the human rights problems of overseas defectors to social adjustment problems among defectors in South Korea.

In this study, I attempt to examine empirically the state of living conditions among North Korean defectors abroad and in South Korean society, analyze the types, degrees, and causes of the problems that the defectors confront, and propose practical aid programs and policies that help them adjust successfully. Findings of this study are believed to provide useful information and insights for developing policies and programs that will facilitate social integration between South Koreans and North Koreans at the time of national unification.

One special goal of this study is to examine an alternative form of support, which can be described as a self-help and collective adjustment model. I claim that previous studies and policies have fundamentally relied on individualistic and assimilationist approaches, and that those approaches have not been effective. In contrast, although the self-help and collective adjustment model has not been considered seriously before, it can be more cost effective and give defectors greater pride and motivation for self-support. Thus, I will investigate the possibility of developing self-reliance through self-employment in business and other forms of self-support community development.

DATA AND METHODS

Several sample surveys have been conducted recently in response to the increasing need for basic data for understanding the situations of the defector population. Congressman Young Il Lee conducted a mail survey of 168 defector households between July and August of 1998. In this survey, one person per household answered the questionnaire, for a total of 456 respondents. The Lee survey provides information on the general social and economic adjustment of the defector population.

The Ministry of Unification also conducted a mail survey with 214 respondents from the 161 defector households who had escaped to South Korea since 1990. Respondents to this survey, which was conducted between September and November of 1998, comprised 75 percent of the total 286 defectors residing in South Korea since 1990.

"Women Making Peace," a civil organization for advancing Korean women's rights, conducted a survey in which trained researchers interviewed 34 female defectors 20-70 years of age between September and

November of 1998. Thirty-five percent of the 96 total female defectors residing in South Korea in 1998 participated in the survey. This survey provides valuable information on the adjustment conditions of female defectors, which had been overlooked by previous studies.

I myself conducted a mail survey during September and November, 2000 with a sample of the defectors who entered South Korea between 1970 and 1999 and were between 20 and 60 years of old at the time of the survey. These people were working or had work experience since their arrival. Ninety-two people were randomly selected from the register of defectors. Seventy-seven of those selected participated in the survey, resulting in a response rate 84 percent. Data from this survey provide information on employment situations and workplace adjustment of defectors.

The four surveys mentioned above differ in such characteristics as sample size, sampling frame, and questions asked, and therefore it is difficult to compare their results. Nevertheless, the credibility of the data can be acknowledged because they show similar and consistent results along the same criteria. I have utilized data from the four surveys to examine the demographic characteristics and living conditions of the defector population.

Like many survey results, the aforementioned data lack information on detailed processes of adjustment and the psychological conditions of defectors. To supplement these deficiencies, I conducted in-depth interviews with thirty defectors between January and February of 1998. The in-depth interviews took two hours on average and delved deeply into such diverse spheres as demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, motives for and routes of escape, and situations of economic, social, and psychological adjustment after arrival in South Korea. I was especially interested to learn. Especially, I inquired the informants' evaluations of such existing "assimilationist" policies as vocational training and re-socialization education, their opinions about the alternative "self-help approach," and their tried assessments of the possibility of its implementation. Because most of the interviews were conducted within the residences of the informants, I was able to catch a glimpse of their habitation and everyday life. Also, I had meals or tea after the interviews, trying to produce as private and natural an atmosphere as possible in which to listen to their opinions. The substance of each interview was recorded on tape, with the consent of the informants, and was later transcribed verbatim. The transcribed notes were then used for in-depth analyses.

The informants were not chosen at randorn from the defector population, but introduced by agents of defector support groups. Once one informant

was interviewed, he/she introduced another informant. Snowball sampling techniques do not usually produce results that may be generalized to the population. However, it is the most realistic and easiest approach at this point of time, because access to defectors is strictly controlled by the government. Class background and route of escape were considered for balanced selection of informants and to ensure that people from all classes were included. In order to acquire an objective perspective on the adjustment process of defectors, additional interviews were conducted with experts and workers within organizations assisting with the settlement of defectors.

INTEGRATED UNDERSTANDING OF DEFECTION AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

The processes by which North Korean residents decide to cross the border, stay abroad, enter South Korea and undergo social adjustment are closely interlinked. Current research on North Korean defectors, however, has not sufficiently examined such chains of processes, treating them instead as separate processes. For this reason, it is important to analyze how factors at various stages — pre-departure, overseas stay, and entry and adjustment — are interrelated, and how experience at each stage affect the types and levels of social adjustment as the final outcome. Thus, I attempt to make a synthetic analysis of the experiences of defection, overseas stay, and social adjustment of North Korean defectors.

Pre-departure stage

For most defectors, defection occurred when they felt threatened after having expressed skepticism and criticism of the North Korean system. It materialized from a combination of ideological conversion and perceived threat of death. These who were most likely to experience this combination were those who had external contacts who realized the inconsistency and concoction of the North Korean system, and those specified as "the hostile class" who endure surveillance and molestation with no bright future. Students studying abroad, diplomats, woodcutters from Russia, and traders sent out to earn foreign currency comprise a considerable proportion of the defector population, for they came to realize the inconsistency and concoction of North Korean society. After the opening of China in the 1980s, the news of South Korea's economic development began to reach North Koreans by way of Korean Chinese, instigating defection to South Korea.

Also, the report that more than 47 percent of defectors came from the regions bordering Russia and China illustrates the importance of contact with the outside world as a key motive for escape (Y. Yoon, 1999).

Motives for defection differ by time period. Until the early 1990s, motives tended to be mostly ideological, having to do with dissatisfaction with the North Korean system and unfavorable comparison to that of South Korea. People motivated by these reasons included soldiers, diplomats, students, and traders sent abroad. Since the mid 1990s, particularly after the death of Kim Il-Sung in 1994, economic motives caused by the food crisis became more dominant. As economic conditions continued to deteriorate in the late 1990s, and as individuals had to eke out their living by all means including illegal ones, such individual motives, as dissatisfaction with treatment, class disadvantage, and fear of punishment for wrong-doings like embezzlement and adultery, became apparent. For these reasons, increasing proportions of defectors currently come from the lower classes of North Korea, such as laborers, farmers, and unemployed people. Also, beginning in the late declined as compared to long-term stayers and defectors. Short-term stayers are those who trangress the border in search of food, and who stay abroad temporarily — usually for several weeks. Long-term stayers stay abroad for periods of several months, and defectors are those seeking political asylum, who have no intent to reture to North Korea. The number of long-term stayers and defectors has increased since the late 1990s.

Another important development in the defection process is the formation of social networks linking North Korea, China, and South Korea. Such networks facilitate the flow and exchange of information and resources (including money) internationally, and makes it easier for would-be-defectors to achieve their goals. In return for expensive fees — often exceeding $8,000 professional brokers provide services to their clients where by they safely transport family members left behind in North Korea, first to China and them to South Korea. The brokers have built an international division of labor among ex-defectors in South Korea, Korea Chinese in China, and corrupt security agents in North Korea. As a result, nowadays defection takes a form of chain migration. In fact, more than half of incoming defectors in the past several years are reported to have had parents, siblings, and other kin in South Korea prior to their arrival. As defection became routine and institutionalized, the background characteristics of defectors became more diverse with respect to age, sex, social class, and region of origin. Particularly, the number and proportion of families, women, children, and the elderly have increased considerably: women accounted for more than 40 percent of the total number of incoming defectors in 2000. Consequently,

patterns of social adjustment became more diverse and new problems, such as divorce, domestic violence, and generational conflicts, began to emerge within the defector population.

Overseas stay stage

The most common routes taken by North Koreans to South Korea involve moving first to third countries and then escaping to South Korea. Other routes involve direct escape to the South by sea or by crossing the DMZ. Although escape routes have diversified recently, in the 1960s, 60 percent of defectors came to South Korea by sea or through DMZ. After the 1980s, the majority of them escaped by way of third countries, such as China and Russia (Park, Kim, and Lee, 1996). In the late 1990s, however, it became difficult to seek political asylum in China and Russia, so defectors began taking long detours through such neighboring countries as Mongolia, Thailand, Myanmar (the former Burmar).

Those who flee North Korea attempt to apply for political asylum as defectors. The application for seeking asylum can be submitted to the government or, to the Korean embassy/consulate of the country in which they are staying, to the UNHCR, or the International Red Cross. The Chinese government has consistently claimed that North Korean defectors are economic migrants, not political refugees, and it has continued to deport arrested defectors to North Korea. Korean embassies abroad have shown lukewarm attitudes toward overseas defectors, although the Korean government proclaims that it would accept all defectors regardless of their status.

Defectors denied refugee status are referred to the UNHCR or the International Red Cross requesting that they be afforded defector treatment. The UNHCR or the Red Cross investigates the validity of the applicant's status as a North Korean citizen and, when the applicant's status is confirmed, requests the Korean embassy to receive them and grant them political asylum under International Law and in the spirit of humanitarianism. Whether asylum will be granted in this method, however, is not assured. The UNHCR branch office in China has a tendency to regard North Korean defectors as economic migrants pushed by food crisis in North Korea, and therefore adopts a policy of denying asylum to these people. Even if asylum is granted, defectars must wait at least six months, enduring deprivation of board, lodging and other basic needs, and facing the persistent threat of arrestor repatriation by North Korean security agents. They barely survive under double or triple pain and suffering. While staying in China and Russia, many defectors receive material and spiritual help from missionar-

ies and pastors, and many have embraced Christianity as a result. Two thirds of defectors entering South Korea after 1990 reported religious affiliations, and an absolute majority of them were either Catholics or Protestant (Ministry of Unification, 1998).

Since the mid-1990s, as legal entry to South Korea became more difficult, many North Koreans began resorting to illegal methods, such as passport forgery and maritime smuggling. Currently more than 90 percent of incoming defectors to South Korea are said to enter through illegal means, and it seems that the South Korean government has lost its capability to control the inflow of defectors.

For most defectors, escape from North Korea is an extremely dangerous adventure that involves risking their lives. The aftermath of the physical and spiritual shock they acquire during the process remains for a long time. As compensation for their risk-taking, they expect to lead lives of freedom and affluence when arriving in the South. Such expectations are likely to break down, however, as they clash with stark reality, and fall into disappointment and despair.

Arrival and social adjustment stage

Arriving defectors take the following steps into South Korean society. Immediately following their arrival at the airport, they are taken to a facility for investigation and accommodation operated by the Intelligence Command under the Ministry of National Defense. In the past, a month-long check on their social status was made in the facility, followed by a second stage of intelligence investigation lasting approximately five months. After a rehabilitation and education facility, called "Hanawon" (meaning the House of Unity in Korean), was built in July, 1999, incoming defectors have gone through a month-long interrogation at the military facility and have then been moved to Hanawon to receive social adjustment education for three months. After this 3-month period, they are transferred into the hands of appropriate police officers who take charge of them for a residence protection period of one or two years.

After the four months of investigation and education, defectors go to live in society, but networks of support systems are yet not well established to support their adjustment to society. Since Hanawon was established, professional counselors have begun to measure individual aptitude, ability, psychological and physical health. They also provide counseling and guidance. Such services are limited in scope and effectiveness, however, due to time constraints and insufficient manpower. The limited resources of Hanawon

make it difficult for its staff to provide education and training tailored to individual needs and circumstances. Moreover, preparation at Hanawon does not increase significantly defectors' chances of getting jobs or of successfully adjusting in society. Success in adapting to South Korean society, therefore, depends mostly on individual effort or support from other people.

Under these circumstances, the role of the police officer in charge is all the more important. According to the government's management of defectors, a defector who finishes the four-month period of investigation and education is put under the supervision of a security police officer for one or two years in the local area where the defector resides. Such an officer is usually not from one of the intelligence departments that handle North Korea, and so has no knowledge of state of affairs in North Korea, of the defector's motive for escape, or of his or her personal background and current circumstances. The officer is also too busy working on his or her main duties to execute additional protecting and monitoring duty for the defector. It is difficult for the officer to make a real commitment to helping the defector to adjust. In spite of this, the officer must introduce the defector to a job, find a temporary residence until he or she can move to a leased apartment, and must also teach him or her such everyday survival skills as buying goods at the market or riding the subway. When the defector travels to a different region to give a speech, the officer must take the pains to accompany him or her. Such a management system essentially shifts the responsibilities of the government into the hands of a police officer without sufficient compensation. So, if a defector meets an officer who is kind and has good connections, he or she can get introduced to a good workplace and meet good sponsors, thus making a good start in adapting to normal life. On the other hand, under the supervision of a dishonest or irresponsible officer, a defector may not only fail to get a job, but may squander all the settling funds in debauchery leaving him penniless in the end.

In my opinion, one of the fundamental reasons the government has not set up a comprehensive system for the adjustment of defectors is that priority is given to national security issues, naturally pushing their adjustment problem down the ladder of importance. Under the circumstances of North-South confrontation, a defector may be a spy in guise, or he or she may become the target of terrorist acts, which justifies the inevitability of investigating and protecting defectors.[1] After risking their lives in escaping from

[1]An example is the murder of Lee Han-Young, the nephew of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il, which occurred February 1997. Before his death, Lee disclosed to the South Korean

North Korea to seek out freedom, however, when the first people they meet in the South are investigators who doubt and examine their motives for escape, and when they witness police officers tracking their lives for one or two further years, it is highly probable that defectors develop a negative image of the South. Additionally, cutting them off from outer society for four precious months (more than six months until 1997), failing to provide them with practical education on social life, common knowledge, work befitting their skills and aptitude, or training, only delays their adjustment to society.

LONG-TERM ADJUSTMENT AND RELATED PROBLEMS

Adjustment is the state and process of an individual coming into harmony with diverse social circumstances and conditions. More specifically, adjustment can be seen as "a condition in which an individual's inner, psychological desires come into harmony with external, social environments, enabling him or her to live satisfied without desperation and insecurity." Several scholars have analyzed the adjustment of defectors in South Korean society from diverse angles. In this study, I classify simply the adjustment into a material (or economic) side and mental (psychological) side, and examine therelationship between these dimensions. Material adjustment involies the acquisition of income, skills, and jobs to lead an independent life in the host society. Mental adjustment refers to having a sense of belonging to host society as a full and equal member of society. Complete adjustment can be said to be a state where material and mental adjustment are realized at the same time. Sometimes, these two aspects do not concur, and we can assume four patterns of adjustment as shown in Table 1.

Type I is a state where complete adjustment is fulfilled, both materially and mentally, and can be called integration. Type II is the case where suc-

TABLE 1. TYPOLOGY OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OF NORTH KOREAN DEFECTORS

		Mental Adjustment	
		Success	Failure
Material Adjustment	Success	I. Full Adjustment (Integration)	II. Partial Adjustment (Isolation)
	Failure	III. Partial Adjustment (Acculturation)	IV. Maladjustment (Marginality)

mass media Kim's private and bizarre life styles.

cessful material adjustment has been achieved, but mentally has not acquired a sense of belonging to host society and does not actively participate, hence resulting in a state that can be called isolation. Type III is also a kind of partial adjustment where although materially maladjusted, mental uniformity with host society has been reached, and we can call this state acculturation. Type IV represents the case of failure to adjust both materially and mentally, circulating around the circumference resulting in marginality.[2]

Table 1 is only an idealized simplification for analysis, and adjustment can not be categorized into success and failure, so in real life, adjustment types will be much more complex and diverse. Still, it is a useful analytic tool in that it makes it possible to discern the factors that influence the adjustment process by categorizing actual cases of defectors into these four types and by analyzing individual characteristics and environmental peculiarities of them for each type.

Material adjustment

Previous studies and my own interviews with defectors show consistently that most defectors have difficulty with the material (economic) aspects of adjustment. Those who have gotten jobs in large private firms or public corporations have secure occupations and careers, but they compose only a small part of the defector population. The majority of defectors are either unemployed or underemployed in terms of work hours and wages. According to the results of the Congressman Lee survey, 39.2 percent of respondents report being unemployed. Those employed at stable workplaces amounted to only 23 percent of the total respondents. The results of the Ministry of Unification survey showed the unemployment rate of defectors to be 34 percent. In a survey conducted in 1996 by a North Korean defector fraternity, 36 percent of the total 561 respondents were unemployed. By comparing the results of the two surveys, we can conclude that the unemployment problem of defectors has not improved much (Lee and Kim, 1996: 36). Similarly, in the same survey, only 24 of 561 respondents, (about 4.2 percent), answered that they were working in the same fields as they had in North Korea (Sun, 1995: 78-79). Besides the problem of job mismatching, working defectors suffer from job insecurity, low income, and

[2]The idea for this typology was given by Berry (1987) in his study of minorities national identity in multiracial countries like Canada. He proposed the four types of isolation, integration, assimilation, and marginalization, classified according to the intercourse between relationship with other race and nationalities and national identity.

TABLE 2. OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF DEFECTORS (%)

Occupation	Lee survey	Occupation	MOU survey	Occupation	WMP survey	Occupation	Yoo survey
Wage worker	19.6	Wage worker	21.5	Clerical	11.8	Professional	1.7
Commerce	3.6	Business	8.4	Service	5.9	Administrative	3.4
Business	6.5	Public official	2.7	Business	5.9	Clerical	31.0
Public official	6.0	Farming/fishing	0.9	Full-time housewife	35.3	Technical	3.4
Education	0.0	Researcher	2.3			Business	15.5
College student	8.9	Student	13.1	Part-time housewife	5.9	Service/Sales	13.8
Laborer	3.0	Labor	7.0			Production	20.7
Unemployed	39.2	Unemployed	29.4	Student	20.6	Other	6.9
Other	13.7	Other	1.4	Unemployed	14.7	No Answer	3.4
No Answer	1.2	No Answer	13.6				
N	168	N	214	N	34	N	58

Source: Lee Young-Il Survey (1998); Ministry of Unification Survey (1998); Women Making Peace Survey (1999); In-Jin Yoon Survey (2000).

Note: The occupational classifications differ slighty among the four surveys. They are presented here without modification. The Yoon survey includes only economically active people who were employed at the time of the survey or had once worked.

concentration in lower-ranking clerical, production, service, and sales jobs (Yoon, 2000).

The unemployment problem for female defectors is more serious and is frequently neglected because even male household heads have hard time getting jobs. As we see in Table 2, only 10 out of the total 34 respondents (29.4%) engaged in gainful employment. However, 79 percent of the respondents reported that they had engaged in economic activities in North Korea, and 82.4 percent of them expressed a desire to work. Given the low rate of employment, such desires must result in a strong sense of frustration.

Without stable occupations, defectors are unable to earn enough income to sustain independent lives. According to the results of the Lee survey, the average monthly income of the 107 respondents who disclosed their incomes was 700,000 Won ($551), and three-quarters had incomes lower than 1,000,000 Won ($787). If we consider that the average monthly income of urban workers is about 1,500,000 Won ($1,181), the defectors earn less than half the income of South Korean residents. To make matters even gloomier, of the total 168 respondents, 36.3 percent (61 respondents) refused to disclose their incomes. Because a large part of them are likely to have had no income, it is likely for the income condition of the defectors to be worse than as reported in Table 3. The MOU survey results show that 36 percent had an average incomes below 500,000 Won ($394) per month, and 80.8 per-

TABLE 3. AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME OF DEFECTORS (%) (Unit: 10,000 Won($7))

Income	Lee survey	Income	MOU survey	Income	WMP survey	Income	Yoon survey
Below 20	12.1	Below 50	36.0	Below 50	35.3	No income	5.2
20-50	21.4	50-100	44.8	51-70	23.5	Below 50	8.6
51-80	26.2	101-200	11.2	71-100	20.6	50-100	39.7
81-100	15.0	Over 201	8.0	101-200	11.8	100-150	31.0
101-160	11.2	Sum(%)	100.0	201-300	8.8	150-200	8.6
161-220	10.3			Sum(%)	100.0	Over 200	6.9
221-300	1.8					Sum(%)	100.0
Over 301	1.9						
Sum(%)	100.0						
N	168	N	214	N	34	N	58

Source: same as TABLE 2.

cent had incomes below 1,000,000 Won ($787). It is to be noted that 25.5 percent did not respond to this question, and it is highly probable that most of them had monthly incomes lower than 500,000 Won. According to a more recent Yoon survey, about half of 58 respondents earned less than 1,000,000 Won per month. We can know from these results that a majority of defectors fail to adjust economically.

Mental adjustment

No less serious than those of material adjustment are the problems defectors have in mental adjustment. The Less Survey asked, "What is the greatest difficulty you have in living in South Korea?" 58.3 percent of respondents listed economic difficulties, but 20.8 percent indicated sociocultural differences. Defector respondents listed economic inequalities, the breakdown of social ethics, corruption and embezzlement among public officials, and the vulgarity of popular culture as problems of South Korea in comparison to North Korea. My own interviews with defectors illustrate that they recognize that South Korea is economically more affluent and productive than the North, but think of it as a society ruled by survival of the fittest and materialism. Especially, to them it is an inhumane society that gives no heed to the socially disadvantaged like themselves. Their perception of the capitalist system is double edged, however. North Korean defectors are attracted to the idea of a competitive society where they are free and are able to make the best of their abilities, and they want to succeed by making lots of money. On the other hand, as those who have experienced social disadvantage and who have been pushed aside by the harsh competition and

achievement oriented tendency, such a system seems cruel and egoistic.

After trying to adjust and failing, defectors may find themselves in a psychological state of estrangement or marginalization. Many feel ignored or mistreated by the South Korean government and citizens, and this resentment grows as their period of settlement lengthens. They are also negative about the attitude of South Korean residents towards them. At a conference hosted by the Five Northern Provinces Committee to cheer up defectors, one defector pointed out how miserly South Koreans are in supporting defectors by saying, "When we meet South Koreans, they just throw us hollow praises such as "How brave you are!", but when we ask them to help us, they coldly refuse."

One defector I interviewed currently holds secure employment is a public corporation, and is on good terms his colleagues at work. He had many hardships and trouble with his colleagues at first, however. He was often absent from work because of outside speeches, was not adept at his work, and he had especially much trouble with colleagues who thought he was protected by seniors in the company and earned a large salary despite his shortcomings. One of his co-workers, who harbored such feelings, was his partner at a billiard game in which they had placed bets. As they lost because of his (the defector's) lack of skill, his partner blamed him and said, "Can't you even play billiard if you cross the Tumen River?" (The Tumen River is a natural boundary between North Korea and China.) This led to a fight, resulting in a three-week injury for which he had to compensate, and was also greatly distressed during this period.

This defector also encountered great difficulty marrying his wife, due to the prejudice and social gap South Korean residents hold towards North Korean defectors. He was introduced to his wife a student at the university. Only on the third time they met did he disclose the fact that he was a defector. As they got closer and made plans to marry, his wife's parents, who belatedly discovered he was a defector, took her to the province by force, and urged them to split. His mother-in-law even said, "I would rather consent to an American hoodlum". In the end, he got the consent to marry, but this example shows how difficult it is for defectors to be accepted as members of South Korean society. As such experiences accumulate, the feeling of isolation deepens.

As observed above, most defectors experience both material and mental difficulties in adjusting to society, and the majority can be described as experiencing "maladjustment" or "marginalization", as presented in Table 1. Maladjustment to South Korean society often leads to deviation and criminal activities.

The next most prevalent adjustment type after maladjustment is "isolation." There are defectors who, despite being economically stable through secure and adequate employment, have not been able to take root due to feelings of responsibility for family members left behind in the North, fear of North Korean terrorist acts, and the prejudice and discrimination of South Korean residents toward defectors. This leads to exclusive socializing with other defectors thus being unable to establish friendly relations or acquire a sense of solidarity with South Koreans. Although this result could be due to weak determination to adjust on the part of the defector, a more likely explanation is the critical and discriminatory perception of South Koreans. Common prejudices of South Koreans against defectors expressed as "How ruthless are they to leave their family back in the North, just for their own wellbeing?" "Don't trust them, because someone who has betrayed once is likely to do it again." "They just demand without trying themselves." When defectors confront such negative and contemptuous attitudes among South Koreans, they are drawn back psychologically and feel isolated, which becomes a hindrance to acquiring a sense of social belonging.

Only a small number of defectors can be described as experiencing "adjustment" or "integration" types, and most of them are former Eastern European students, diplomats residing in foreign countries, or workers sent out to earn hard currency. They have human resources that can be applied to South Korea and, having been exposed to the capitalist system, have already acquired capitalist ways of thinking, which helps them to adapt quickly. Some of them have left secure employment in large private firms or public corporations to start businesses for themselves. Such entrepreneurs are the class that is most likeey to lead a transformation into a capitalist sense of self. Another case of successful adjustment is that of those who repeat or start their university educations in the South. Through their four years in college, they obtain common and professional knowledge, and methods of personal relations necessary for living in South Korea. Thanks to their college education, they receive the chance to apply for administrative and professional jobs in large private firms or public corporations. Through the working experiences, they learn even more about the operation of an organization and techniques of personal relations. Even if they quit to establish their own business, the experience and connection acquired at that time remain big assets.

Finally, "acculturation," which describes success is in adjusting psychologically in spite of material maladjustment, is only a theoretical possibility without actual probability at this time. We can infer from the adjustment

types that material adjustment cannot be a sufficient condition, but is a necessary condition. Therefore, for the adjustment of defectors, it is necessary to support them in obtaining income and secure jobs in order to establish economic independence. In addition, social connection to non-governmental institutions (religious, civil, welfare institutions, etc.) and to members of South Korean society should arranged. According to the MOU survey, only 14 percent of respondents participated in fraternities, indicating that defectors are inept at setting up social connections and relationships (MOU, 1998). The Yoon survey also points out that defectors acquire information about employment for themselves or with the help of the Ministry of Unification or police officers in charge (Yoon, 2000). It is quite rare that they acquire job-related information through South Korean residents, religious or civil organizations. Also, in times of difficulty, they are most likely to consult mainly family members, fellow defectors, and police officers. Therefore, it is imperative that social connections be expanded so they can establish links to South Korean resources (job and educational opportunities, private relationships).

FACTORS OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

Different types of adjustment are thought to result from a number of factors, first among which are the demographic characteristics of individual defectors. Such factors as age, marital status, family type and size greatly influence the socioeconomic adjustment of defectors. As shown in Table 4, 42.1 percent of defectors who entered the country after 1990 were in their thirties, followed by 17.8 percent in their twenties and 16.8 percent in their forties. Age is inversely related to social adjustment: those who are younger at the time of entry are more likely to adapt quickly to South Korean society. Those who are in the forties or fifties have difficulty, however, receiving job-related education or training and are subject to age discrimination. For example, Mr. W. Kim (58) came by boat to the western coast with his family of eight. Because he had experience driving automobiles in the North, he received a six-month automobile repair course, and even obtained a certificate. When he sought out employment at the local car repair center, however, the owner refused by saying, "How can I employ a person who is my father's age?" He tried unsuccessfully several more times and then gave up any hope of working.

Marriage enhances a defector's psychological stability. If the spouse is a South Korean resident, the defector is able to obtain information and opportunity through his/her in-laws' connections. In addition, if they are of the

TABLE 4. DEMOGRAPHIC AND FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS OF DEFECTORS (%)

Characteristic	Percent	Characteristic	Percent
Gender		Marriage	
Male	77.6	Married	37.9
Female	22.4	Unmarried	62.1
N	214	N	214
Age		Family Size	
10's	8.4	One	36.3
20's	17.8	Two	20.8
30's	42.1	Three	23.8
40's	16.8	Four	9.5
50's	8.4	More than 5	9.5
60's	5.6	No Answer	0.0
No Answer	0.9		
N	214	N	168

Source: Lee survey (1998).

age where both spouses can work, this can lead to higher income. In reality, most defectors who got married in the South married working women who continued to work after marriage, thereby playing an important role in compensating for the husband's unemployment or low income. Defectors who are not able to marry at the proper age however, first feel a sense of psychological isolation and culture shock, and secondly must resolve the problems of obtaining employment and information necessary for adjustment. Table 4 shows that 37.9 percent of defectors live alone. Most unmarried defectors want to get married, but because of unrealistically high levels of expectation, and because of the prejudice of South Koreans, it usually does not work out (Oh, 1995). Defectors have a tendency to overestimate themselves and look for women of much higher standing than their own circumstances warrant. Another barrier to marriage comes from the opposition of the prospective spouse's parents, who may be reluctant to give up their child to a defector.

Another family characteristic important to success in adjustment is family size. Entire families who escape together usually achieve economic and psychological stability faster than those who escaped alone. For example, Mr. Y. Lee (58), who escaped with his family of nine in 1997, works as a guard at an apartment, earning 500,000 Won ($394) a month. With the government subsidy and support from his children, however, he is able to lead a life that is, if not affluent, still comfortable. His daughter works at an administrative post in a Seoul church and earns 800,000 Won ($630) per month. The

amount each member of the family earns is not that much, but together, amounts to a substantial sum. The Lee family saves 500,000 Won each month, and the total saving since their escape has amounted to 8,400,000 Won ($6,614). When a family combines its economic endeavors, it not only accelerates economic stability, but also provides psychological stability to family members.

Secondly, the socioeconomic background of defectors is the most important factor determining speed and extent of social adjustment. For many defectors, social status in North Korea tends to repeat itself in South Korea, and this leads to class differentiation within the defector population. Defectors who were students in Eastern Europe are said to have adapted most successfully, and this comes from them having high intellectual abilities, superior human resources, and the ability to adapt to changing environments quickly. For example, Mr. J. Kim entered South Korea in August 1990, and operates a computer software production. He studied Applied Mathematics and Dynamics in Khavarovsk, Ukraine of the old Soviet Union. Through utilizing his connections he set up during this time, he imports less expensive, highly skilled programmers from Russia to produce computer game softwares. Other students-turned defectors enter Korean universities, and through their four years of re-education, they socialize freely with South Korean students and experience the society and culture. After graduation, they gain employment in large firms where they develop friendships with colleagues and seniors, and learn how to live and survive in South Korean society. In sum, the social connections of student defectors are more diverse and expansive than those of other defectors, and these connections increase their access to information, capital, and technology.

One notable characteristic about employment patterns of defectors coming from a student background is that, after faithfully working at large firms for a few years, they quit and participate in diverse businesses. Mr. J. Kim started his own business after working at SK (a large Korean company) for five years. The first reason he chose to start his own business was that, as in is the case of other defectors with student background, he decided that this is the way to earn money and succeed in a capitalist society. The second reason is the aversion towards organizational life. Defectors are people who escaped North Korea because they abhorred the organizational life there, and they feel skeptical of life when they once again must work from early in the morning until late at night and must sometimes participate in unwanted gatherings and drink. The third reason for starting their own businesses is their sense of responsibility for their parents and siblings who might suffer because of their defection. In order to compensate for their sufferings after

reunification, they must be able to support them economically. Owning a business could help.

A third factor associated with successful adjustment is the existence of a sponsor. Because the support system for defectors is not well developed yet, the key to adjustment is individual effort and the support of a sponsor. The destiny of a defector can be determined to assign ficant degree by the police officer chosen to be in charge. For example, Mr. A, who was a guard at a prisoner camp in North Korea and escaped in September 1994 to enter the South in October, met a good police officer and friendly neighbors. The officer in charge of his case helped him adapt to life by giving him, who did not have any concept of money, 10,000 Won and telling him to buy things like toothbrush, laundry soap, and candy. He also introduced him to a job at a public corporation. The officer first aided him in finding a room at an inn before he could enter a leased apartment. A became emotionally unstable after living at the inn, however, which is a place of immoral sexual relationships. The owner of the inn moved him to a calmer, quieter place, and later even cared enough to let him stay at his own house. So, during the five years before he was able to lease an apartment for himself, he lived in a room at the inn owner's house which saved him money, and enabled him to hold on to his settlement subsidy of 20 million Won ($15,748) without wasting any of it. He is still very close to the police officer and the inn owner, and in times of difficulty, he always consults them for advice.

A fourth element in successful adjustment has to do with the political and economic situation of South Korea at the time of arrival. The time and circumstances of arrival determine the level of subsidy, housing, employment, education, and social welfare services incoming defectors can receive. Until the 1980s, the number of defectors was not very large, and it was a time when anticommunist ideology was used as a means of governing, so defectors were used for political purposes, and had no problem adapting due to broad government support. In the 1990s, however, the influx of students from Eastern Europe and lumber workers from Russia dramatically increased the number of defectors, and apprehension arose that the preferential treatment of defectors would become difficult if large-scale escapes occurred. Additionally the establishment of the Kim Young-Sam government weakened anti-communist ideology, and the status of defectors dropped from that heroes to that of objects whose livelihoods required protection. This led to decreases in such support programs as settlement subsidies (which declined to 16,000,000 Won ($12,598) per individual), job introduction, and housing, resulting in unemployment, poverty, and other social problems within the circle of defectors. As the economic conditions of defec-

TABLE 5. SOCIOECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT LEVEL BY YEAR OF ARRIVAL (%)

Year of Arrival	1990-93	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Employment Status						
Employed	82.4	46.9	58.3	61.3	40.6	45.0
Unemployed	0.0	28.1	25.0	32.3	42.2	55.0
Student	17.6	25.0	16.7	6.5	17.2	0.0
N	17	32	24	31	64	20
Mean Monthly Income						
Below 500,000 Won	11.8	40.9	30.0	33.3	57.1	0.0
500,000-1,000,000 Won	41.2	45.5	50.0	42.9	34.3	100.0
1,000,000-2,000,000 Won	35.3	4.5	15.0	9.5	2.9	0.0
Above 2,000,000 Won	11.8	9.1	5.0	14.3	5.7	0.0
N	17	22	20	21	35	5
Satisfaction towards Settlement Support						
Very Satisfied	11.8	7.4	0.0	11.4	12.9	10.0
Satisfied to an Extent	52.9	14.8	29.2	14.3	35.5	35.0
Dissatisfied	35.3	77.8	70.8	74.3	51.6	55.0
N	17	27	24	35	62	20
Satisfaction Towards Life in the South						
Satisfied	5.6	18.8	12.5	2.9	20.9	10.5
Satisfied to an Extent	72.2	37.5	33.3	32.4	56.7	52.6
Dissatisfied to an Extent	22.2	31.3	50.0	52.9	19.4	26.3
Very Dissatisfied	0.0	12.5	4.2	11.8	3.0	10.5
N	18	32	24	34	67	19

Source: MOU survey (1998)

tors deteriorated, a group of critical defectors organized their own interest groups (called 'Free North Koreans') and launched complaints and criticism against the government. In response, the Kim Dae-Jung government, raised the subsidy to 36,000,000 Won ($28,346) in 1999 and again to 42,000,000 Won ($33,070) in 2001.

Table 5 shows the level of socioeconomic adjustment of defectors by year of arrival, as measured by such indexes as employment rate, mean monthly income, perceived level of satisfaction with settlement support, and perceived level of satisfaction with life in South Korea. A consistent pattern is the noticeable gap of adjustment level between those who arrived before and after the year 1994. For example, the employment rate of those who arrived between 1990 and 1993 was 82.4 percent whereas the corresponding figure for those arrived in 1994 was 46.9 percent. With regard to mean monthly income, 47.1 percent of those arriving between 1990 and 1993 earned more than 100,000 Won. Only, 13.6 percent of those arriving in 1994 earned this much. With regard to mere subjective indexes, defectors' per-

ceived levels of adjustment, the percentage of those expressing dissatisfaction toward settlement support and life in the South was substantially higher among those who arrived after 1994.

Space constraints do not allow detailed commentary on the statistical significance of each variable influencing socioeconomic adjustment but, on the whole, variables such as the year of arrival, age, education received in South Korea, education received in North Korea, marriage, and amount of settlement subsidy turned out to be important factors. Especially, the year of arrival and amount of settlement subsidy had a statistically high correlation with all four indexes of adjustment and all four except employment rate respectively. This result can be interpreted as external variables like the time of arrival and the amount of settlement subsidy having greater effects on the socioeconomic adjustment of defectors than personal demographic and human resource characteristics.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY DISCUSSION

Since the mid 1990s, the number of North Koreans escaping North Korea has increased, creating international and domestic tensions and problems. Internationally, overseas defectors, reported to be 30,000-50,000 in number and to suffer from fear of arrest and deportation and human rights violations, have the potential to threaten the political and diplomatic stability of the Far East. To protect and take care of overseas defectors is important not only for humanitarian reasons but also for peace and stability of the Far East. Domestically, given that the majority of defectors in South Korea have difficulty adjusting socially and economically, the rapid growth of the defector population is likely to increase the sense of financial burden among South Korean residents. The social adjustment of defectors is particularly important because it tests the likelihood of achieving social integration between South and North Koreas in the post-unification era.

As of July, 2001, about 1,500 defectors are estimated to live in South Korean society. Many of them have had difficulty making successful social, economic, and psychological transitions in to their newly adopted country. The limited transferability of human capital (such as education and occupational skills and experience) acquired in the North in South Korean society is the greatest barrier. The tendency of South Korean society to devalue things related to the North is another barrier. Particularly, prejudice and feelings of wide social distance held by Korean employers, colleagues, and residents with respect to North Korean defectors make it difficult for them to get jobs, marry, or to have intimate interpersonal relations. Also, the inco-

herent government support policy, which used to change frequently in its scope and level of support, fails to establish long-term economic and social foundations for self-sufficiency among defectors.

The social adjustment of defectors is not an easy task and cannot be achieved by the effort of the government alone. It requires close partnership and division of labor among the government, NGOs, and defectors. The government needs to provide financial and institutional support to civil and religious organizations and volunteers, which deliver appropriate and tailored service to the defectors. The defectors themselves must rid themselves of their sense of dependency and must develop objective and realistic judgments of their ability and of the opportunities available to them. In this respect, it is imperative to re-establish a proper relationship between defectors and our society in changing environments. In the past, defectors were few and they were treated as men of merit. Now, they have lost political and military value and their growing numbers increase the perception that they are a public burden. To obtain social agreement about what defectors mean to us and why we must support them is the first step we must make before specific strategies are implemented.

North Korean defectors are people who risked their lives for freedom and welfare in the South. For humanitarian reasons, we should protect and support them. Also, they are socially disadvantaged, and need a period of preparation in order to adapt to a new political and economic system. It is not right to equate them with the unemployed and the homeless who once had a chance to compete. From the viewpoint of social justice, we should provide defectors with opportunities to overcome initial disadvantages and to realize their full potential. Moreover, they have the knowledge and experience of North Korea that can contribute to social integration between South and North Koreas. Thus, an ideal perspective to adopt would be that the successful adjustment of defectors benefits not only the defectors themselves but also our society.

In this respect, support policies for defectors must be established with the good of promoting economic independence and sociocultural integration. Until they arrive at this stage, however, they must be protected from competing with South Korean residents on the same level, and a scheme must be introduced to enhance their personal abilities. For example, in the United States, whites provided blacks who had not been able to receive education and job training because of their long standing subordination to whites, with affirmative action to give them a chance to overcome the discrimination. Thanks to this policy, many black youths were able to go to college and advance into fields in the public, professional, and industrial sectors. In the

case of defectors, we should support them with higher education, job training, unemployment aid, and subsidies until they gain self-sufficiency.

Key points of support policy for defectors should be first, to expand opportunity structures of self-sufficiency and second, to establish social networks and safety nets. Support policy at both governmental and civic levels should take into account not only economic aspects, such as competitiveness and efficiency, but also such social aspects as compensation and consideration, gradually expanding the points of contact between the two.

The following are some specific ways our government and society can efficiently support the self-sufficiency of defectors. First, the government should give maximum recognition to education, work experience, certificates, and skills they obtained in North Korea or from other countries. It should complement those parts that are unsuited for our society through re-education, and actively introduce them to work places that best suit their abilities and aptitudes. By helping them find employment in positions where they can utilize their human resources, we help them become economically independent, while our society benefits from their labor and service.

Second, the government should make active efforts to provide protected employment opportunities at least at the initial stage of adjustment. Beginning in January, 1999, the government has carried out limited obligatory employment systems for defectors. By this system, the government supports half of wages of defector workers for two years as an incentive to firms that employ them. A part of this system, "the wage subsidy program," however, has a upper limit of 700,000 Won ($551). For this reason, it is attractive largely to firms in so-called "the 3-D industry" that want use government subsidies to decrease labor costs. Defectors, who have a strong preference for white-collar jobs, are not satisfied with the jobs available through this program and thus do not remain in those jobs for long time. Also, for those with college education and professional or administrative occupational experience in North Korea, jobs in production and service industries do not meet their expectations. To make this program more popular and effective, we must make incentives more appealing to both employers and workers. One method would be to increase the upper limit of subsidy, which is now fixed at 700,000 Won, to 1,000,000 Won or higher depending on qualifications of jobs and workers. To finance the additional budget, the government may consider converting the settlement subsidy, which is now about 42,000,000 Won ($33,070) per person, as part of the wage subsidy program.

Third, self-employed small businesses should be seriously considered as

an alternative to wage employment for those with entrepreneurial experience and skills. To eff foster the private enterprise of defectors effectively, support policies should be established and carried out with long-term prospects. The government policy to support defectors opening subsistence businesses, which is in temporary implementation, should be maintained as one of continuing policy efforts. The program should be expanded to support not just the opening of businesses for subsistence, but to raise successful defector-entrepreneurs among those with the potential. For the long-term development of businesses owned and run by defectors, it is important to foster model cases even if they are small in number. Policies based on what may be called an "leading entrepreneur approach" to provide selective support to the most competent candidates to grow into leading entrepreneurs can have the spillover effect of increasing successful opening of businesses as well as employment of defectors. Also, programs should be created to help defector entrepreneurs disadvantaged by their lack of social connections in accessing information, knowledge, technology and financial resources. NGOs and the government should cooperate to provide information, consultation, technological training, et ceter to help defectors open businesses to improve the management of those already in operation.

Fourth, to incorporate defectors into the opportunity structures of mainstream society, we must expand and diversify the social networks of defectors. As explained earlier, defectors rely largely upon themselves, family members, fellow defectors, and police officers in charge for information, fellowship, and consultation. Matching defectors with caring and resourceful individual and group sponsors can be one method. In this respect, Christian churches and Buddhist temples, which have enormous financial and manpower resources, should show greater interest and make greater contributions than ever. NGOs should develop various programs and activities to help defectors make successful adjustment in workplace, schools, and the family. Tutoring service to school-aged children and teenagers, carried out by the Citizens' Alliance to Help Political Prisoners in North Korea, is one good example of NGOs' efforts to bridge the defector community and civil society. A volunteer group of retired executives, entrepreneurs, lawyers, CPAs, and other professionals, formed by the Korean Sharing Movement, is another example of NGOs' efforts to make use of society's resources for defectors.

Such volunteer activities are, however, limited in coverage and effectiveness due to insufficient funding and manpower. The government should complement civil society with financial and institutional support in areas where civil society cannot manage for itself. One area that needs immediate

reform by the government is the system of management of defectors. Under the current system, police officers still have primary responsibility for the safety and welfare of defectors. The system should be changed to allow local social welfare centers staffed by professional social workers and counselors to take care of defectors. We must establish a management system in which social workers, who receive special training in the defector matter, deliver professional and reliable service to defectors.

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