

**KOREA'S MULTICULTURALISM (*DAMUNHWA*) POLICY  
AND MEDIA DISCOURSE**  
FOCUSING ON THE TELEVISION NEWS COVERAGE

Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Capstone Project

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## **Abstract**

A huge influx of immigrants into South Korea since the 1990s has made multiculturalism a concept familiar to everyone. However, there has been a consistent controversy over its configuration, authenticity, and application. Among the many issues that South Korean multiculturalism confronts, the relations between the media and the government's policy has not been addressed or studied enough. This research, based on the quantitative analysis of South Korea's television news content in the context of the policy change, aims to illuminate the causal relationship between these variables as well as to filter out implications for further development of the government's approach to the recent surge in immigration. Specifically, focus will be placed on (1) finding the association between television news coverage and the government's multiculturalism policy-making process; (2) the portrayal of immigrants by television networks; and (3) evaluating South Korean media's role in shaping the multiculturalism discourse based on generally accepted roles of the media. A special effort will also be made to draw on the background explanation regarding global migration trends as well as the South Korean political and socio-cultural environment.

**Keywords:** immigration; multiculturalism; media; South Korea

## **I. Introduction**

Over the past decade, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) has experienced an exponential growth of immigrants, and with this, increasing multicultural families which has transformed South Korea into a much more multicultural society. From 2007 through 2012, South Korea implemented new legal approaches to immigration in an effort to reflect the nation's changing migration context. Legalization efforts were meant to symbolize the beginning of a new era, in which South Korea would acquire a new

national identity as an immigration country. Multiculturalism, in this sense, became the national motto, and a series of laws have demonstrated its commitment to integrating newcomers into society.

Although multiculturalism represents varied values and is difficult to define in any singular way, there is a consensus among scholars that it is a concept that seeks the mutual respect and coexistence of diverse ethnic and racial groups without attempts to integrate their different cultures and values. Canadian philosopher and a leading authority on multicultural theory, Charles Taylor (1994) defines multiculturalism as “the politics of recognition” where the cultural majority recognizes minority groups as having equal rights and values. All citizens, in this view, would proudly maintain their own cultural identities and still have a sense of belonging to a society and nation (Goldberg, 1994; Willett, 1998). For a practical understanding on the theory of multiculturalism, Banting & Kymlicka list eight criteria that provide a more concrete picture. Their outline includes: affirmation of multiculturalism at the central, regional and municipal levels; the adoption of multiculturalism in school curricula; the inclusion of ethnic representation, sensitivity in the mandate of public media or media licensing; exemption from dress-codes; allowing dual citizenship; the funding for ethnic group organization to support cultural activities; funding for bilingual education; and affirmative action for disadvantaged immigrant groups (Banting & Kymlicka et al., 2006). Among these criteria, the media’s role in by-playing the governments’ policy on multiculturalism is of special interest to this paper.

Faced with diverse multicultural challenges, the South Korean government seems to be somewhat unsure about its policy choice, especially in an environment where a sense

of homogenous ethnicity and culture is still strong. Yet, as South Korea's national identity experiences a paradigm shift, the Korean media and public also seem to be increasingly moving away from the long-standing concept of homogeneity, and government policy toward multiculturalism presents different aspects as time progresses.

A generally accepted belief is that governments yield implicit power to the media to set their own news agendas and influence journalist output. Lippmann's (1965) concept of "manufactured consent" describes the ordinary citizen as unable to understand or synthesize complicated national or international issues, and thus, the opinions and tastes of the masses are shaped by the dominant political power as well as by social and cultural institutions, including the media (Herman & Chomsky, 1988: 397; Lippmann, 1965). Among many forms of the media, television news, in particular, seems to be more accessible than newspapers in the public's consumption of news stories. In this vein, this research traces media discourse for the past five years from 2008 through 2012 to look for an association between policy changes and media attention. An analysis of television news transcripts from South Korea's three major television networks makes it possible to quantify attitudes or views in the multiculturalism debate. The result shows that the media's attention to multiculturalism is on the rise. However, it reveals that television news coverage is largely limited to what the government emphasizes, thus disregarding the media's role as a critic with an eye toward influencing policy progress. Thus, it can be inferred that the public's understanding of multiculturalism is somewhat constrained by the frame set by the policy makers.

## **II. Background**

### **1. Global Multiculturalism Discourse**

In the context of the unequal distribution of economic and political power in the world economy, global migration was understood mainly as a way of mobilizing cheap labor for capital between the 1960s and the 1980s (Castles & Miller, 2009: 26). As western countries began to accept migrant workers from less-developed countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, Europe, North America and Oceania experienced demographic changes. These changes inevitably brought about changes in economics as well as in politics and the culture of those countries. As the emergence of a permanent settler population in receiving countries was recognized by some governments, the tendency was to move from policies of individual assimilation to acceptance of some degree of long-term cultural differences that might be understood to pave the way for granting minority cultural and political rights as embodied in the policies of multiculturalism introduced in Canada, Australia and Sweden since the 1970s (Castles & Miller, 2009: 15). Research on the way in which migrants become incorporated into receiving societies has grown rapidly, along with studies on the determinants, processes and patterns of migration (Castles & Miller, 2009: 20).

In understanding migratory trends, it is necessary to distinguish multiculturalism from assimilation. According to Castles & Miller (2009), multiculturalism means that immigrants should be able to participate as equals in all spheres of society without being expected to give up their own culture, religion and language, although usually with an expectation of conformity to certain key values. Assimilation, in contrast, focuses on

incorporating immigrants into a society through a one-sided process of adaptation. Migrants under assimilation policy are expected to give up their distinctive linguistic, cultural or social characteristics, and become indistinguishable from the majority population (Castles & Miller, 2009: 245-250).

South Korea's path toward noticeable demographic change was taken in late 1990s, but the multiculturalism debate did not really begin until the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Then, by virtue of South Korea's center-left government from 2002 through 2007, discussion about multiculturalism increased markedly.

In discussing South Korea's policy and its association with the media, it is helpful to understand the comprehensive framework of three stages of development in recognizing the demands of multiculturalism as developed by Raz (1994), Kymlicka (1995), and Bleich (2003). The three stages are tolerance, legalization of non-discrimination, and ultimate achievement of multiculturalism. Each stage represents symbolic features; for instance, tolerance is cultivated through the media and through socialization of natives and newcomers; legalization of non-discrimination consists of passing laws in three major areas – expression, access, and physical discrimination;<sup>1</sup> and multiculturalism is represented by multiethnic rights that allow expression of cultural, religious, and ethnic identity in the public sphere, self-government that allows autonomous rule within certain districts, and self-representation in the political sense.

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<sup>1</sup> "Expression" means verbal or written type of discrimination. "Access" recognizes any hindrance due to one's race, culture, or religion in seeking employment, education or rent. "Physical" means literally violence or hate crimes directed at an individual because of a victim's race, culture, or religion. Legalization is different from tolerance in the fact that it has binding effects with various punishments (Kim, Nam-kook, 2009).

## 2. A Brief History of South Korea's Immigration

The modern immigration conversation in South Korea began right after Korea was liberated from Japanese occupation. Under U.S. military governance in 1946, Korea enacted the “Regulation for Entry and Departure Movement Control and Record of South Korea.” It was later succeeded by the “Foreign Entry, Departure and Registration Law” in 1949 after the establishment of the Republic of Korea. In 1963, the government introduced the “Immigration Control Law,” which is said to have laid the groundwork for today’s immigration policy.



Figure 1. Migration Trend in South Korea after the Establishment of Government (Source: IOM-MRTC Research Report 2012)

During the 1960s and the 1970s, Korea’s migration policy particularly concentrated on facilitating the outward movement of domestic labor forces, such as construction workers, miners, nurses and farmers who ultimately contributed to the country’s economic development by earning foreign currency.



As South Korea put an end to its dictatorship and the economy stabilized in late 1980s and early 1990s, the influx of foreigners increased, transforming South Korea from an emigration country into a nascent immigration nation. The number of labor migrants rose from a mere 461 in 1980 to 495,529 in 2011.<sup>2</sup> The majority came from China, Vietnam, and the Philippines, and these mostly low-wage unskilled workers took on the country's 3D (dirty, dangerous, difficult) jobs, those which Koreans were most reluctant to take. Labor shortages were also tied to growing concerns over a falling birth rate of 1.6 children per woman in 1990.<sup>3</sup> The change in demographics and the gloomy prospect of the future inevitably brought about a more serious approach to the development of immigration policy. The South Korean government adopted the "Overseas Investment Business Training System" in 1991 in order to accept foreign temporary workers who could fill the labor void in manufacturing businesses. As a response to a growing labor requests from small and medium sized manufacturing businesses, this system was integrated in 1993 into a larger scale "Industrial Trainee System," which was later complemented and renamed "Employment Permit System."

At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the recruitment of foreign brides gained popularity largely because of the shortage of marriageable women especially in rural areas, a phenomenon which is believed to be the dark side of economic development that produces more job opportunities in cities. The commercial matchmaking sprang up as an emerging business model in the 1990s when government licenses were no longer required

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<sup>2</sup> Annual Report on Arrivals and Departures, 1980/2011, Korea Immigration Service, Available at [http://www.immigration.go.kr/HP/COM/bbs\\_003/BoardList.do?strNbodCd=noti0096&strOrgGbnCd=104000&strFilePath=imm/&strRtnURL=IMM\\_6050&strNbodCdGbn=&strType=&strAllOrgYn=N](http://www.immigration.go.kr/HP/COM/bbs_003/BoardList.do?strNbodCd=noti0096&strOrgGbnCd=104000&strFilePath=imm/&strRtnURL=IMM_6050&strNbodCdGbn=&strType=&strAllOrgYn=N)

<sup>3</sup> Birth Rate, Statistics Korea, Available at <http://kosis.kr/nsikor/view/stat10.do>

for this business; hence, the so-called “international marriage brokers” rapidly penetrated every corner of rural areas. Korean brokers with on-the-spot partners in China and Southeast Asia recruit ethnic Korean farmers who have a remote chance of marrying desirable women in Korea. When recruited men reach a certain number, brokers organize a trip to foreign countries to arrange several meetings between Korean men and indigenous women. Korean men pay the brokers, and select a woman they would each like to take on a date. If the man is not satisfied with this date, he still has several other chances to choose a woman from a pool of about a dozen. Kim Choong-soon (2011: 75-81) explains this arrangement as a “pull factor” in bringing foreign brides to Korea, while economic needs among the brides’ poor families can be identified as the “push factor.” Consequently, the rate in the number of marriage migrants increased remarkably from 23,414 in 2002 to 144,214 in 2012.<sup>4</sup> This interracial combination has brought about unprecedented social problems that the Korean government has to handle. These include a new phase of poverty in rural areas due to the increased economic burden on low-income men; the isolation of multicultural families either from economic or from cultural opportunities; and the lack of access to proper education and any social safety net. At the same time, the image of Korea as an ethnically and culturally homogenous nation was increasingly challenged. Accordingly, the South Korean government was under great pressure from both domestic and foreign activists who cared about human rights. As a result, “The First Basic Plan for Immigration Policy (2008-2012)” was finally introduced in 2007, marking the historic shift in its national identity from a non-immigration country to an immigration country. The “Act on the Treatment of Foreigners in Korea” was

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<sup>4</sup> Korea Immigration Service, Available at <http://www.immigration.go.kr>

legislated the same year. The approval of the “Support for Multicultural Families Act” followed in 2008, and it confirmed another Basic Plan that specifically referred to support for multicultural families.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Main Contents</b>
<b>2003</b>	<b>Act on Foreign Workers’ Employment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basis for the introduction of the ‘Employment Permit System’</li> <li>• Establishes a Foreign Workforce Policy Committee, Council for Protection of Rights and Interests of Foreign Workers</li> <li>• Contains protection of foreign workers, government support for foreign worker- related organizations or groups</li> </ul>
<b>2007</b>	<b>Act on the Treatment of Foreigners in Korea</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks to help incorporation of foreigners into a Korean society as well as to increase social integration</li> <li>• Designates May 20 as the “Together Day”</li> <li>• Specifies the establishment of a basic plan for policy on foreigners every 5 years, and the establishment and implementation of yearly action plans</li> <li>• Establishes the Foreigners’ Policy Committee under the Prime Minister</li> </ul>
<b>2007</b>	<b>Basic Plan for Immigration Policy (2008-2012)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aims to strengthen the support for multicultural families and to strictly manage the process of marriage and entry</li> <li>• Includes intensified support for multicultural children in education and for marriage migrant women in job education or employment</li> <li>• Promotes the protection of human rights of immigrants who have particularly gone through divorce or violence</li> <li>• Encourages strengthening of social education for understanding multiculturalism</li> <li>• Focuses on strengthening of national competitiveness through introducing high-quality labor force</li> </ul>
<b>2008</b>	<b>Support for Multicultural Families Act</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defines multicultural families as being comprised of a married immigrant and a Korean national, and being comprised of a person who obtained permission for naturalization and a Korean national</li> <li>• Basis for the ‘Basic Plan for Multicultural Family Policy’</li> <li>• Regulates that the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family to carry out fact-finding survey on multicultural families every three years</li> <li>• Includes measures to prevent social discrimination and prejudice against multicultural families and to enhance cultural diversity</li> </ul>
<b>2010</b>	<b>Basic Plan for Multicultural Family Policy (2010-2012)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aims to improve the quality of life and to support stable settlement of multicultural families</li> <li>• Focuses on intensified educational support for children with multicultural backgrounds</li> <li>• Strengthen support for job education and employment for marriage migrants</li> <li>• Includes rationalization of naturalization for stable social integration</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activates social education for multicultural understanding</li> <li>• Reinforce public relations activities for the promotion of multiculturalism</li> </ul>
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Table 1. Major development of immigration policy in recent years.

Although the shift in the policy agenda to change South Korea into an immigration country was strongly pushed by the government, public sentiment toward multiculturalism seems to have stagnated and even retreated due to the resurgence of nationalist views during the conservative reign over the past five years. Watson (2012) notes, for instance, that right-wing, anti-multiculturalism groups such as the “Citizen Alliance Against Foreign Migrants,” “Citizens’ Alliance against Foreign Workers,” and the “International Marriage Damage and Prevention Center” have been the most active in petitioning government officials, conservative politicians and foreign embassies to abolish the government’s multiculturalism policy and stop promoting international marriages.

### 3. Public Debate over Multiculturalism

Before discussing the Korean public’s attitude toward multiculturalism, one question needs to be addressed: is Korean multiculturalism different from the Western version in a descriptive, normative, and/or ideological sense (Kim Choong-soon, 2011)? Among many attempts to define Korea’s policy, Kim Hyun-mee’s (2007) report on the birth of Korean multiculturalism tells us that there is, in fact, an inherent difference. According to her, the word “multicultural family” first appeared in government documents at the suggestion of a nongovernmental organization named “HiFamily.” In 2003, HiFamily

submitted a petition to the National Human Rights Commission saying that the use of the word “mixed bloodedness (*honhyeol*)” was a human rights violation. The group sought to replace the term with “the second generation of a multicultural family.” The United Nations Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 2007 also warned about the dangers in the prevalent notion of “pure-bloodedness (*soonhyeol*)” that causes various aspects of discrimination against “mixed bloods” (Kim Hyun-mee, 2007). In fact, Kymlicka (2007) claims that Korea is mono-national along with Iceland and Portugal. The above story about the birth of the term reveals a general lack of understanding of multiculturalism. Watson (2012) further argues that South Korea’s multicultural policy conflicts with the Korean people’s common opinion about embedded assumptions of racial and ethnic homogeneity. He terms that the phenomenon a “paradox.” Accordingly, without problematizing the particularistic view of race, ethnicity, and national identity, he stresses that any debate on multiculturalism will simply continue to reinforce the exclusionary boundaries between Koreans and foreigners. Also noticeable in Korea is the narrow use of the term. In the context of the government’s focus on migrant women, multicultural family became the official term<sup>5</sup> in 2006 and a consensus was reached that systematic support for multicultural families should be provided (Kim Hyun-mee, 2007). In this sense, it is no wonder that Koreans tend to think that multiculturalism is applicable only in the context of marriage migrant women. For this reason, Kim Choong-soon argues that Korea’s “*damunhwa*” which is a literal translation of multiculturalism in

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<sup>5</sup> A marriage migrant woman named Maria (pseudonym) is particularly dissatisfied with the term “multicultural family” because the term creates so many distinctions between ordinary Korean families and families of international marriages. To Maria, the term carries a sense of being underprivileged, low class, and in need of government assistance. (Kim Choong-soon, 2011: 148-149)

English, cannot carry the same meaning as the English word. He explains that Koreans encountered the term without first understanding all of its implications and ramifications.

With insufficient exposure to development of the varied definition of multiculturalism, South Koreans' general values and behaviors appear to be far from multiculturalism. Yoon In-jin (2007) points out that South Koreans' strong pride in ethnic homogeneity, which has remained static over hundreds of years, is attributed to the logic of "being different" as "being wrong," and has enhanced prejudice and intolerance toward foreigners and minorities. Moreover, he adds that immigrants continue to be treated differently according to the economic development level of their native countries. In that context, South Koreans are tolerant and considerate only when immigrants do not compete with or threaten their culture and social system. Therefore, it is inevitable that there are gaps between words and deeds. Scholars such as Han Geon-soo (2007) dismiss multiculturalism as being a rhetorical concept or political slogan. Meanwhile, extreme nationalists argue that multiculturalism is undermining South Korean development and security because it weakens Korean ethnic homogeneity within its territorial boundaries.

From a policy standpoint, the South Korean government has made rapid progress over the past five years through state legislation. Yoon In-jin (2007), however, argues that its multiculturalism policy is geared toward assimilating immigrants into South Korean culture and society rather than recognizing and protecting their unique culture and identities. Both the central and local governments' concentrated support on Korean language programs, despite the low satisfactory rating by immigrants, clearly shows shortcomings of assimilation strategy. Kim Young-ok's research (Table 2, 2012) demonstrates that there is a need for recognition and mutual acknowledgement if

differences between migrant and indigenous people in order to encourage cross-cultural understanding.

Sections		Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Not interested	Average point
Public Cultural Program for Migrants		23.8	36.7	21.6	18.3	3.09
Private Cultural Program for Migrants		25.2	34.2	22.4	18.2	3.12
Condition and Policy for Multiculture	Policy for multiculturalism and migrants	30.7	35.2	34.0	.	3.02
	Enjoyment of home country's culture	11.4	27.6	61.0	.	2.30
	Sufficiency of Korean cultural programs	17.4	35.8	46.8	.	2.64
	Respect of home country's culture from Koreans	27.0	37.1	36.0	.	2.87
	Need of multicultural education for Koreans*	55.8	35.8	8.4	.	2.41
Need of cultural centers for migrants		68.3	15.9	15.8	.	3.73

Table 2. Migration policy satisfaction by marriage migrant women.

The need of multicultural education for the Koreans and the respect of the Korean for different cultures appear to be significant. Also, migrants felt substantial insufficiency in enjoyment of home country's culture while staying in Korea. *Note:* \*Among five-scale, 5 indicates, "education program is unnecessary." (Source: Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (2008), recited from Kim Young-ok (2012))

Even without a sufficient exposure to multiculturalism, the fast-growing number of immigrants has made multiculturalism a key word in Korean politics. Late President Roh Moo-hyun, who was from the center-left, officially accepted the term multiculturalism and laid the groundwork for current legislation toward the end of his term in 2007. During this period, debate over the concept became heated and marked a symbolic departure from the non-immigration paradigm. At the same time, however, backlashes against easing immigration procedures and embracing different cultures were not rescinded. The president had to risk growing critiques from extreme nationalists or political conservatives.

Although groundbreaking legislation and national plans regarding multiculturalism came into effect during the reign of conservative President Lee Myung-bak who succeeded Mr.Roh, Yoon In-jin (interview, August 2012) claims that overall multiculturalism in Korea has stagnated or even dwindled. For example, in 2009, Democratic Party representative Chun Byeong-heon submitted a bill to the National Assembly aimed at preventing racial discrimination, which was later named as the “Antiracism Law.” From the liberal elite, the view was that this initiative was further proof of Korea’s maturing democratization (Watson, 2012). However, the law has not yet been passed due to harsh criticism from not only conservative groups but also some liberal clubs. Despite some lawmakers’ unusually bipartisan effort to highlight the much needed path toward multiculturalism, many South Koreans have voiced major concerns. One, for instance, is that immigrants would use the antiracism law as a universal human right issue, thus precluding domestic Korean courts from delivering harsh punishments to foreign criminals. The concern that South Korean individuals or businesses accused of racial discrimination would have to prove themselves innocent of such charges also made the public more aware of the backlash of the bill, because it would run directly counter to the “innocent until proven guilty” norm (Watson, 2012). As Joppke (2007) puts it, these two concerns are symptomatic of the worldwide universalist/particularist paradox found in many multicultural countries.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Joppke (2007) emphasizes that modern citizenship in multicultural countries has been marked by a tension between universal inclusion and particularistic exclusion. He says, “The rise of modern citizenship thrives on the idea of shared humanity and of universal human rights, as developed by the European Enlightenment. On the other hand, such universalism had to be reconciled with the particularism of states, without which the promise of “liberty, equality, solidarity” could never be a reality.”



Along with these concerns, the issue of positive discrimination has also been at the center of the debate. As racial minority groups are expected to gain favorable treatment, it is possible that either majority groups in an economically marginalized situation or other minority groups that are not selected would face unintentional discrimination. Even though the bill claims to be purely focusing on the cultural level, ethnic Koreans who have been experiencing economic, political, and socio-cultural inequality seem to maintain emotional antipathy toward the bill. At the same time, some people argue that this special treatment would be more likely to bring social conflict by reinforcing separation between ethnic Koreans and immigrants (Watson, 2012).

As a result, the conservative government chose to maintain a policy of “assimilation” rather than going forward toward “multiculturalism,” by strengthening overall border control and enforcing frequent raids upon illegal labor migrants. For instance, the conservative government forcefully deported illegal migrants in the name of public security while preparing for the G-20 summit meeting in 2010, while the former administration under the President Roh had suspended deportation for overstaying labor migrants as a generous gesture for the upcoming 2002 World Cup. In the meantime, the conservative government continued to shed light exclusively on marriage migrants and their families at the surface level. Reserving a seat for a marriage migrant woman as the first-ever proportional representative in the National Assembly by the ruling conservative party was thus largely regarded as empty rhetoric.

The approach of conservative politicians seems to be analogous to Watson’s (2012) idea. He argues that the conservative government’s multicultural policy is tied to neoliberal globalization, which is believed to attract the most economically productive

foreign workers and foreign capital, thereby strengthening South Korea's development and national security. In other words, the South Korean government seems to have been determined to take a two-track immigration policy by both fastening the entrance door to the low-skilled workers while widening the other door to the high-skilled labor forces or investors. Despite rising human rights issues, this approach was praised domestically, especially at a time of global economic recession. In fact, during this period, the public seems to have swung back toward being against multiculturalism, and nationalistic activists became much more conspicuous. As of December 2012, approximately 17,500 Internet users subscribed to "Anti-Multiculturalism" communities on South Korea's leading websites, such as *Daum* and *Naver*. It is probably no accident that most of these communities and hostile attitudes emerged around the year 2008, when the conservative President Lee was inaugurated.<sup>7</sup>

#### **4. Media Discourse on Multiculturalism**

Foreseeing the media's role in support of the policy, the South Korean government was enthusiastic about using the media in its drive for successful adoption of multicultural approach, even though the country still swayed between an embrace of multiculturalism and assimilation. Media institutions mediate and powerfully shape the information that reaches the public, directly and indirectly influencing what people know about political events (Edelman, 1988; Gulati, Just & Crigler, 2004). Edelman (1988) specifically asserts that the mass media is a major source of public opinion on political

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<sup>7</sup> Daum: [www.daum.net](http://www.daum.net)  
Naver: [www.naver.com](http://www.naver.com)

issues, providing “cues about the probable future consequences of political actions, with information about the sources and authoritative support for policies, and with the groups with whom they identify.”

The Korean news media started paying attention to the multiculturalism discourse at the onset of attempts to legalize the policy and emphasized the need to transform Korea into a full-fledged multicultural society in order to maintain the nation’s development pace. The media in Canada significantly aided in shaping the immigration refugee system in that nation, but in a different way. Despite the generally accepted perception about Canada’s migrant friendly environment, Hier & Greenberg (2002) argue that Canadian news media held a particularly hostile stance against migrants since 600 undocumented immigrants from Fujian arrived on Canada’s western shores in September 1999. This continuing view of these migrants as a risk to the Canadian population led the state to respond by culminating the level of perceived threat. Hay (1996: 261; Hier & Greenberg, 2002) insists that “media influence does not reside in the power of direct ideological indoctrination, but in the ability to frame the discursive context within which political subjectivities are constituted, reinforced, and reconstituted.”

Given the propensity of the news media to tell policy makers and the public what is important to know and how to think about it (Gitlin, 1980), it would make sense for readers to explore the South Korean media’s role and attitudes in addressing multiculturalism. Perloff (2009) confirms that examining people’s beliefs about news media coverage of immigration is important because knowledge and perceptions of media portrayals and their presumed effect on others may be used as justifications for individuals’ policy positions. Lippmann (1965) confirms this by describing the media as

a creator of a “pseudo-environment” that influences people in understanding the world and thus taking certain stances.

Adversely, assuming the view that policy makers also consume news and are influenced by media coverage, which runs counter to the generally accepted notion of “manufactured consent,” Park Jin-kyoung and Won Suk-yeon (2010) claim that news media acts as a parameter in determining policy makers’ stance on multiculturalism.<sup>8</sup> As shown in Table 3, government officials’ support for multiculturalism as influenced by the media appears to back multiculturalism over its weaker form, assimilation, while continuing to reject exclusion. On the other hand, a perceived threat on immigrants tends to lead government officials to prefer exclusive policy choices to either assimilation or multiculturalism.

	Exclusion	Assimilation	Multiculturalism
Multiculturalism support	-0.049	0.262**	0.341*
Recognition of threat	0.245*	-0.407*	-0.228*

Table 3. The total effect of parameter in government officials’ multiculturalism policy decision making, measured by the structural equation model. *Note.* \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$  (N=610) (Source: Park Jin-Kyoung & Won Suk-yeon, 2010)

The media plays diverse roles in problematizing an issue, constructing a discursive frame, and suggesting solutions (Hier & Greenberg, 2002). Keeping the media’s role in mind, this paper begins its analysis by asking how the news media presents multiculturalism and whether there is a certain trend in its portrayal of multiculturalism

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<sup>8</sup> Park and Won classified ideology, homo-ethnic directivity, nationhood, in/direct contact as the independent variable in determining policy makers’ position on multiculturalism; support or recognition of threat educated by the media as a parameter; and choice of exclusion, assimilation or multiculturalism as a dependent variable.

over time. By specifically looking at the attention and attitude of South Korean television news, the key attempt of this paper is to see whether there is an association between television news coverage and the multiculturalism policy-making process in South Korea. For this analysis, the researcher hypothesizes that the quantity of news coverage and the significant change in multiculturalism policy have an interconnected relationship. Furthermore, this paper discusses whether the news media effectively influences the government in shaping a policy towards multiculturalism or if it tends to be impacted by political elites. In this regard, the extent to which the media plays a role as an agenda-setter in multiculturalism discourse is also a key focus this paper will explore. Ultimately, the researcher aims to figure out at which stage South Korea's multiculturalism is situated among the three stages presented by Castles & Miller.

### **III. Television News Analysis and its Association with the Multiculturalism Policy**

In an effort to find a relationship between multiculturalism policy-making and the South Korean media, this section delves into television news coverage over the past five years, when debate on the issue intensified in South Korea. The news story samples from South Korea's three major networks are collected using a data service tool for quantitative analysis.

#### **1. Data and Sample**

The sample consists of television news transcripts that discuss ‘multiculturalism, airing in South Korea’s popular television networks between January 1, 2005 and December 31, 2012. Initially, this paper intended to include news coverage published in Korea’s daily newsprint media. However, the pilot search revealed that daily newspapers that are ranked in the top three in terms of circulation are politically situated toward the right conservative end, suggesting that they tend to be relatively hostile toward multiculturalism. Though it is difficult to find direct ties to multiculturalism, it has been shown that a relationship exists between attitudes towards racial policies and the endorsement of general principles of equality (Sidanius et al., 1996) as well as between xenophobia and political conservatism (Pettigrew, 1998; Bobo, 2000; Hyerm, 2005). While it would be useful to explore the different approaches of all kinds of news media, there was a concern with obscuring the overall objective of understanding the general atmosphere in which Korea's multiculturalism discourse has evolved. Unless a study aims to conduct a detailed analysis of the ideologies underlying news coverage, given the fact that newspapers tend to more effectively embed ideological ideas than television news does, it seems better to choose simple but relatively unbiased television news. The other reason why this paper limited its analysis to television news stories can be found in the public’s dominant preference for television news. According to a Survey on a Consciousness of News Consumers conducted by the Korea Press Foundation in 2008, 60.7% of respondents selected the television as the most trustworthy medium among the five choices of newspaper, television news, magazine, radio, and Internet. In other words, the public prefers to consume news from television networks. Therefore, this analysis focuses on identifying shifts in the tone and attitudes of television networks toward

multiculturalism in order to compare them to major shifts in government multicultural policies.

This paper used a keyword search of the KINDS<sup>9</sup> database, which is a Korean version equivalent to LexisNexis, to locate television news transcripts for analysis. Using the keyword “multiculturalism” appearing in the full text, the researcher retrieved articles from three major television networks that enjoy high viewership: state-owned KBS (Korea Broadcasting System), MBC (Munhwa Broadcasting System), and SBS (Seoul Broadcasting System).

The search produced a total of 2,237 hits for three television networks combined. As analysis proceeded, a substantial number of unrelated items as well as duplicates that appeared in different news programs of the same television network were identified. These items were removed from the sample. However, the news coverage from two different networks that dealt with the same topic were treated as the two different ones.

As the analysis proceeded, it appeared that there were no notable differences among television networks in tones and attitudes in discussing multiculturalism. To understand the change of multiculturalism discourse across television networks, the study chose to conduct a keyword analysis.<sup>10</sup> For word analysis, the researcher carried out another round of random sampling by year, and ended up analyzing 50 transcripts from each year regardless of the network. The researcher used a hand-operated analysis method in order to avoid unrelated or duplicated counts. This quantitative analysis paper examines the

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.kinds.or.kr/>

<sup>10</sup> Karin Böke et al.(2000: 18-28, recited by Bauder, 2008) suggest three ways to investigate immigration discourse in Germany: word analysis, metaphor analysis and argument analysis. This paper uses word analysis, which is presumed to be an objective barometer of the media’s viewpoint.

frequency of words that were mentioned at different stages of the multiculturalism debate and investigates the implication on media's role in policy-making process.

## **2. Findings**

### **1. Sudden Increase of News Coverage in 2008**

In 2005, there was no news coverage found in any television network discussing multiculturalism. At that time it was virtually a new concept for South Korean people. In 2008, the instances of news coverage increased to 226 (117 after adjustment<sup>11</sup>), indicating a sudden increase with a four-fold rise from the previous year. That was the year in which “Act on the Treatment of Foreigners in Korea” and the “First Basic Plan for Immigration Policy (2008-2012)” were introduced. August 2007 marked the historical cornerstone for South Korea's discussion of the issue as the total number of foreign residents in Korea surpassed one million for the first time in history. Yet the debate on the subject seemed to be merely toddling. The booming of multiculturalism-related news coverage in 2008 also seemed to coincide with the approval of the “Support for Multicultural Families Act.” That law was aimed at improving the quality of life of multicultural families, and constructing necessary systems to ensure sustainable implementation of multiculturalism.

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<sup>11</sup> This refers to number of news coverage after removing double counts and irrelevant coverage.



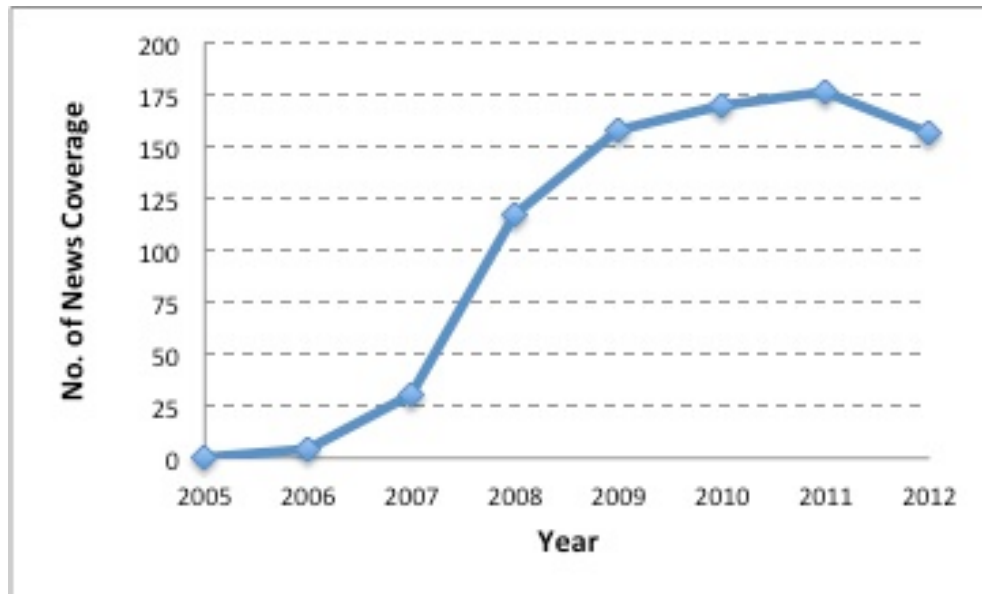


Figure 2. The total number of television news coverage in news programs that mention multiculturalism at least once (2005-2012). *Note.* The amount of news coverage includes transcripts from Korean Broadcasting System, Munwha Broadcasting System, and Seoul Broadcasting System.

Year	KBS	MBC	SBS	Total
2005	0	0	0	0
2006	0	3	1	4
2007	20	5	6	31
2008	74	20	23	117
2009	101	35	22	158
2010	116	24	30	170
2011	104	40	33	177
2012	82	30	45	157

Table 4. The breakdown of number of news coverage by television network talking about multiculturalism (2005-2012)

The increased discussion of multiculturalism (Figure 2, Table 4) is salient in KBS, MBC, and SBS combined until 2012, when the slope began moderately declining. “The Basic Plan for Multicultural Family Policy (2010-2012)” mandated in the Support for Multicultural Families Act was confirmed and took effect in 2010 with a three year plan to finish by 2012 and this Basic Plan is presumed to have held media’s attention to

government-initiated multiculturalism policy. The Basic Plan's effect continued until the next year, but the media seems to have gradually lost interest in multiculturalism. In 2012, discussion of multiculturalism fell by 11 percent from the previous year in the volume of news coverage, probably due to an absence of heated debate or any introduction of new policy on multiculturalism since 2010.

According to the detailed figures in Table 4, KBS appears much more interested in multicultural issues, but this may be explained by the fact that KBS has two channels, unlike other television networks with a single channel. If we mechanically divide the amount of news coverage from KBS into two, the result does not provide any meaningful distinction from the others. Yet, the figures of KBS are slightly higher than the other two, suggesting that the state-owned television network is more closely associated with the government's move toward enhanced multiculturalism. Nevertheless, it is noticeable that SBS, the most commercialized television network by nature of its ownership, marked its peak in 2012. Other television networks, by contrast, showed lower interest in the same period.

Overall, it is evident that talk about multiculturalism in television news has jumped from virtually nothing to a significant level in a relatively short period between 2005 and 2008, and maintained that level for three years. However, the absence of outstanding policy input in 2012 seems to question the validity of the media in advancing multiculturalism discourse.

## 2. Word Analysis: Discourse over Time

Issue Year	Korean Language	Culture/ Food	Fake Marriage	Wedding Ceremony	Race/ Ethnicity	Divorce/ Runaway	Domestic Violence	Law	Child Education	Poverty	Job/ Employment	Tougher Border Control	Prejudice/ Discrimination	Human Rights	Others
2008	12	16	1	2	10	0	0	7	10	3	1	3	9	4	32
2009	14	14	0	0	8	5	4	4	10	1	2	1	10	2	26
2010	15	12	2	3	4	1	2	2	12	6	8	3	5	2	18
2011	9	13	6	0	4	1	4	3	22	5	4	6	5	2	10
2012	19	7	1	3	2	1	3	2	17	5	9	0	5	0	20

Table 5. Diverse of issues, presented by key word counts found in multiculturalism-related television news transcripts during a period between 2008 and 2012. *Note:* Multiple counts are allowed.

The sample includes a total of 250 transcripts, or 50 transcripts from KBS, MBC, and SBS combined, aired from 2008 through 2012 respectively. Individual transcripts were assigned to relevant words that reflect issues encompassing multiculturalism. On average as shown in the Table 5, every transcript appeared to have included at least two issues related to multiculturalism.

### *Increasing Narrative News Stories<sup>12</sup>*

The proportion of narrative news stories tells how much the media is interested in a particular subject given the limited time and resources required for making those stories for television networks. The comparatively low proportion of narrative news coverage in 2008 is likely related to the relatively factual manner in which television news reported on multiculturalism. However, narrative news stories in 2009 remained slightly over half of all news coverage, presenting stories in a much more opinionated manner and often offered in-depth interpretations. The proportion of narratives the following years

<sup>12</sup> Narrative news refers to 1-2 minute-long reports conveyed by news reporters, while straight news consists of 1-2 sentences briefly stated by a news anchor.

remained almost the same as in 2009, suggesting constant media attention. Yet, this attention diminished turning into 2012, signaling a return to the past with only 17 hits, slightly above the 2008 figures.



Figure 3. The comparison in the number of narrative news versus straight news coverage. Narrative news stories on television news peaked in 2009 representing heightened interest from the public. Number of straight news dropped by almost 30% from 2008 to 2009, but it significantly bounced to the level of four years ago.

Most television news stories seem to be event oriented: Korean language contests, culture nights, celebrities' visit to event sites, openings of multicultural centers, or introductions of a new law or survey. An events focus is typically more characteristic of television news coverage, as contrasted with that of newspapers (Iyengar, 1991). For instance, a widely known American football player, Hines Ward, who was born to a Korean mother and an African American father, came to be regarded as the advocate for multiculturalism, and his visit to South Korea was spotlighted for a couple of years from 2008 as the debate over multiculturalism in South Korea grew with legislation such as the

“Act on the Treatment of Foreigners” (*“Hines Ward to invite multicultural children to the US”*, November 2008, SBS). Facilitating a talk over the computer screen between marriage migrant women and their families also came into the spotlight from time to time and these events seem to have attracted television network attention even for a temporary period (*“Migrant women meeting parents over the video chatting”*, April 2011, KBS, MBC, SBS). In addition to events, criminal stories involving multicultural families were also frequently found in television news. It is also interesting that the South Korean media in 2011 responded to the story of Norwegian right-wing extremist Anders Behring Breivik, who killed 77 civilians, with a restatement of South Korea’s policy on multiculturalism. Even after the South Korean people became alarmed about a potential terrorist attack when an anti-immigration nationalist expressed admiration for the monoculture of South Korea and Japan in his writing, the media failed to trigger a new debate or to maintain wide public attention. Rather, they simply repeated the multiculturalism manifesto. In other words, such external events do not seem to have fundamentally changed the attitude of the media. Instead, they increased attention when the media’s interest seemed to be dwindling.

It can be concluded that the increase in the amount of narrative news coverage is a positive sign of heightened attention toward multiculturalism. Despite the increase in narrative news coverage from 2009 through 2011, the quality of the content needs to be closely examined. Even though this study is devoted to analyzing news coverage through quantification, the obvious monotony in the choice of items needs to be addressed. For example, all three television networks delivered stories about how well marriage migrant women adapted to rural lives that require respect for the Confucian tradition by featuring

their role in preparation for the two major national holidays - New Year's Day and Chuseok (equivalent to Thanksgiving day). Judging from this, it is possible to tell that the increased number of narrative news stories on aspects of multiculturalism could be a barometer to measure public interest, but it is still not necessarily linked to in-depth coverage of the issue.

### *The Question of Balance in News Treatment of Multiculturalism*

There seems to be considerable imbalance in the media's attention to marriage migrant women and their families compared to media interest in labor migrants residing in South Korea. When the word "multiculturalism" is put in the KINDS to browse news transcripts, results appear to have relevance largely to multicultural families. In contrast, less than one-third of the transcripts explicitly or implicitly include labor migrants as the main subject in discussing multiculturalism. Figure 4 shows that there were between 38 to 50 news stories that implied inclusion of marriage migrants in their multicultural context. Meanwhile, the number of news transcripts that included labor migrants was at most 13 out of 50 stories. Moreover, there are transcripts that do not specifically refer to whom the news coverage targets. For instance, five pieces from 2010 appeared to be vague in specifying the focus of the news coverage. Those news stories without specific reference simply argue for the validity of a debate of multiculturalism. This biased view stands in stark contrast to most immigration countries that mainly target migrant workers to integrate into their society.



Figure 4. The comparison in the number of news coverage targeting respective migrants, marriage migrant women versus labor migrants.

South Korean media shows significantly unbalanced dealing with multiculturalism. It exclusively sheds light on marriage migrants while labor migrants accounting for approximately 75% of total migrants in South Korea are being deserted from official attention.

Although marriage migration is particularly pertinent to South Korea's situation, implicit exclusion of labor migrants in the immigration debate contrasts sharply against the global trend since talk of multiculturalism in most immigrant countries was initiated by the influx of labor migrants. Interestingly, the number of labor migrants has almost tripled,<sup>13</sup> but multicultural policy in South Korea is almost exclusively concentrated on support for marriage migrants and their families. For example, the central government's budget for migrant workers in fiscal year 2012 dropped to 4 million US dollars (4 billion Korean won), which is less than half of the 9 million set aside in 2009. Meanwhile, the portion of the budget assigned for marriage migrants and their families rose from 30 million in 2008 to almost 90 million in 2012. Including local government programs, the

<sup>13</sup> As of 2011, the number of labor migrants staying more than three months, was estimated to be 590,000, whereas marriage migrants accounted for 220,000.

total budgetary volume is estimated to be 200 million for a single year.<sup>14</sup> When combined, these facts suggest that multiculturalism in South Korea exclusively refers to marriage migrants and their families.

### *Interest Shift*

Media attention to multiculturalism remained relatively consistent throughout the study period. Despite differences of interest during each year, trends can be found (Reference to Table 4). Language and cultural differences seem to be the most challenging issues for immigrants. Both problems were mentioned most frequently during the initial period of 2008 and 2009. This pattern corresponds with the booming establishment of Multicultural Family Support Centers, which allocate resources predominantly to Korean language and culture programs, following the approval of Support for Multicultural Families Act in 2008. Around 100 centers<sup>15</sup> were established across the nation till the first half of 2009, and the number gradually doubled for the remaining period till the end of 2012. The concentrated interest on language and culture programs eventually faded as 2011 approached, and child education issues took over the spotlight with 22 mentions in 2011. Throughout the period of the study, concern about child education was on a constant rise until it slightly declined to 17 hits in 2012, yielding the first place to language issues again. It is no wonder that child education stood at the

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<sup>14</sup> Yonhap News, December 27, 2012. Available at [http://app.yonhapnews.co.kr/YNA/Basic/article/new\\_search/YIBW\\_showSearchArticle\\_New.aspx?searchpart=article&searchtext=□□□&contents\\_id=AKR20121220116600372](http://app.yonhapnews.co.kr/YNA/Basic/article/new_search/YIBW_showSearchArticle_New.aspx?searchpart=article&searchtext=□□□&contents_id=AKR20121220116600372)

<sup>15</sup> Donga Ilbo, September 22, 2009. Available at <http://news.donga.com/3//20090401/8714580/1>



center of concerns as the number of children with multicultural backgrounds was rapidly growing. Figure 5 and 6 prove the incremental rise of concern on education, corresponding to the number of children from multicultural families.

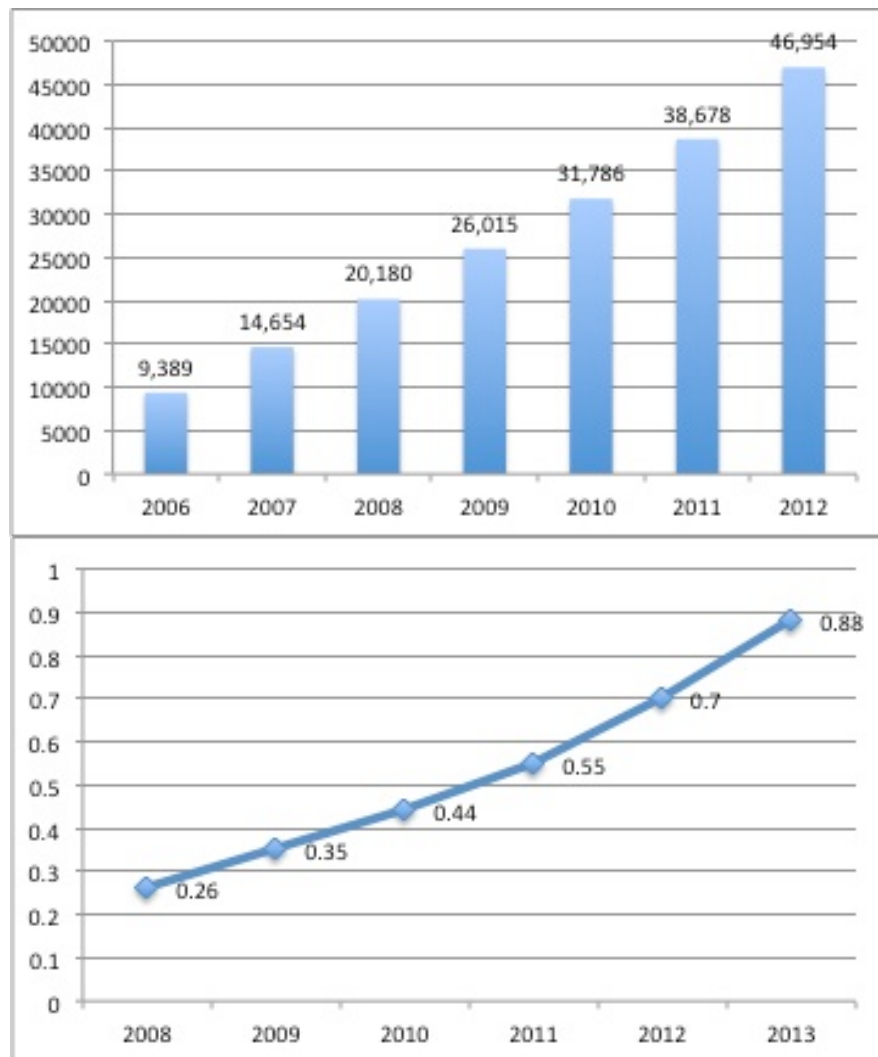


Figure 5 & 6. Number of total students with multicultural backgrounds and the ratio of those students out of total students in South Korea. *Note:* The ratio of multicultural students in 2013 is an estimated figure. (Source: Ministry of Education and Science)

They also predict that child education might not peak in the near future. In fact, most news coverage points out that the school attendance rate of children with multicultural

backgrounds is only two thirds that of average Korean students, reportedly due to language problems, bullying, and prevalent discrimination among students.<sup>16</sup> Low rates of school attendance among these children is particularly problematic for the fact that it might exacerbate the marginalized situation multicultural families usually face; more than 20% of the multicultural families are living with less than a thousand dollars per month, and this percentage is more than double the average among Koreans.<sup>17</sup>

Along with child education, the employment of marriage migrant women became a growing concern. As noted above, many multicultural families are economically living below the average level, hence migrant women eagerly seek jobs. Given that most multicultural families live in the rural areas where farming is the main source of income, women became desperate to fill the income-consumption gap in off-seasons. The occurrence of the word “poverty (economic hardship)” became relatively frequent with 6 hits in 2010, when the South Korean government confirmed the Basic Plan for Support to Multicultural Families. Emphasis was put on the creation of jobs for marriage migrant women under the Basic Plan: the government encouraged businesses to employ migrant women by providing subsidies for employment and by introducing vocational programs. Reflecting the government’s concern on economic self-support of multicultural families, the frequency of words “employment/job” appeared to show the similar trend with the word ‘poverty’ throughout the period. The link between poverty and employment seem to have decoupled in 2012 as the word employment appeared more frequently.

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<sup>16</sup> Yonhap News, October 25, 2012, Available at <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=100&oid=001&aid=0005895841>

<sup>17</sup> Jeong Yu hun, 2009, Characteristics of South Korean Multiculturalism and its Implication, Hyundai Research Institute, 09-44

Despite the fact that prejudice/discrimination based on homogeneous ethnic and cultural grounds has long been considered to be the major factor in public hostility toward foreigners, discussion on the discriminatory attitude of many Koreans does not appear to have been addressed enough except for the first and second year of the study period. On average, one out of five news stories mentioned prejudice or discrimination in discussing multiculturalism in both 2008 and 2009. However, that declined to only 10 percent of the sampled transcripts. Likewise, the use of the word “human rights” peaked with only 4 hits in 2008, and the overall negotiation of human rights in multiculturalism discourse was relatively quiet throughout the period. It is rather surprising that there was not a single mention about human rights in 2012 even as many countries viewed human rights issues with rising concern.

Domestic violence also seems to have been a regular focus of the media. It was constantly mentioned from 2009 through 2011. There were at least several noticeable criminal cases involving foreign residents, including a couple of murder cases in which marriage migrant women were killed by their Korean husbands. Conversely, marriages of convenience by foreign women wanting to obtain Korean citizenship increasingly drew media attention. In particular, more than 10 percent of television news reports covered such marriages and their damage to Korean peasants in 2011. Although domestic violence and attempts at such marriages of convenience both seem to have contributed to a rising divorce rate among multicultural couples, the mention of “divorce” was not necessarily linked to their frequency in this analysis. On the other hand, it is noticeable that the argument for tougher border control or stricter immigration procedure gained popularity. There was only one news story that mentioned tougher border control

in 2009, but the number rose to six in 2011. A closer examination of the text-based data reveals that transcripts that mentioned either words “violence” or “fake marriage” offered tougher border control as the solution to those problems. In fact, the South Korean government has gradually tightened border control over the past couple of years.

Generally, it seems apparent that television news stressed different interests at different times: the above analysis shows that the media’s focus shifted from the basic requirement for a settlement (language/understanding of culture) to normal demands for sustaining a life (employment/education) that largely reflect the difficulties that people with multicultural backgrounds confront.

### **3. Discussion**

Analyzing television news coverage for the five-year period, in which an unprecedented discussion of multiculturalism took place in South Korea, this study explores how television news media has associated with both the public and the policy makers in reflecting and framing the issues surrounding immigration and its challenges. Drawing upon the findings, the pattern of media attention devoted to multiculturalism seems to have been largely shaped by government initiatives.

#### ***Media’s Role of Problematization***

Although immigration has long been a concern, it is only in recent years that the issue has produced a substantial amount of public interest, particularly through news media. Despite the fact that the South Korean government proclaimed globalization as the

national agenda in early 1990s and the influx of immigrants increased markedly, the adoption of multiculturalism as a government policy came as late as 2006, three decades after the term ‘multiculturalism’ became widely used among western countries.

News coverage on the subject first appeared in 2006 on South Korea’s three major television networks. There were only four news stories throughout all television news that year, but the great leap forward in the number of news coverage with eight-fold increase in 2007 reflected the government’s unprecedented input: “The First Basic Plan for Immigration Policy” marked the shift in South Korea’s identity from a non-immigration country to an immigration country. The legislation of the “Act on the Treatment of Foreigners in Korea” followed that same year. When “The Support of Multicultural Families Act” was approved in 2008, the news coverage shot up four-fold. These simple figures enable us to assume that the media’s attention to multiculturalism is closely associated with the government’s policy. The imbalance in dealing with immigrant categories – between migrant workers and marriage migrants – clearly shows how effective the government is in influencing the media’s attention. The government’s multiculturalism policy manifests itself in prejudiced budget allocation and programs in favor of marriage migrant women, which is in turn reflected in the news coverage. These simple findings confirm the hypotheses suggested at the beginning of the paper - the quantity of news coverage and the change in multiculturalism policy have an interconnected relationship, and television news coverage of multiculturalism tends to be a reflection of government-led policy rather than a matter of the TV stations’ choosing their own active agendas. This suggests that the media has synchronized its problematization process of immigration with that of the government.

According to Hier & Greenberg (2002), the media serves to recruit and mobilize readers as active participants in the discussion of a crisis. Spelling out the problems provides the basic groundwork. In this sense, Korean television news coverage in the sampled sources seems to have effectively assumed a distinct pattern, presumably inherited from the government. The number of news transcripts showed problematic ways in which immigrants were portrayed: most marriage migrants were seen as recipients of support, imposing heavy burden on the government shoulders, or were described as a threat to the integrity of the country, rather than as contributors to the society. Meanwhile, portrayal of labor migrants was largely absent. Otherwise, the media facilitated the perception that migrant workers deprive less privileged Koreans from easy sources of income. Especially in times of economic downturn, these people were likely to be portrayed as intruders.

Notably enough, television news tends to be highly dependent on visual images. Continuous and extensive news coverage of crimes involving immigrants, or of marginalized people with multicultural backgrounds, has arguably contributed to a common image of migrants as exhausted, weakened, unkempt criminals. As Hay (1996) puts it, visual evidence precipitates the construction of a crisis in a way that other mechanisms simply could not, and the public could be mobilized as participants in this process by expressing their concerns or resentment. It could be deduced that policy makers who are influenced by or have an effect on the media, might also be directly or indirectly involved in the construction of a crisis. The aforementioned findings that television news coverage tends to mimic the government initiatives on multiculturalism, which looks more like assimilation, due to its narrow framing and inherent bias, rather

than the healthy development of discussion on the subject. That enables us to surmise that South Korea's television news has contributed to reinforcing the negative image of immigrants that policy makers acquired. Thus, the perceived threat suggested by the media might be said to have helped to spur the construction of a crisis in dealing with immigrants. Simply put, Korean television news rehearses problematizing immigrants based on the government assumptions, rather than on the way the government actually deals with multiculturalism.

Furthermore, despite the South Korean government's proclaimed broad policy toward multiculturalism, it is apparent that immigration policy has taken on a restrictive perspective once again. This confirms Hier & Greenberg's (2002) argument that problematization is a prelude to decisive intervention, fostering a sense of social regulation. In Korea's context, the media's alignment with the government in problematizing immigrants seems to have contributed to heightened regulation. Yet, it is not clear if the media's problematization of immigration issues was self-imposed or initiated by the government.

### *Assimilation vs. Multiculturalism: Where is South Korea?*

As discussed in the Global Discourse of Multiculturalism section, three stages of development in recognition of multiculturalism can be applied in determining South Korea's status as a multicultural country. The media's association with these stages – tolerance, legalization of non-discrimination, and ultimate achievement of multiculturalism – is of special interest in this study.

While tolerance is the first stage, it is generally recognized as an important virtue throughout the whole process of multicultural development. However, this virtue is a voluntary and arbitrary concept. Its durability depends on the majority's preference (Kim Nam-kook, 2009). There is little doubt that this preference is largely formed by the media.

The South Korean government spearheaded legalization of non-discrimination, particularly after 2007. "The Support of Multicultural Families Act," which was introduced in September 2008, is a good example of a progressive initiative that supports families with a foreign spouse, predominantly marriage migrant women. It was presumably reinforced as the total number of immigrants in Korea surpassed a symbolic one million in the previous year. As the Korean government's efforts to legalize non-discrimination increases, news coverage from the three major television networks has increased in quality as well as in quantity. In substance, the majority of immigration topics discussed in the media before the introduction of this law, were mostly concentrated on one-time events or accidents, such as Korean language competition or domestic violence. In contrast, after the law was enacted, news topics became diversified and in-depth feature stories flourished: positive images of multiculturalism (*"Migrant daughter-in-law keeps the tradition of Lee Family,"* September 2008, KBS; *"Migrant women eager to vote,"* December 2009, KBS); multiculturalism policy analysis and suggestions (*"Children from multicultural families in desperate need for educational support,"* May 2009, KBS; *"First indictment against race-discriminative speech,"* September 2009, KBS, MBC, SBS); and frequent delivery of survey and statistics (*"Number of children from multicultural families doubled in 2 years",* December 2008,



KBS, MBC, SBS; “77% of *Seoulites* favor multiculturalism,” December 2008, KBS, MBC). Interest from politicians also heightened following the Support of Multicultural Families Act. Dozens of promises were made by major political parties - some of which actually materialized. With a general election looming, the conservative ruling party not only assigned a proportional representative seat for the marriage migrant women for the first time, but also appointed a naturalized person to a high-ranking government official in 2009.

The First Basic Plan for Support to Multicultural Families initiated in 2010 appears to have strengthened the momentum towards advanced multiculturalism. The surge in multiculturalism news coverage in 2008 held for almost a year, but the upward trend slowed during the first quarter of 2010. As the Plan was introduced in the second quarter of 2010, television news coverage picked up again, slightly surpassing the total number of reports of the previous year.

In order to measure the legitimacy of Korea’s multiculturalism with regard to the third stage, more detailed policy areas need to be studied. Among the eight policy areas suggested by Banting & Kymlicka et al. (2006), this paper limits the discussion to the extent that media’s involvement can be found either in a positive or in a negative way in relation to the South Korean government’s adoption of a policy. Regarding the adoption of multiculturalism in the school curriculum, the textbook used for fifth and sixth grade in elementary schools includes a chapter on the different way of life of foreigners or the difficulties of mixed race children since 2007. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education distributed supplementary materials to teachers to help them understand the multicultural phenomenon and removed the discriminatory descriptions from textbooks. Education

issues have been at the center of the media's interest, so it has long been argued that the government should revise the curriculum in order to reflect a broader view of South Korea's changing population. Part of this change may be attributed to the media's strong voice. However, some critics claim that the media has not sufficiently addressed the fundamental issues that children from culturally or ethnically mixed families face; for example, in a suburban city of Incheon, 36.5% of elementary school age children, 55.2% of secondary school age and 77.9% of high school age adolescents with multicultural backgrounds dropped out of school as of 2011. Given the fact that the number of children under 18 with multicultural backgrounds has been increasing dramatically, these figures suggest potential future challenges.

Dual citizenship has been a thorny issue, especially in terms of military service. Every man in South Korea with few exceptions is obliged to serve. The Korean government announced that it was going to introduce dual citizenship in late 2007 and amended military law to reflect the multicultural phenomenon, but the debate remains high because the law exempts some people from service if their external appearance, such as skin color, clearly distinguishes themselves from average Korean men. Although intense interest has been drawn from the sectors of the public that are sensitive to any sign of discrimination in military service, the media has not adequately dealt with this issue. KBS and SBS only shed light on the issue by introducing the discussion conducted by the army in 2009 (*"Army to prepare for the multicultural era,"* June 2009).

Finally, funding for minority group cultural activities and Korean language education seems to be the Korean government's priority. However, the media has particularly criticized these programs because they are limited to one-time support or focus only

narrowly on the quick attainment of Korean language skills, a practice that does not guarantee sustainability. News coverage pointing to the government's short-sighted funding scheme has been aired for over a decade, but the government has been slow to respond. Moreover, the media's critical attitude has not gone beyond this scope of the issue presented above, suggesting a limited sense of criticism.

As seen above, the evaluation of these policy areas in relation to the media's involvement shows that the transition to a more multicultural society has not been realized in full in Korea even though that direction toward multiculturalism is clear. Besides, the media's role in addressing the respective issues regarding multiculturalism largely remains limited to simple fact-delivery or repetition of government announcements, and fails to meet expectations to live up to its role in setting agendas, framing discourse, and suggesting fresh solutions. Once again, it seems apparent that South Korean television news has been influenced by the government, rather than having its own impact on the policy-making process. Some scholars attribute this limited approach of television news to its distinctively episodic and event-oriented nature (Iyengar, 1991).

Although the context is different, similar cases of the media's serving government policies are easily found throughout the world. Burke (2002) notes that the Australian media's widespread use of the metaphorical construct of Australia as the "family home" in the 1970s may well have stemmed from the "Family of the Nation" concept espoused by that nation's Minister for Immigration. In 1984, however, the Australian media began to depict immigrants not as grateful guests of a family home but as passive tenants when the incumbent administration altered its position to the other extreme. Likewise, South

Korean television news coverage disclosed that it has a narrow viewpoint in determining multiculturalism especially as to the choice of the subject and its attitudes, following the stance of the government.

South Korea's multiculturalism policy that only concerns families with marriage migrants is especially problematic. With regard to this unbalanced approach toward multiculturalism, Eom Han-jin (2008) claims that the South Korean government's reluctance to accept the permanent settlement of migrant workers is reflected in its policy concentrating its efforts instead on integrating marriage migrants who then acquire Korean citizenship. Moreover, as discussed above, news coverage has been largely hostile or paternalistic<sup>18</sup> toward immigrants, suggesting that the media still has very mixed views on multiculturalism. Given this attitude, the media seems to be serving as a developer for a more deep-seated sense of social insecurity and uncertainty regarding the increasing numbers of immigrants in South Korea. In sum, narrowly framed multiculturalism by the government became nestled in television news, thereby abandoning the expected strong role of the media as policy contributor. Regarding the intent of narrowly framed multiculturalism, Kim Nam-kook (2009) argues that it emphasizes the government's willingness to maintain the single race tradition. Looking

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<sup>18</sup> Paternalistic approach toward marriage migrants is particularly being criticized among foreign brides. One Chinese bride wrote, "The Korean government, central as well as local, and various volunteer organizations, tend to believe that foreign brides need financial assistance out of pity. Consequently, a lot of money has been spent to help them, which is good. However, since money has been spent in such a way, the public has formed the negative view that the government and organizations ladle out taxpayers' money unreservedly. This creates a negative image of foreign brides. ... If the outside agency is going to run multicultural family affairs, foreign brides may become so used to receiving aid from society that they might lose their ability to be independent. Most of all, we foreign brides are not pitiable people, even if some of us are struggling financially." (Excerpted from Voices of foreign brides, Kim Choong-soon, 2011: 147)

at the government's intentions, it is useful to explore Price's (2002) concept of the "market for loyalties." In this market, competitors for power use the regulation of communications to organize a cartel of imagery and identity among themselves. South Korea's single race tradition, in this sense, can be interpreted as an identity formed by the cartel, in which Price argues that the government itself is often included. He further explains that the market is operated by the cartel to maintain power and to ensure political stability (31-32). Accordingly, South Korea's multiculturalism proves itself closer to assimilation rather than to the generally accepted principles of a broader multiculturalism. Simply put, the concerted effort of the government and the media in spotlighting the problems of immigration seems to have resulted in a policy, which may be regarded as one of de facto assimilation policy.

### *Limited Role in Suggesting Solutions*

The findings particularly suggest the media's lackluster performance in addressing multiculturalism issues. The reasons might be found in Korea's traditional ethnic and cultural homogeneity that has been enshrined in the Korean people's consciousness. Because the media itself constitutes an extension of society in which social consciousness is constructed through interactions between people and institutions, the media can be said to be largely influenced by that. Generally, more emphasis has been put on the media's role of upholding the social norms rather than on the societal values, thus impacting the media's attitudes and tones. According to Scheufele (1999), however, there has been research on at least five factors that may potentially influence how journalists frame a given issue: social norms and values; organizational pressures and constraints; pressures

of interest groups; journalistic routines; and ideological or political orientation of journalists (Shoemaker & Reese, 1997; Tuchman, 1978). Looking at the media as the dependent variable as much as the independent variable would be equally important in understanding the media's role in shaping policies. Edelman (1993) particularly stresses that the choice of frames is often driven by ideology and prejudice (232; Scheufele, 1999). Referring to news coverage on the Gulf War, Edelman (1977) concluded that authorities and pressure groups categorize beliefs in a way that marshals support and opposition to their interests, and that these groups use the mass media to construct opinions and their societal influence in order to establish certain frames of reference (51; Scheufele, 1999). In South Korea's societal context, especially with regard to multiculturalism, the media seems to be largely a dependent variable positioned as an object. For instance, television news coverage such as *"Migrant daughter-in-law keeps the tradition of Lee Family"* depicts a foreign bride as a woman who delivers a baby for a family for which pedigree is about to die out, or as a woman who prepares ritual services for ancestors. Unlike most other news coverage in which a paternalistic view is prevalent, this kind of news reveals a receptive attitude toward marriage migrants. Owing to the deep-rooted Confucianism tradition in Korea, it is presumed that the media also approves of marriage migrants who replace Korean women in rural villages, conform to the hierarchical order, and keep Korean tradition. Kim Choong-soon (2011) and Han Geon-soo (2007) point out that Confucianism is a big hindrance to multiculturalism. Interestingly enough, the media does not seem to pay close attention to civil society's strong support for multiculturalism. The number of non-governmental organizations, including religious groups, has increased by almost fifty percent from 462 in 2008 to 689 in 2012. Their range of

activities generally include the protection of human rights, support for the adaptation process of immigrants, and efforts to improve national immigration policy. Many foreign workers and marriage migrants seem to rely heavily on these organizations as service organizations regardless of their legal status in Korea. In fact, civil activists fill the void left by the lack of government support. At the same time, they criticize the way the media portrays immigrants, and these activities are especially consistent with Lippmann's view. He claims that public opinion must be organized for the press, not by the press, if they are to be sound (1965: 10). Nevertheless, civil society's advocacy efforts for multiculturalism have not been drawing much attention from the media. In multiculturalism-related news coverage, reporters may only contact activists in an attempt to look balanced.

Given the fact that television news coverage has hardly gone beyond what has been offered by the government and the media's strong attachment to homogenous tradition in Korean society, it seems obvious that the media's role to suggest solutions to multicultural challenges has been also limited. The range of solutions does not vary between television networks or between certain periods of times, and solutions are mostly a repetition of the government's already determined future plan. In this sense, some lament the media's uncritical attitude in adopting a state-initiated multiculturalism policy. Most migrant supporter groups hold negative attitudes towards the wide ranging role of the state out of concerns about the nation's possible authoritarian approach (Kim Nam-kook, 2009). Kim Nam-kook (2005) notes that state-led multiculturalism can oppress the opinions of social minorities in a society where excessive integration is a central problem by emphasizing homogeneity that revolves around the autocracy and demands of the

majority group. In fact, despite the relative progress and effectiveness of South Korea's government-initiated multicultural policy thus far, the policy cannot necessarily be linked to the media's progressive approach toward multiculturalism. Instead, the media seems to have posited itself as a public information agency. For this reason, television news networks cannot be free from criticism that points to scaled back humanitarian aspects and further restricted immigration policy which apparently keeps the country from achieving a true multicultural society.

Region \ Year	Religious Organizations		Civil Organizations	
	2008	2012	2008	2012
Seoul	3	9	12	54
Busan	0	2	25	17
Daegu	2	6	20	19
Incheon	7	10	9	18
Gwangju	3	7	29	19
Daejeon	0	7	8	24
Ulsan	1	5	4	17
Gyeonggi	34	54	65	118
Gangwon	0	3	33	32
Chungbuk	1	3	25	13
Chungnam	0	1	23	52
Jeonbuk	3	16	43	46
Jeonnam	3	16	21	22
Gyeongbuk	4	10	34	21
Gyeongnam	2	13	38	42
Jeju	0	1	10	12
Total	63	163	399	526

Table 6. Civil Society's Advocacy for multiculturalism: increase of supporting organizations for foreign residents in Korea (source: Ministry of Public Administration and Security. Survey of Current Status of Foreign Residents in Local Government in 2008, 2012)



## **IV. Conclusion**

While South Korea's state-led drive toward a policy more accepting of multiculturalism may have been acknowledged as a success story for the past decade, the controversy over the authenticity of that policy still looms. As in many immigration countries, South Korea's prominent turn into a multicultural society has been highly controversial. The government still seems to be calculating advantages and disadvantages of welcoming foreigners into a society that is still largely homogenous, while the focus of the South Korean media tends to revolve around the government's past ideas.

An analysis of television news transcripts from South Korea's three major television networks confirms several facts. First, change in the policy attention to multiculturalism has a direct impact on the amount of television news coverage and the proportion of lengthy reports by all three networks. This proves that there is a clear association between news coverage and the multiculturalism policy in South Korea. Secondly, television news coverage's general view on immigrants is paternalistic and unbalanced, suggesting limited efforts and questioning the authenticity of a move from assimilation toward multiculturalism. The government's exclusive support for marriage migrants and the media's disproportionate report on these people can be seen as a reflection of South Korea's enshrined exclusiveness. Thirdly, the media's heavy reliance on the

government's provision of ideas on immigration has made journalists more of a dependent variable in setting and choosing its agenda.

Only a few scholarly works have investigated the relationship between multiculturalism and the media. Among many potential subjects, it would be of great interest to explore the differences between conservative and liberal media in approaching multiculturalism in future studies. Yet, it seems that a parallel comparison between television and print media news coverage might hinder rather than help readers in understanding the relatively unbiased general atmosphere surrounding public discussion of multicultural issues unless the study aims to conduct a detailed analysis of the differing ideological slant underlying the news coverage. It would be also worthwhile to examine the relationship between the rapidly growing social media online and its ultimate impact on the multiculturalism policy-making.

This topic could also benefit from further research. In word analysis, the researcher's classification does not exclude the possibility of bias. In order to increase the credibility of the results, multi-coders could be employed. Additionally, its focus on only three television networks limits the ability to generalize these findings. Given the compelling and imminent issues facing South Korea's practice of multiculturalism, such as the need for a control tower in order to effectively coordinate the policy and to avoid overlaps, this research paper intends to provide a missing piece to a big jigsaw puzzle.

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