

The Formation of Social Constructions of Female Marriage Migrants and Female Work Migrants in South Korea

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Abstract

Immigration issues have come to the forefront in recent years in Korea, where various groups of immigrants have seemingly been viewed in different ways. This study examines the social constructions of two types of female immigrants; marriage migrants and work migrants. The main focus is to compare two relatively similar groups of immigrants to ask 'who is deserving and who is not?', in other words, which groups of immigrants benefit from positive social constructions, and which are construed more negatively. In particular, the effects of historical legacies, narrative portrayals in the press, and public policies are examined. Data were collected from various sources including 586 articles from five major national newspapers, and research reports from public and nonprofit agencies. Analysis results can be summarized as; first, the mixed race issue in Korea has significant effect on the formation of the social constructions of female immigrants in terms of historical legacy. Second, the results reveal different patterns of social construction between the two target populations. The press and policymakers appear to be mostly in favor of the assimilation of female marriage migrants into Korean society. Although there are relatively many policies for female marriage migrants, immigration policies in Korea lack gender perspectives. Finally, it would be good to note that portrayals of female immigrants in the media should be changed to overcome the stereotype of female immigrants because the media plays a vital role in framing images of female immigrants, which consequently reinforces path dependency. Media, including newsprint, should not portray them as a stereotype, but make efforts to portray the diversity of female immigrants, especially treating them not as objects of action, but as actors.

Key words

Female marriage migrants, female work migrants, social construction, immigration policy, racial discrimination

Introduction

As economic globalization has rapidly spread over the world, migration issues are no longer limited to European or North American countries. In North-east Asia, where governments have traditionally been relatively unconcerned with immigration, the influx of new workers and residents is an issue which has now begun to be addressed. In Korea, immigration was relatively minimal until around a decade ago. However, during this time, the foreign population has grown rapidly, and currently there are 1.45 million expatriates (about 2.84% of the total population) residing in the country (Korea Immigration Service, 2012, p. 272). Following the sudden rise in the immigrant population, Korean citizens are increasingly concerned about the immigration issue (Park & Yi, 2009), but views are becoming bifurcated. On the one hand, many social activists and nonprofit organizations are working to support the human rights of immigrants and their settlement in Korea. On the other hand, some groups hold negative views, for example, a far right group opened the 'anti-multicultural policy café' in 2008 which is negative toward immigrants.¹ This group attempts to portray immigrants as job stealers, and regards the current immigrant policy as a conspiracy between government and business at the expense of native Koreans.

Over the last decade, a considerable number of studies have focused on immigrant workers (Kim, 1995; Lee, 2004; Kim, 2007; Kim, 2010; Seo, 2011) and marriage immigrants (Kim & Chun, 2008; Hwang, 2009; Min, 2011) respectively, and there have also been some studies comparing the two kinds of immigrants (Han & Park, 2011). However, academic research focusing on female immigrants, especially comparisons of female marriage migrants and female work migrants is scarce. One explanation is because work migrants are usually thought to be predominantly male, and marriage immigrants, female. Yet, the ratio of female migrant workers is about 30% of the total workforce (Korea Immigration Service, 2012), and in terms of actual numbers, there are slightly more female work migrants than female marriage immigrants.

Accordingly, this study attempts to assess the formation and evolution

¹ For more details, visit the following site at <http://cafe.daum.net/dacultureNO>.

of the social construction of female immigrants in Korea by comparing the two target populations: female marriage and work migrants. It is relatively straightforward to define female marriage migrants; female foreigners who come to Korea for the explicit purpose of marrying a Korean man. The definition of female work migrants in this study is limited to low-skilled female foreigners. Professional or high-skilled female work migrants are about 12.3% (19,139) compared with low-skilled female work migrants. However, most of them are English teachers who come from native English speaking countries and European countries (9,014). Other types of professional skilled female immigrants from these countries and Europe are 1,828. Excluding these, professional skilled female migrants amount to 8,297 (5.3%) which is a relatively small number (Korea Immigration Service, 2012).

In order to achieve the research goals of this study, the social construction of target populations is utilized as a theoretical framework (Schneider & Ingram, 1993; Ingram, Schneider, & deLeon, 2007; Schneider & Sidney, 2009). As immigrant target populations are subject to both positive and negative social constructions, this is a particularly suitable theoretical framework for the analysis of migration issues (Newton, 2005). In addition, this study also utilizes the, at times, overlapping theory of path dependency (Pierson, 2004).

The remainder of the study is organized as follows. In part two, the study reviews the discussions regarding gender perspectives on immigration policy and introduces the social construction of target populations as a theoretical framework for the empirical analysis. The research questions and research design are then outlined in part three. Part four reports the analysis results in terms of three factors which contribute to the shaping of the social constructions of the two target populations: impacts of historical legacies, the influence of media coverage, and public policy influences. The final section summarizes the analysis results and draws out policy implications.

Theoretical Backgrounds

The need for gender perspectives on migration policy

Immigrant women are subject to multiple forms of discrimination such

as domestic violence, sexual harassments, and xenophobia, due to their identities as women, immigrants, and ethnic minorities.² As such, a new gender-based migration approach is urgently needed to address the inequalities and discrimination that immigrant women suffer from. Generally speaking, immigration policies fail to reflect a gender perspective. This means that the specific situation and discrimination that immigrant women face has not been addressed. A gender conscious approach to immigration policy introduces a shift from the predominant view of female immigrants as simply the wives and children of male immigrants, to incorporating an understanding of women's human rights and of the unique experiences of immigrant women themselves (European Women's Lobby, 2004).

Gender as a social construction that organizes relationships between men and women can greatly differentiate the causes, processes and impacts of migration on the two sexes. Knowing how these differences play out at the interface of migration and poverty can be important to promoting gender equality and empowering women. A gender analysis of migration looks beyond simple differences in migration behavior between men and women and examines the inequalities underlying those differences. It looks at how these are shaped by the social and cultural contexts of the individual, and the influence that membership in social groups, and economic and political conditions can have on decisions about migration (World Bank, 2005).

Determinants of female migration

All major studies on migration agree that economic disparities between developing and developed countries continue to be a key determinant of cross-border movements for poor countries (UNDP, 2005). The increase in female migration can also be explained by the demand in low paying service sectors of developed economies (Sassen, 2003). In addition, education can affect women's migration potential, as it does with men. However, unlike men, while their education may impel them to move, foreign companies have frequently preferred to hire them because they are cheap and docile rather than educated (Oishi, 2002).

² For more details, visit the following site at <http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice/home/fsj/im/migrations>.

As gender attributes are usually assigned by cultures, the migration options and constraints for women can vary vastly, depending on their socio-cultural origins. Generally, the more restrictive the role assigned to women in their countries of origin, by culture or religion, the less female migration takes place (Zachariah, Mathew, & Rajan, 2001). Government policy can also have a gender-specific influence on migration decisions. Indeed, many poor female migrants have been more vulnerable to irregular forms of employment and deportation by having their residency status and entitlements tied to the immigrant status of their male spouse (World Bank, 2005). Therefore, it is important to have gender perspectives on immigration policy.

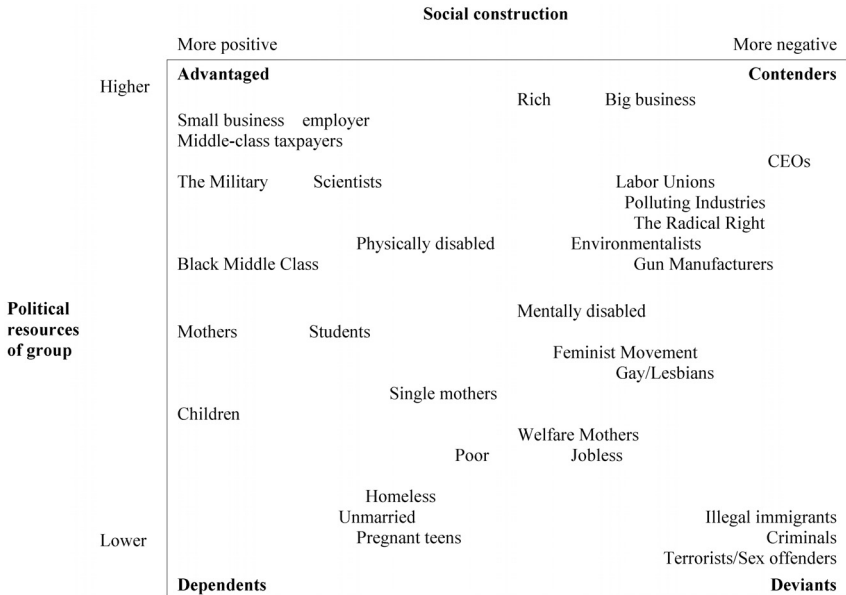
Social constructions and influences of public policy

Since Schneider and Ingram (1993) introduced the social construction theory to policy studies, it has been widely utilized to explore how and why policy changes, by investigating the interactions between various socio-cultural influences (Ingram, Schneider & deLeon, 2007, pp. 114-117). According to the social construction theory, social issues are said to be a product of human social interaction, and policy, in essence, it is also perceived to be something which is socially constructed. Schneider and Ingram (1993, p. 335) define social constructions as “stereotypes about particular groups of people that have been created by politics, culture, socialization, history, the media, literature, religion, and the like”. These influences lead to particular social constructions of the groups concerned (Burr, 1995; Schutz, 1967). Ingram, Schneider, and deLeon (2007) categorized the social construction of target populations based on two dimensions (political power and social construction). Depending on both the level of political power³, as well as whether the social con-

³ Political power of the target population indicates that their voting power as well as reactions from the general public because “social constructions become part of the reelection calculus when public officials anticipate the reaction of the target population itself to the policy and also anticipate the reaction of others to whether the target group should be the beneficiary (or loser) for a particular policy proposal” (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, 335). In other words, general public (not target populations) could be affected by the images of target population in voting if the policy is made in favor of negative social constructions to them. For this reason, if the press makes the target population as positive, policy makers would have more chances to get reelected.

struction is positive or negative, they identified four categories of target populations: advantaged, contenders, dependents, and deviants, as displayed in Figure 1 (Ingram, Schneider, & deLeon, 2007, p. 102; Schneider & Sidney, 2009, p. 107).

Figure 1 *Types of target populations by social construction and political power*



Once created, social constructions tend to continue to remain unchanged, whether they are favorable to immigrants and ethnic minorities or not. In other words, path dependency impacts upon social constructions in the way that public attitudes towards a particular group, whether socially vulnerable or not, are guided by earlier attitudes and decisions (Pierson, 2004). This can be mainly explained by the fact that initial social constructions tend to become more permanent with time, and reversal would incur significant costs. The deserving and entitled have a tendency to make other groups believe that uneven distribution of resources is only natural. In addition, they would go so far as to reinforce their beliefs by taking advantage of public policy and law.

Public policy plays a major role in shaping the social construction of

certain groups or concepts in modern society (Schneider & Ingram, 2005). Still, other elements affecting the creation of social constructions may include external events, social movements, entrepreneurship, advances in science and technology, social science, and changes in demographic characteristics (Schneider & Ingram, 2005). Public policy could lead to either policy persistence, facilitating a path-dependent social construction or, on the other hand, policy change, and efforts to change the course of existing social constructions.

Research Design

Based on the above discussion, the research questions of this study can be summarized as follows: (1) is there any difference in social constructions between female marriage migrants and female work migrants?; and (2) if so, what are the main factors behind the differences, and have there been shifts in the social constructions of the two target populations? In order to answer these questions empirically, this study employs a comparative case study method to investigate the social constructions of two types of female immigrants in Korea. The analysis focuses on factors which influence social constructions of the two target populations: female marriage and work immigrants. These two groups were selected due to their similarities in the following areas: (1) gender, (2) the number of immigrants, (3) the ratio of illegal⁴ migrants, and (4) country of origin. First, although the number of female work migrants (about 155,000) is higher than that of marriage immigrants (approximately 123,000), the difference is relatively small (32,000). Second, the ratios of illegal immigrants among the two target populations are similar; 7.6% for female work migrants and 7.1% for female marriage migrants. Third, as shown in Table 1, for both types of immigrants, Chinese-origin (including Korean-Chinese) tops the list, followed by Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Mongolia and Cambodia. These countries make up

⁴ The term 'illegal' could be problematic to indicate undocumented immigrants, because they are different from criminals. However, Korean government used this term to indicate aliens without an appropriate legal document (i.e. visa). In addition, the social construction framework suggested by Schneider (see Figure 1) also used this term to designate undocumented aliens. This study distinguishes two types of illegal as illegal (undocumented) residence and illegal crimes such as prostitution and criminal actions.

97.3% and 88.3% of the total number of female work migrants and female marriage migrants, respectively (Korea Immigration Service, 2012).

Table 1

A comparison of female work migrants and marriage migrants, by national origin

National origin	Female work migrants			Female marriage migrants		
	Total persons	Illegal residence(persons)	Illegal residence (ratio)	Total persons	Illegal residence (persons)	Illegal residence (ratio)
Grand-Total	155,960	11,867	7.60%	123,093	8,762	7.12%
Asia-Total	154,676	11,771	7.60%	120,596	8,723	7.23%
Cambodia	1,153	110	9.50%	4,188	209	4.99%
China	2,871	1,623	56.50%	31,429	2,205	7.02%
Korean-Chinese	128,298	4,497	3.50%	24,059	2,495	10.37%
Mongolia	2,154	822	38.20%	2,366	289	12.21%
Philippines	4,628	1,617	34.90%	7,272	443	6.09%
Thailand	3,649	757	20.70%	2,494	162	6.50%
Uzbekistan	2,776	134	4.80%	1,678	62	3.69%
Vietnam	6,102	1,458	23.90%	35,191	2,690	7.64%
Other Asia	3045	753	24.73%	11919	168	1.41%
North America	0	1	-	704	5	0.71%
South America	29	20	69.00%	186	7	3.76%
Europe	1221	60	4.90%	1480	20	1.35%
Oceania	1	1	100.00%	75	0	0.00%
Africa	31	14	45.20%	36	1	2.78%
Stateless	2	0	0.00%	19	6	31.58%

Source: 2011 Immigration statistics annual report, rearranged by the authors.

However, these two target populations differ from each other in terms of the purpose of visit and legal status⁵. While female work migrants seek employment and temporary residence⁶, the other group's purpose to enter Korea is marriage, joining a new family, and seeking

⁵ They should apply work/fiancée visa in order to enter Korea, (E-6 for marriage and E-9 for work immigration, respectively) (www.immigration.go.kr).

⁶ Female work migrants can apply for permanent residence, although it is difficult. They could stay at most 58 months with their visa. However, eligibility for applying permanent residence requires more than 60 months of residence in Korea (Choe, 2010). Thus, in order to apply for the permanent residence, visa (E-9) should be given to them at least twice.

permanent residence. Despite this, female work migrants stay for almost the same number of years as their marriage counterparts, which makes it difficult to distinguish the two groups simply by duration of stay. Another difference is who initiates the immigration. While work migrants were led by the public policy, the female marriage immigrants were privately-initiated, especially in the rural areas. With the high economic development, the younger generation of Koreans became reluctant to get a job in 3D (difficult, dangerous, and dirty) areas, which caused a shortage of labor in the 3D industries in Korea. As a response to this social problem, the government made a policy to import labor from abroad (i.e., Employment Permit System for Foreign Workers in 2003). On the other hand, international marriage in Korea began in rural areas because of the shortage of marriageable women in rural areas, which is caused by urbanization; most young people in rural areas have headed for urban lives in search of better jobs and better standard of living.

Data collection

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative data to analyze the social constructions of the two target populations (Geertz, 1973). In analyzing these cases, this study focuses on socio-cultural influences including historical legacy, descriptions in the press, and government policies, in order to obtain knowledge of the social constructions of the two groups. Data were collected from multiple sources including newspapers and research reports from academic, public and non-profit agencies. First, qualitative data from a range of studies is used to review historical legacies. Second, in order to investigate the influence of the press on the two target populations, newspaper articles, which describe the two target populations, were collected. These data were assembled from five daily national newspapers; three conservative-oriented newspapers (*Chosun-Ilbo*, *DongA-Ilbo*, and *JoongAng-Ilbo*) and two liberal-oriented (*Kyunghyang-Shinmun* and *Hankyoreh*). This study selected the five newspapers as data sources on the basis of the following facts: (1) these newspapers are representative of their respective political orientations; and (2) the readership of these papers is higher than others in Korea.

In detail, in order to collect narratives of the two groups, this study

gathered newspaper articles from 2002 to 2012 through an internet news search⁷ using the following two search terms: ‘female work migrants’ and ‘female marriage immigrants’. The initial search results were 2,228 articles which were narrowed down to those articles with appropriate contents⁸. Subsequently, this stage left 586 articles which are used for analysis. In total, 524 of the articles contained reports of female marriage immigrants, while the remaining 62 articles were about female work migrants. Finally, public research papers were utilized in order to analyze public policies with respect to the two target populations⁹.

Measurement

From the various available sources, this study collected data from Korean daily newspapers to explore how the press illustrates the two target populations. The data was coded using two variables: political orientation of the press and types of narrative about the two target populations. First, the five media outlets were classified as conservative or liberal. Newspapers have a large influence on the creation of social constructions of target populations through the re-framing of public opinion on the basis of the press frame which is an interpretation of facts according to the value or belief system of the press (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). In other words, negative news coverage of minorities such as crime cases or poverty has a negative influence on public opinion “by cultivating certain assumptions, setting agendas, priming the audience, and framing stories” (Larson, 2006, p. 93). In the Korean context, the political orientation of the press can be clearly divided into conservative and liberal newspapers (Choi, 2010, pp. 404-406), which is consistent with the political orientation of the two major political parties

⁷ The authors actually searched from the late 1990s, but there were no articles including relevant information. Thus, the time period for analysis spans 2002 to 2012.

⁸ This study excluded articles: (1) if they did not specify the gender (i.e. the target population of this study is female immigrants); and (2) if articles did not portray female immigrants but mentioned once in the article (e.g., job posting), and (3) regarding book review, conference title and etc.

⁹ Most of data regarding public policies were collected from policy reports from governments (Kim, 2012; Ministry of Justice, 2008, 2012; National Human Rights Commission, 2003); and National Assembly Research Service (2010).

in Korea¹⁰. On the basis of these differing perspectives, each paper re-frames (i.e., interprets) the two target populations according to their respective value and belief systems. In turn, these interpretations are expected to influence the building of social constructions of the target populations more generally.

Second, in order to measure the narratives of female immigrants, this study proposed two dimensions: (1) positive and negative portrayals; and (2) reflections on domestic perceptions of the behavior of female immigrants (i.e., description of what immigrants did, and how this was perceived by Korean nationals). Combining the two dimensions, there are four types of portrayals, as displayed in Table 2: (1) female immigrants' contributions to the country and stories about exemplary immigrants; (2) illegal (and/or unethical) behaviors; (3) Koreans' efforts to include female immigrants; and (4) Koreans' attitudes which exclude female immigrants.

Table 2
Classification of portrayals of female immigrants

	Positive	Negative
Portrayals of female immigrants (i.e. what they do)	I Contribution to Korea, Exemplary story	II Illegal behaviors
The domestic view on female immigrants (i.e. how they are seen by Koreans)	III Inclusion (assimilation): Efforts to include immigrants	IV Exclusion: Discrimination including violation of human rights (or treating as an object of pity)

Narratives included in category I and III can be seen as descriptions

¹⁰ Korea has the two-party system, although several minor political parties exist. The main ruling political party in Korea is a conservative party, the Saenuri Party. The main opposition party, the second biggest party, is the Democratic party whose political identity is more liberal than the Saenuri Party. These two parties are dominant forces of South Korean politics. The current main party is favorable to marriage immigrants on the basis of the traditional value system of Korea, 'family.' However, this party has little interests in labor issues since the Korean conservatives do not favor the labor movement. Accordingly, the conservative Saenuri party does not have much interest on female work migrants. On the other hand, the Democratic Party showed policy interests to both types of female immigrants.

of the target populations as suitable for membership in Korean society. In contrast, categories II and IV refer to narratives which describe the target populations as detrimental to wider Korean society. More specifically, positive narratives about female immigrants (I) include newspaper articles that portrayed a) the target populations as contributors to national wealth and security, and b) stories about exemplary immigrants (i.e., those who have successfully settled down in Korean society). Negative narratives about female immigrants (II) include those which depict the target population as the perpetrators of illegal behavior, such as undocumented workers, prostitutes, criminals, and job stealers. Efforts to support female immigrants (III) can be seen as an endeavor to assimilate them into Korean society. These efforts are categorized into various support programs provided by the government as well as the local community including nonprofit organizations, and promoting anti-discrimination actions. Finally, narratives portraying Koreans' attitudes to excluding female immigrants (IV) are divided into two sub-categories: (1) stressing the salience of differences between Koreans and immigrants; and (2) violation of human rights, or female immigrants as an object of pity. The first sub-category reinforces negative feeling to the target populations by highlighting racial, cultural, and national differences from Koreans. The second sub-category includes narratives which depict the target populations as victims or social minorities who are deprived of human rights. Both of these sub-categories view female immigrants as not entitled to membership in Korean society.

Furthermore, Table 3 summarizes the four types of narratives utilized in this study. According to the coding scheme created by the researchers, articles were examined to see if they contain any keywords and phrases shown in the table. In this way, the authors attempted to objectively code the articles according to their contents, and to avoid the possibility of subjectively interpreting the articles according to tone or nuance. In addition, the authors conducted inter-coder tests to ensure the consistency of the coded results¹¹. In cases where the codes differed, the research team discussed the article until they could agree on a specific code.

¹¹ Inter-coder reliability for the content analysis reached 94.5%.

Table 3
Coding scheme for portrayals

	Category	Sub-category	Keywords or contents
Portrayal of immigrants	Positive portrayals (I)	Contribution to Korea	Meeting the labor shortage, helping overcome demographic problems, contribution to community
		Exemplary story	Successful adaptation to Korean society, Successful adaptation to Korean family
	Negative portrayals (II)	Illegal behaviors	Illegal stay, prostitution, job stealing, criminal actions, misc.
From the Korean perspective	Efforts at inclusion (III)	Efforts of inclusion	Support programs from local community and local government, promoting anti-discrimination actions
	Exclusion (IV)	Discriminative descriptions	Socio-cultural prejudices, stressing differences between Koreans and immigrants, xenophobia
		Violation of human rights	Human rights issues in the family/marriage such as domestic violence, divorce due to domestic violence, marriage as human trafficking
			Human rights issues in the workplace such as low-wage, physical abuse including sexual harassment, withholding of wages
	Human rights issues in general		
Factual		Report status of immigrants using statistics	

Social constructions of female work migrants and female marriage migrants

Anti-immigration sentiments: historical legacy (1950s to late 1990s)

It is worth noting historical and socio-cultural legacies which influenced the formation of the multicultural frame for immigrants in Korea (Schon & Rein, 1994). Korea has a long history of racial nationalism and homogeneity going back to the late 19th or early 20th century when the country was invaded by Western powers and neighboring countries. In the face of external attack, Koreans resorted to nationalism and united in the vision of a collective community to resist foreign influence and protect their national identity from external enemies. While a homogeneous society was what helped the Korean people to unite and strive for independence, Korean nationalism only really came to the fore after

1945 when Korea was liberated from Japan. In the course of the division of North and South Korea, and the Korean War followed by the Cold War, Korean nationalism became more pronounced. From the 1960s several different types of nationalism developed, portraying varying political views. For instance, the entitled in society upheld bureaucratic nationalism in order to defend the legitimacy of their positions. By contrast, the progressive groups maintained resilient nationalism as it helped people to resist against foreign powers and at the same time to obtain political autonomy. Still, both bureaucratic and resilient nationalism cultivated the concept of a homogeneous or single-race society (Choi, 2006, pp. 287-288; Han, 2008, pp. 120-121). According to this concept, there is no place for diverse ethnicities or minorities, as this would entail divergence from the single pure bloodline. Those excluded from this vision include people of Chinese origin residing in independent Korea since 1945 and people of mixed race born to parents in inter-racial relationships.

Since Korea became independent in 1945, the Korean government has practiced exclusion when it comes to immigration policy. It was difficult for overseas citizens to become naturalized Koreans as they have to meet ambiguous criteria such as “a man of irreproachable conduct” and “confident and capable to make ends meet”, and authorization from the Minister of Justice was also required. The descendents of Chinese living in Korea were unable to acquire Korean nationality since they were considered to be foreign nationals. In addition, the Korean government took steps to ensure that the Chinese residents in Korea could not come to dominate the financial sector. This was done through the Land Law, passed in 1961, which disallowed the ethnic Chinese from owning property and they were forced to give up their savings during currency reform in 1963 (Lee, 2008, pp. 265-266).

People of mixed race also endured hardships due to the unfavorable policies towards non-Koreans. Until the 1970s, there were very few foreign residents in Korea and in most cases they were servicemen from the United States or children born between Korean women and those soldiers. As mixed babies were born in *gijichon* (military camp towns), they earned a dubious distinction and were seen as disgraceful. As they were so poorly treated in Korean society, facing racial discrimination and prejudice, the government chose to arrange international adoption

for them. In this way, adults of mixed race were affected by the Korean emigration policy, which was rooted in an international adoption policy for mixed children (National Human Rights Commission, 2003, p. 35). To facilitate emigration and overseas employment, the government dropped the requirement of mandatory military service (1972) and reserve forces training (1974) for adults of mixed race. As can be seen, Korean immigration policy has had a narrow but persistent focus on “expulsion” strategies in the form of international adoption and emigration in relatively recent years. In addition, public attitudes towards racial discrimination were compounded by a gender bias stemming from Korea’s patriarchal culture. It is usually the case that compared to mixed-race children born to Korean fathers, those born between Korean mothers and American soldiers were exposed to a much higher degree of discrimination. This unbalanced perspective consequently had a major impact on attitudes towards multicultural families and their offspring from the 1990s onwards.

The gender issue in jobs

Since Korea is in a somewhat patriarchal culture, sex roles in the jobs are segregated. In addition, gender policies are mostly focused on supports for female workers rather than gender equality orientation because women are still regarded as a social minority in Korea. In this situation, the term ‘labor’ in Korea is coined as workers in the industrial field, whereas women usually work in the service field (about 70% of female employees in Korea, Statistics Korea, 2012a). Following this pattern, the gendering of migrant labor is similarly constructed. While most male work migrants are employed in the field of manufacture (55.9%) and construction (15.6%), most female work migrants are employed in the field of service industry (about 64% of female work migrants, Statistics Korea 2012b).

Findings of Social Construction

In order to explore social constructions of the two types of female immigrants, this section probes (1) the influence of newspaper reports on the two types of female immigrants and (2) the impact of public policies.

(1) The Influence of Newspaper Reports

Table 4 displays the distribution of the articles by newspaper for each of the target populations. Of the total 586 articles, 369 were published in the liberal media, accounting for the majority of the press frame at 63%, whereas their conservative counterparts published 217 articles, making up 37% of the total. This indicates that the conservative press did not seem to pay as much attention to the activities of minorities¹². Among the three conservative newspapers, the share of the two conservative daily newspapers (Chosun Ilbo and JoongAng Ilbo), was a mere 2% of the overall media coverage analyzed in this study (13 articles)¹³. Furthermore, it was not until 2012 that the 13 news reports appeared in these two newspapers and no articles were published prior to that year.

Table 4
Frequency distribution of articles, by political orientation of the press (n = 524)

		Female marriage migrants		Female work migrants		Total	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Conservative	Chosun	8	1.5%	0	0%	8	1.4%
	JoongAng	5	1.0%	0	0%	5	0.9%
	DongA	196	37.4%	8	12.9	204	34.8%
	Subtotal	209	39.9%	8	12.9%	217	37.0 %
Liberal	Kyunghyang	138	26.3%	13	21.0%	151	25.8%
	Hankyoreh	177	33.8%	41	66.1%	218	37.2%
	Subtotal	315	60.1%	54	87.1%	369	63.0%
Total		524	100%	62	100%	586	100.0%

¹² It should be noted that DongA Ilbo issued 204 articles regarding female migrants, which means that not all conservative media neglect the female migrants. However, since Chosun Ilbo and JoongAng Ilbo cover 38.1% of the whole readership in Korean newspaper, their influences in Korean society are dominant comparing to other newspapers.

¹³ Considering the readership rates of these two newspapers, it could be important to look at these two separately because subscription rates of these two newspapers positioned at the top first and second respectively; *Chosun Ilbo* (23.3%) and *Joong-Ang Ilbo* (14.8%) which means these two take 38.1% of whole newspaper readership (Korea Press Foundation, 2012).

The two target populations also received different levels of coverage. While there were some articles about female work migrants in the conservative newspapers, the majority of the coverage for this group came from the liberal press (87%). However, when it comes to female marriage migrants, there is a more even spread between the conservative (39.9%) and liberal newspapers (60.1%). The much greater emphasis which is given to female marriage migrants rather than their work-immigrant sisters, by not only the conservative newspapers, but also their liberal counterparts, can be explained as female marriage migrants are a group which the government has targeted for integration into Korean society whereas female work migrants are not. More specifically, since female marriage migrants are closely related to the family system in Korea; as a spouse to a Korean husband, a mother to children, and daughter-in-law to Korean mother/father-in-law, the conservatives conceive them as a member to include in Korean society. The strict concerns about family security in Korea have been explained by an immigrant professor in Korea, Noja Park; “To some extent, the immigrant policy may benefit particular groups of people who are related to Koreans, such as marriage immigrants who have recently joined a Korean family, Korean descendents living outside Korea, and North Korean defectors. Still, the absolute majority of foreign residents who have nothing to do with the Korean bloodline will remain outsiders” (Park, 2011).

Meanwhile, attitudes toward female economic migrants from the two sides of the press contrast significantly. As there are very few articles about them in the conservative press, this can be interpreted as a reluctance to describe them as members of Korean society. In the case of the liberal press, female work migrants were portrayed both positively and negatively, with negative narratives generally depicting them as victims of human rights violations. This indicates a greater emphasis on attempting to understand female work immigrants in the liberal press.

Figure 2 illustrates the overall trends for the four types of portrayals from 2002 to 2012. Discriminative portrayals peaked in 2008, while positive portrayals sharply increased between 2008 and 2009. On the other hand, the frequency of inclusive portrayals was generally low during the given period, although slightly higher than that of negative por-

trayals, which was lowest of all. These trends indicate that until recently, the press reported female immigrants as objects to be excluded. However, since 2008, their attitudes toward this group have slowly shifted from negative (i.e. exclusion) to more positive (i.e. inclusion or assimilation).

Figure 2 *Portrayals of female immigrants, by the number of articles (2002-2012)*
(Unit: number of articles)

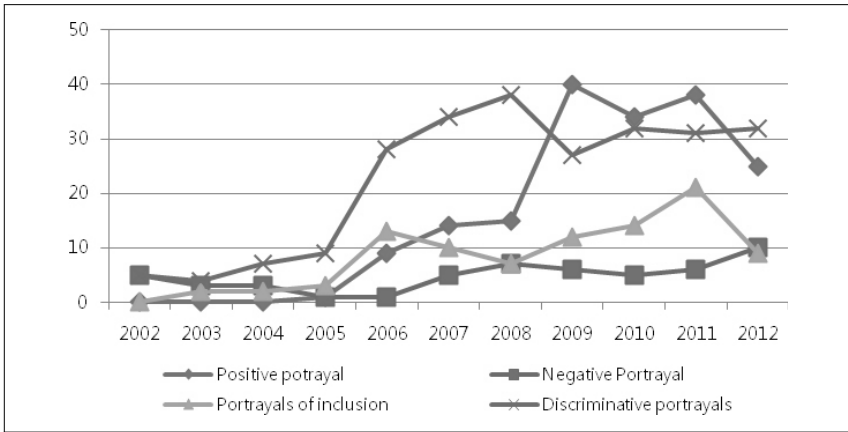
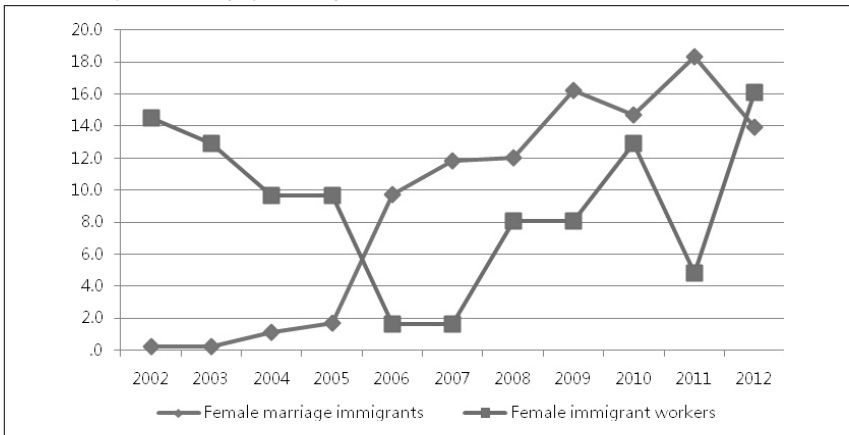


Figure 3 illustrates the percentage change in the media coverage of the two types of female immigrants during the period of 2002-2012 by compiling the number of articles published each year. The reporting patterns for the two target populations are clearly different. As far as female work migrants are concerned, a relatively large number of news stories were available until 2005, when there was a brief dip before recovery. In contrast, concerns for immigrant wives show a general upward trend. This is consistent with wider developments, in the sense that immigrant wives appear to be a topic which has captured the public’s attention. In contrast, the fluctuating number of news reports on female work migrants can be explained by the frequency of scandalous events at the workplace such as sexual harassments and low-wage issues.

Figure 3 *Changes in reporting for the two types of female immigrants (2002-2012) (Unit: %)*



As shown in Table 5, negative portrayals for female marriage immigrants are lower (5%) than positive ones (33%). On the other hand, only 2% of portrayals of the female work migrants are positive, while 42% are negative. When it comes to inclusion, marriage immigrants are again subject to more positive portrayals, 17% compared to a mere 3% for female work immigrants. Finally, discriminative portrayals for both groups of female immigrants are similar. This result clearly shows the differences in the social constructions of the two target populations; positive for female marriage immigrants and negative for female work migrants.

Table 5

Frequency distribution of narrative portrayals, by number of articles (n = 524)

	Female marriage migrants		Female work migrants		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percentage
Positive portrayal	174	33.2%	2	3.2%	176	30.0%
Negative portrayal	26	5.0%	26	41.9%	52	8.9%
Portrayals of inclusion	91	17.4%	2	3.2%	93	15.9%
Discriminative portrayals	215	41.0%	32	51.6%	247	42.2%
Simple facts	18	3.4%	0	0%	18	3.1%
Total	524	100%	62	100%	586	100%

Table 6 presents the frequency distribution of the sub-categories of positive portrayals. First, while there are almost no positive portrayals of female work migrants, there are quite a number of positive portrayals for female marriage immigrants. Second, although meeting labor shortages was one of the most important reasons under consideration in the development of Korean immigration policy, narratives describing female work immigrants as contributing to Korean society and economy are scarce. Yet, it is not difficult to find such newspaper articles referring to their male counterparts. This indicates that the policy concerns mainly the male foreign workforce, which refers to the government's tendency of gender-blindly designing the policy.

Table 6
Frequency distribution of positive portrayals, by the number of articles

		Female marriage migrants		Female work migrants	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Contribution to Korea	Meeting labor shortages	2	1.1%	1	50%
	Solving demographic problems	5	2.9%	0	0%
	Contribution to community	41	23.6%	0	0%
Exemplary story	Successful adaptation to Korean Society	108	62.1%	1	50%
	Successful adaptation to Korean family	17	9.8%	0	0%
	Miscellaneous	1	0.6%	0	0%
	Total	174	100.0%	2	100.0%

Third, the number of narratives which portrayed female immigrants as contributors¹⁴ is less than exemplary stories¹⁵. Still, when con-

¹⁴ Examples for contribution to community are promoting Korean Laws to fellow immigrants', 'Philippine-origin immigrants' volunteering as an English teacher in an elementary school or a community center', 'Vietnamese-origin immigrants' volunteering for elderly service in local community', and 'teaching the Korean language and Korean culture to fellow female immigrants'.

¹⁵ Examples are 'appointment as a national assembly member (Philippine-origin female marriage immigrant)', 'recruitment as a public officer and policy officer' 'running for local

tribution and adaptation narratives are taken together, it can be interpreted that most positive images of female immigrants come from their own efforts to assimilate into Korean society, rather than a general positive recognition from the Korean population (i.e. 96% of positive portrayals are based on their active participation in their community and achievement of the so-called Korean dream). Nevertheless, this may have a significant impact on shifts in the social construction of female marriage immigrants in that their active participation can help to raise their political power.

The dominant negative portrayals of female work migrants, as displayed in Table 7, are as prostitutes (50%) followed by illegal residence (19%) and criminals¹⁶ (15%). In the case of female marriage migrants, major negative portrayals are as illegal residence and criminals (73%), followed by prostitution. In other words, while negative social constructions for female marriage immigrants are mostly as illegal residents, female work migrants are dominantly portrayed as prostitutes. This result indicates that gender-bias is more serious towards female work migrants.

Table 7
Frequency distribution of negative portrayals, by number of articles

	Female marriage migrants		Female work migrants		Total	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Illegal residence	10	38.5%	5	19.2%	15	28.8%
Prostitution	4	15.4%	13	50.0%	17	32.7%
Stealing jobs	1	3.8%	2	7.7%	3	5.8%
Criminal actions	9	34.6%	4	15.4%	13	25.0%
Miscellaneous	2	7.7%	2	7.7%	4	7.7%
Total	26	100.0%	26	100.0%	52	100%

council member' and 'female immigrants launching a business'.

¹⁶ Examples of criminal actions are terror, murder, participation in organized crime rings, and sham marriages in order to obtain citizenship.

There are striking differences in Korean society's efforts to include the two target populations. As can be seen in Table 8, there are only two articles illustrating the provision of community support for female work migrants. This result indicates Koreans' widespread apathy about female work migrants. However, there are many examples of inclusive efforts towards female marriage immigrants. These include the provision of various forms of support from the community (59%), followed by the provision of institutional support from government (18%), anti-discrimination actions (13%), and demanding new programs and services (10%).

Table 8
Frequency distribution of Korean society's inclusive efforts by the number of articles

	Female marriage migrants		Female work migrants		Total	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Institutional supports from government	16	17.6%	0	0%	16	17.2%
Supports from community	54	59.3%	2	100%	56	60.2%
Anti-discrimination efforts	12	13.2%	0	0%	12	12.9%
Demanding new programs and services	9	9.9%	0	0%	9	9.7%
Total	91	100.0%	2	100%	93	100.0%

As shown in Table 9, there are many reports of human rights violations against both groups. Dominant portrayals for female marriage immigrants are as the victims of domestic violence, divorced as a consequence of domestic violence, and single mothers (84%). Though these portrayals cause a negative feeling among Korean nationals, it is relatively less negative than the feelings summoned up in response to illegal residence, prostitution or criminals. This means that the location of female marriage immigrants moves from deviants (i.e. from the historical legacies) toward dependents in terms of Figure 1.

Table 9

Frequency distribution of Korean society's discriminative attitude toward female immigrants, by the number of articles

		Female marriage migrants		Female work migrants		Total	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Human rights violation	in the family/marriage	134	62.3%	0	0%	134	54.3%
	in the workplace	0	0.0%	15	46.9%	15	6.1%
	in general	47	21.9%	6	18.8%	52	21.5%
Discriminative descriptions	Socio-cultural prejudice	14	6.5%	6	18.8%	21	8.1%
	Stressing differences	14	6.5%	4	12.5%	18	7.3%
	Xenophobia	6	2.8%	1	3.1%	7	2.8%
Total		215	100.0%	32	100%	247	100.0%

As for female work migrants, most cases (66%) portray them as suffering from low-wages, physical abuse including sexual harassment, and the withholding of wages. In order to overcome this problem, immigrant workers may need to participate in and request the protection of radical labor unions, which does not help them shift their social construction from negative to positive. There is relatively less discrimination from Koreans toward female marriage immigrants than female work migrants. Examples of discriminative descriptions of immigrant wives are racial discrimination (including discrimination due to mixed race between Korean and non-Korean bloodlines), unilaterally forcing female immigrants to obey Korean culture (not allowing cultural differences), and racial/cultural prejudice from Korean colleagues in the workplaces.

In sum, female work migrants are generally overlooked by Korean society, and to the extent to which they are recognized, they continue to be subject to negative social constructions. These negative social constructions (i.e. an object of sexual harassment) appear to stem from gender bias. On the other hand, female marriage immigrants are more positively construed, which has both facilitated and fed back into their political power, and enabled them to shift from being perceived as deviants to dependents.

(2) The Impact of Public Policies

Traditionally, Korean policy designs have featured powerful state-led policy (Evans, 1995), which entrenched the role of government as a powerful concentration of the bureaucracy and presidency over society. Immigration policy is no exception to this trend. Thus, it is important to evaluate the impacts of public policy design on social constructions of the two target populations. This section explicates features of government policy designs for the two target populations, specifically, various policies from central government departments. In particular, this study analyzes: (1) whether a policy includes a gender perspective; and (2) the purpose of policy in terms of ‘simple inclusion or assimilation’ vs. ‘encouragement of tolerance or efforts to embrace differences’. These policies are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10
Immigrant policies of central government departments¹⁷

Ministry	Policy fields	Focus of policy	Target population	Gender perspective	Design purposes
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Immigration, nationality, emigration	Overall control of immigration policy	General immigrants	No	Assimilation
		Social integration of immigrants	General immigrants	No	Assimilation
		Protection of human rights	Female immigrants	Yes	Tolerance
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs (MIHW)	Family & social welfare	Social adaptation of female marriage immigrants	Female marriage immigrants	Yes	Assimilation
		Welfare of multicultural families	General immigrants*	No	Assimilation
Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST)	Culture, sports, tourism, & art	Enhancing public awareness of multi-culturalism	Domestic citizens	No	Tolerance
		Support for Korean cultural/language adaptations	General immigrants*	No	Assimilation
		Development of Korean-language materials	General immigrants*	No	Assimilation
Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST)	Institutional education, human resource development	Support for education of multi-cultural families	General immigrants*	No	Assimilation
		Providing an efficient environment for maximizing academic achievement	Their children	No	Assimilation

¹⁷ The policies in this table are not an exhaustive list but the most representative policies in the respective departments.

Ministry	Policy fields	Focus of policy	Target population	Gender perspective	Design purposes
Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE)	Employment	Employment approval of immigrant workers	Immigrant workers	No	Assimilation
		Social adaptation	Immigrant workers	No	Assimilation
		Career counseling for immigrant workers	Immigrant workers	No	Assimilation
Ministry of Public Administration and Security (MOPAS)	Local government management	Support for the settling-in of immigrants	General immigrants*	No	Assimilation
Ministry of Gender Equality & Family (MOGE)	Gender equality & human rights of women	Human rights of female immigrants	Female marriage immigrants	Yes	Tolerance
		Social adaptation of female immigrants	Female marriage immigrants	Yes	Assimilation
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)	Job training for women in agriculture	Agricultural education for female immigrants who settle in rural areas	Female marriage immigrants	Yes	Assimilation

Source (the first three columns): National Assembly Research Service (2010, 20) and Kim (2012).

* These policies include detailed programs and services for female marriage immigrants.

Eight central government departments have issued immigration policies with 17 specific foci. Five of the policies (29%) directly target female immigrants, and among these, four of the policies are exclusively concerned with female marriage immigrants. Considering that four of the general immigration policies also contain provisions relating to female marriage immigrants, it can be seen that more than half (nine policies, 53%) are oriented toward the support of female marriage immigrants. Four of the policies which focus on female marriage immigrants include a gender perspective, such as strengthening human rights protection programs, supporting legal consultation, granting eligibility to stay, and establishing a support center for female marriage immigrants (Ministry of Justice, 2013).

In contrast, there is neither a specific policy for female work migrants, nor a gender sensitive policy designed for them. Indeed, the policies which do include immigrant workers (policies issued by the Ministry of Labor in Table 10) are gender blind in their design. This analysis clearly shows female marriage migrants and their families (especially their mixed raced children) to be at the center of Korean immigration policy (Kim, 2012; Han, 2004; Won, 2008).

It is also worth noting that there are only three policies which accept the differences of immigrants (such as socio-cultural differences and gender differences). The remaining 14 policies (82.4%) are designed to

assimilate particular groups of immigrants into Korean society¹⁸. For example, policies such as ‘support for Korean cultural/language adaptation’, ‘development of Korean-language materials’, ‘social integration of immigrants’, and ‘social adaptation of female marriage immigrants’ mostly represent programs aimed at promoting Korean language and culture. Yet, while the Korean government has pursued immigration policies that focus on cultural assimilation of immigrant minorities, it has failed to introduce cultural diversity and tolerance of minority cultures to mainstream society (Kim, 2012).

As discussed in the previous section, this policy orientation (i.e., assimilation) dates back to the myth of a racially homogeneous state and may actually hinder the integration of immigrants into wider society. According to Emily Donjuan, a female marriage immigrant from the Philippines, who was interviewed by the Hankyoreh (December 7, 2012), the current policy design is the main impediment to immigrants settling down in Korea: “Korean immigration policy should shift from assimilation to constructive engagement. It is an antinomy that Koreans have high expectations from immigrants while Koreans themselves are negligent in learning about different cultures.”¹⁹

Shifts in social constructions of the two types of female immigrants

Based on analysis done in the above, this section presents whether social constructions of the two types of female immigrants shift or not. Social constructions portrayed by the media and public policies differ significantly for the two target populations. In the case of female marriage migrants the following points are noticeable: (1) although both negative and positive narratives appear, there are far more positive than negative portrayals; (2) since positive narratives correspond to the augmentation of political power, the location of female marriage immigrants in Figure 1 is likely to move upward; (3) a relatively large number of public policies have been designed which are not only based on positive

¹⁸ The National Assembly Research Service recently proposed policy suggestions to change the immigration policy design from assimilation to social integration, which accepts the socio-cultural differences of immigrants (Kim, 2012).

¹⁹ http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/563609.html

social constructions, but which also include a gender perspective; and (4) most of the negative portrayals are not direct descriptions of their qualities or behavior, but see them as victims of human rights violations, which helps to shift their social constructions from deviants to dependents. In addition, it is worth noting the effects of mainstream media as well. While in the early 2000s, female marriage migrants were described as a victim (for example, a movie, Failan, 2001), currently their images on the TV have developed. To be specific, current TV programs such as, *Love Human Asia* (KBS) and a Korean TV program for female marriage migrants (EBS) focus on assimilation of female marriage migrants and their children. However, these TV programs are criticized as lacking effort to integrate them into the society by limiting the role of female marriage migrants to within the family (Oh & Lee, 2011).

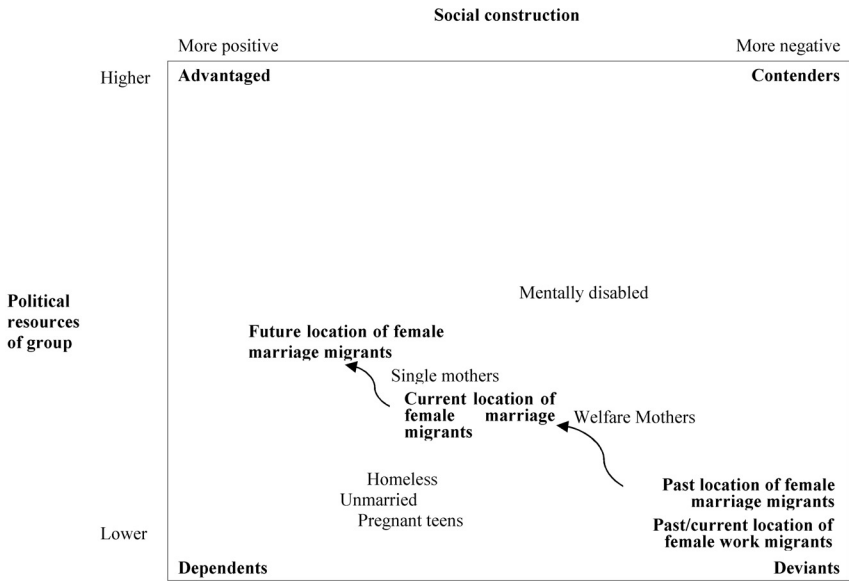
Consequently, although the social constructions of female marriage migrants in Korea have not completely shifted from deviants to dependents, the social constructions of female marriage migrants are likely to shift to a similar location between single mothers and welfare mothers. If these patterns continue, along with changes in policy design from assimilation to tolerance, in the future they could be located between mothers and the black middle class in Figure 1.

On the other hand, however, female work migrants continue to be construed as deviants. In other words, they are not only subject to negative portrayals, but also categorized as unqualified for membership in Korean society, mainly because: (1) there has been an absence of policies designed for female work migrants; and (2) their negative constructions have been based on gender discrimination (only for female work migrants), as well as an image of working illegally or stealing jobs (for all immigrant workers). To be specific, in terms of a gender perspective, female work migrants have not been perceived as deserving of any gender-sensitive portrayal from the press or public policy. Instead, they have been subject to gender bias. In the mainstream media such as film, this pattern is also identified. There are a few movies which focus on male work migrants, but there are almost no movies focusing on female work migrants²⁰. Although these movies disclose the secret

²⁰ For example, *Searching for Ronny* (2009) Bandhobi (2009), and *Banga Banga* (2010).

that Koreans are obsessed with xenophobia toward work immigrants and require Koreans to make an effort to understand them, they also have the limitation of describing the work migrants as stereotypes. As a result, their negative social construction seems to have been consolidated into stereotypes or remains largely unchanged due to the historical legacy of a negative social construction. These shifts in the social constructions of the two types of female immigrants are illustrated in Figure 4, below.

Figure 4 *Shifts in the social constructions of female immigrants*



* The positions of female marriage migrants are moving toward positive and having relatively more political resources. In here, their position should be seen as a matter of degree, not strict binary division.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

The findings of the study imply that the path created by the historical legacies (i.e. stereotype for aliens or mixed race) are getting weaker/less inevitable, at least for the female marriage migrant. However, the current public policies and media could create another path, which would lock in particular policy trajectories (i.e. passive objects for assimilation).

Before establishing this path dependency effect, government, media and society in general should endeavor to build an image of female immigrants based on gender-equality.

For this purpose, this study makes the following policy suggestions which are expected to help build a gender-based social construction of female immigrants. First, policies should be designed based on a change in perspective from assimilation to encouragement of tolerance or efforts to embrace differences. Korea has a history of strengthening the nation-state based on the vision of one homogeneous race, which has been a fundamental reason to encourage segregation. In order to overcome this historical legacy, Koreans should admit that the country does not have a unitary identity. Furthermore, if the Korean government and society push the assimilation policy, it would be possible to make another biased stereotype for female marriage migrants whose role is limited within a family and who are regarded as a target in the role of obedience/ the obedient subject. It would be another bias against them albeit better than the former stereotype.

Second, there is an urgent need for public policy to consider gender-sensitive policy design for female work migrants. Compared to the policies in place for the wellbeing of immigrant wives, institutional support for female work migrants is yet to be made available, which could result in a failure to protect fundamental human rights. In fact, the policy design process for female immigrants is complex, as simultaneous consideration needs to be given to diverse aspects of the target population, such as the gender-perspective, socio-cultural situations, welfare, and human rights. Thus, it is advisable to establish a collaborative public management system for female immigrants which involves the various ministries which are active in this area. For instance, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Labor and Employment could work together to formulate guidelines on human rights protection. At the same time, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family could develop strategies from a gender-responsive perspective to help support non-Korean female workers.

Third, it is vital for the Korean government to incorporate a gender-responsive perspective into its immigration policy. Policies with gendered and integrated perspectives could be supports for employment

and job training specialized to female immigrants, nursery supports, and education programs of multi-culture for their Korean family members including their husband and mother/father-in-law (Lee, 2009, pp. 160-162). This could help to remedy some of the problems stemming from the male-oriented or patriarchal culture, which has contributed to the present policy's narrow focus on female marriage immigrants (Won, 2008, p. 45). This kind of male-dominated society stresses men's role in continuing the Korean bloodline. Also, Korean policymakers seem to have viewed migration in a gender biased way by generalizing that women seek marriage immigration, while men are more likely to be work migrants. However, in reality, there are a far greater number of work migrants than marriage migrants among the female immigrant community in Korea. Therefore, immigration policy should aim to be more inclusive by offering female work immigrants extended social welfare services. To this end, the government should work on enhancing effective governance by coordinating with a variety of nonprofit or non-government organizations, civil groups and local communities, as well as drawing up practical and feasible measures which promote their human rights and wellbeing.

Finally, portrayals of female immigrants in the media should be changed to overcome the stereotype of female immigrants because the media plays a vital role in framing images of female immigrants, which consequently reinforces path dependency. Considering many news articles and much academic research on female immigrants (and movies, TV programs and etc), it can be said that there is relatively fluent social discourse regarding the role of female immigrants in Korea. However, from the feminist perspective, there is still a gap between such discourse and activism (Minic, 2007). In other words, Korean society still regards female immigrants as a passive object to be assimilated into the society (Beck, 1998, p. 152). Thus, media, including newsprint, should not portray them as a stereotype, but make efforts to portray the diversity of female immigrants, especially treating them not as objects of action, but as actors.

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