

# **Framing “Korean working holidaymakers in Australia”: A longitudinal analysis of Korean newspapers from 2000 to 2018**

## **Abstract**

Temporary migration is a growing global trend, but there is little research on its representation in the media of sending countries. This paper fills this gap by examining how temporary migration is framed, focusing on the representation of Korean participants in Australia’s Working Holidaymakers visa program in South Korean newspapers from 2000 to 2018. This paper explores the role Korean newspapers have played in constructing pro-migration discourses and representing the program, its participants, and their experiences while considering the social and political environments. Key frames identified include a “culture of migration,” national interest, economic imperatives/employment, and “victimization.

Keywords: working holiday makers visa, media representation, youth migration, temporary migration, Korean youth

## **Introduction**

Temporary migration is a growing global trend and an emerging area of research. Much of the research on media representation of temporary migration focuses on receiving countries. In 1995, Australia became the first country to form a working holiday agreement with Korea. Australia is the most popular destination for Korean working holidaymakers (WHMs), due to its simple visa application process and the availability of employment opportunities. Since 2008, over 30,000 Korean youths have arrived in Australia under the WHM visa, comprising more than 70% of South Koreans who have gone abroad for working holidays. In 2018, there were 16,073 Korean WHMs in Australia, comprising 13.6% of the total (Department of Home Affairs, 2018). Koreans are the third-largest group among WHMs in Australia, and one of the largest population groups from non-English speaking countries. The popularity of the Australia Working Holidaymakers visa program (AWHP) can be explained by the fact that it has been “hyped” in Korean mass media, with newspapers, films, dramas, and novels frequently featuring the life of WHMs in Australia. Newspapers serve as a thought-shaping tool, a forum for public discussion and debate, and tools of social control (Cohen and Young, 1981). Newspapers’ inclusion, exclusion, and placement of information effects change, shapes opinion, and reinforces ideas. Based on articles collected from 11 leading Korean newspapers over an extended period from 2000 to 2018, this paper delves into how the media has constructed an image of the program, its participants, and their experiences, whilst considering the implications of social and political environments upon this program. First, the paper offers a brief theoretical discussion of the role of the media in framing migration. Second, the paper examines the longitudinal trends of the newspapers covering this program, drawing from quantitative data. Third, drawing on content analysis, the paper identifies major themes and frames of the AWHP and its participants.

## **The role of the media: Framing and generating a “culture of migration” and “geographical imaginations”**

The media has been both the object and source of research. Media content analysis has become increasingly popular as a research methodology (Macnamara, 2005). The media can be one of the most influential social apparatuses in disseminating discourses, turning them

into a battlefield of framing and counter-framing (Druckman, 2004). The influence of the media has been discussed in the concept of “framing” effects. Entman (1993: 52) argues that the purpose of framing is to promote specific interpretations of a news event by selecting “some aspects of a perceived reality” and making “them more salient in a communicating text.” Similarly, Gitlin (1980: 7) defines media frames as “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual.”

Framing suggests that the media has “the power to influence the thoughts of individual audience members to such an extent that they might act out the ideas and activities the media have exposed them to” (Taylor and Willis, 1999: 156). The media, as an opinion leader, has strong incentives to shape public opinion and reframe issues that do not support their perspectives (Sniderman and Theriault, 2004). The relationship between the media and public opinion is dynamic and non-linear. The media can affect public perceptions and, conversely, public opinion influences media coverage (Hopkins et al., 2017). Some research has identified the role of the media in framing/reflecting government policies (Fitzgerald and Housley, 2009; Franklin, 1999). As a key player in social policy, the media is a “primary connector” between people and power (Young, 2000).

Media researchers also highlight the role of the media in constructing and perpetuating particular ideologies (Saleem, 2007, Soriano et al., 2015). Media frames are central in determining audience perceptions of a given event or issue as either mostly positive or mostly negative. This is primarily due to the fact that media frames tend to offer judgment reflective of a “specific ideology” through the choice of words, metaphors, and phrases (Saleem, 2007: 134-5). Similarly, Soriano et al. (2015) argued that the media, including advertisements, could create cultural ideologies, such as gender and mothering ideology.

Much research on the portrayal of migrants and migration in the media has focused on receiving countries, mostly Western developed countries. The economic significance of immigration and the growing number of migrants in developed nations have led to increased media coverage. The media has constructed positions on migration issues and framed public discourse about it (Datta, 2018). The key frames depicting migration and migrants include threats, victims, anti-migration, and crisis sentiment. The representation of migrants in the media of receiving countries has become predominantly negative, framing migrants as threats and problems (Datta, 2018). The Western media has associated migrants with criminality, security, or border security (Kim et al., 2011). In Western news media, migrants are also discussed in the victim frame (Vickers and Rutter, 2016), either as victims of exploitation or of their circumstances; this frame is characterized by words such as “backward,” “primitive,” and “helpless.” In a similar vein, the news media has “othered” migrants and ethnic minorities by framing them as “lawbreakers” (Teo, 2000). Migrants are framed as being unable to adopt the host nation's values, thus threatening social cohesion, which has also created a crisis mentality, promoted an anti-immigrant atmosphere, and caused public anxiety. As such, the media of receiving or host countries often present narratives opposing pro-migration policies and criticizing migrant values (Henry and Tator, 2009).

There is very limited research on the representation of migration in the media of sending countries. This paper has adopted two concepts: “culture of migration” and a “geographical imagination” approach (Thompson, 2016; Sijapati, 2015) to examine the role of a sending country's media in the decision-making process of prospective migrants. A culture of migration is understood as a factor that creates migratory aspiration and renders migration as

a “rite of passage” and “source of capital” (Bal, 2013). A culture of migration can be one of the push factors for out-migration in sending countries (Sijapati, 2015). Similarly, a “geographical imagination” approach helps to explain why migrants choose to migrate to a particular country. Thompson explains that geographical imaginations are “imagination of landscapes and climates, perceptions of cultural qualities and understandings of economic, social and political characteristics of places” (2016: 79). Drawing from the concepts discussed above, this paper examines the role of Korean print media in disseminating discourses of a culture of migration, constructing imaginations of a geographical location, and framing/counter-framing the experience of migration and migrants.

## **Methods**

This paper utilizes 369 articles collected from 11 major national Korean daily newspapers: Chosun, DongA, Hankook, Hankyoreh, JoongAng, Kookmin, Kyunghyang, Munhwa, Naeil, Segye, and Seoul. The data were collected through the Korean Integrated News Database System (KINDS), the largest news search archive in Korea. Despite its advantages, the KINDS did not cover some major newspapers until the mid-late 2010s. Therefore, articles from Chosun, DongA, and JoongAng were searched for through their respective websites.

The collected data covered the period from 2000 to 2018. Although the working holiday agreement between Korea and Australia was made in 1995, only a few related newspaper articles appeared in the early stages of the program. All the articles were retrieved using the keywords “Australian working holiday” and reviewed in detail to determine their relevance and validity. For the analysis of the collected articles, a coding scheme was developed to quantify article volumes, themes, topics, and tones. Additionally, content analysis was conducted to explore and identify the main themes and key media frames about the AWHP. The specific questions we address in the analysis of the collected AWHP data in the Korean print media are as follows:

- What is the volume of newspaper coverage of the AWHP over time?
- In which section is the news item placed?
- What is the subject or topic covered?
- What is the tone of the content (positive, negative, or neutral)?
- Has coverage been shaped by specific events?

## **Quantitative analysis: Longitudinal trends in media representations of the Australian working holiday program**

The AWHP did not attract media attention for about a decade after its introduction in 1995. Only a few newspaper articles appeared up until the mid-2000s. Media coverage of the AWHP reached its peak in 2013, and then remained steady with some fluctuations.

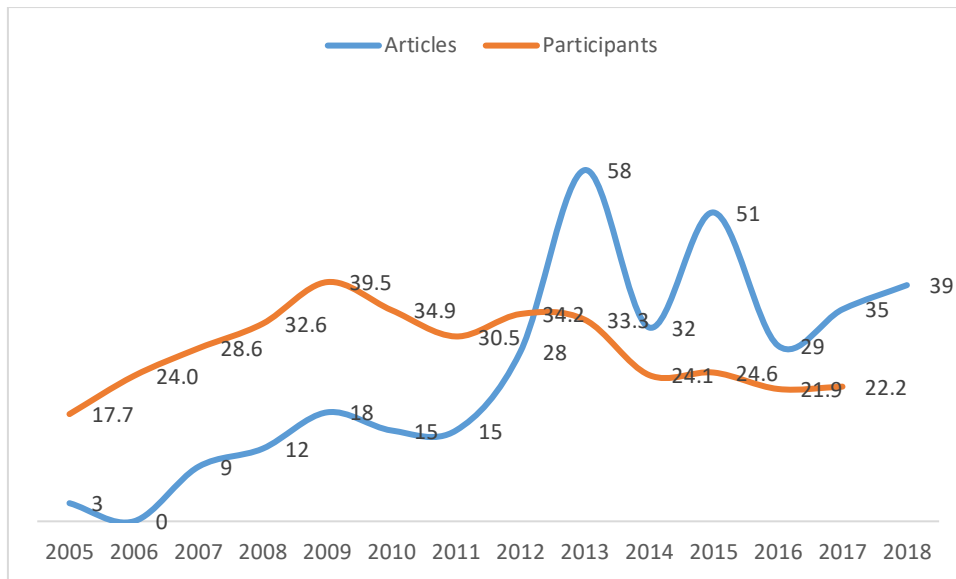


Figure 1. Media coverage by publication year and participation (1000 people) in the AWHP

As Figure 1 indicates, media coverage reflected the AWHP participation rate. The maintenance of a relatively high level of media interest in the AWHP appeared to be related to the Korean government’s policy efforts to promote overseas employment as a solution to youth unemployment. The Korean government launched the K-Move program in 2013 to support young Koreans’ overseas job search. The sharp rise in media coverage of the AWHP coincided with the implementation of the K-Move program. The media framed the AWHP as providing a pathway to overseas employment or an opportunity for the career development of Korean youth. The newspapers reinforced government initiatives and policies.

This also implies that the Korean media reflected and promoted the culture of migration, particularly temporary migration such as the AWHP. Among Korean youth, temporary migration has become a rite of passage or source of social and cultural capital. As discussed above, the Korean government, like other governments such as those of the Philippines, Mexico, and Bangladesh, fostered the cultures of migration on a national scale.

Korean newspapers placed AWHP-related articles mostly in the “Economy” section (26.8%), followed by “International” (24.7%), and then “Culture” (16.3%), which implied that the Korean media constructed the AWHP as a means of providing employment opportunities rather than opportunities for cultural exchanges. These results reflect the soaring youth unemployment of the last two decades, in which almost one in ten young people aged between 15 and 29 are unemployed (Statistics Korea, 2019). The Korean government has established measures to tackle this serious issue and regarded working holiday programs as a workable pathway to promote overseas employment of young people. These economic and policy contexts led the media to place the AWHP in the economy section. Nevertheless, a longitudinal trend showed that the dominance of the “Economy” section weakened, and the location of articles diversified over time. Recently, articles were more likely to be found in the “Culture” and “International” sections, indicating that the AWHP was increasingly presented as a cultural/international experience beyond being an overseas youth employment program.

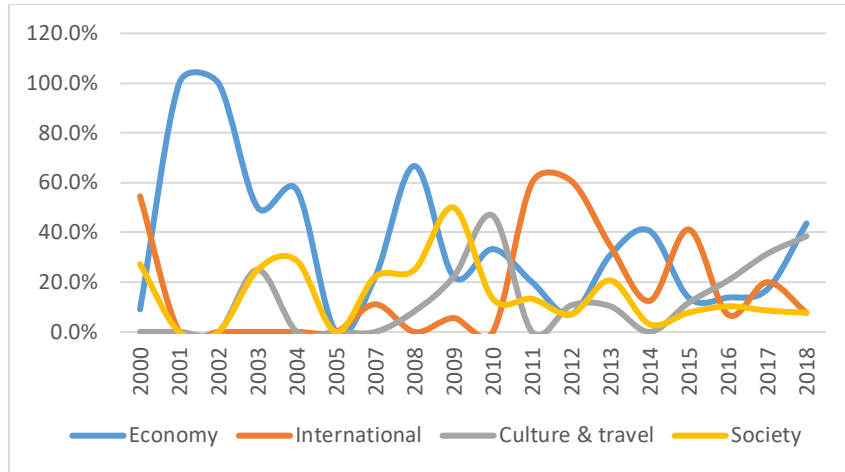


Figure 2. Section by publication year

*Tones: A balanced representation over the period*

We employed a tonality analysis to examine the approach of the Korean media to the AWHP. Tonality analysis uses a subjective assessment to determine whether the content of an article is favorable or unfavorable to the person, organization, commercial product, or policy measure discussed in the text. There are different ways to assess tone. One of the most common is a simple classification of contents as “positive,” “neutral,” or “negative” (Michaelson and Griffin, 2005), which was used for this paper. One-third (33.1%) of articles delivered positive images of the AWHP and featured life stories of participants with successful experiences, whereas approximately two in five articles (38.5%) contained a critical viewpoint of the AWHP or life stories of those who ended up with no meaningful gains or exclusionary experiences.

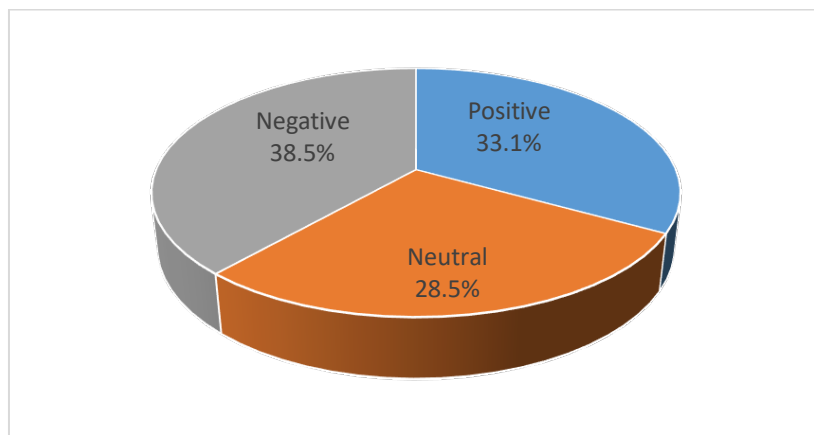


Figure 3. Article tones

In the early 2000s, “neutral” articles dominated, indicating that the media merely presented information about the program to readers. Following the introduction phase, “positive” articles accounted for the majority of coverage for a decade. This might have reflected the culture of migration and the increased interest in the AWHP among Korean youth as an opportunity to work overseas. The media also appeared to highlight an optimistic outlook for the program, in line with the Korean government’s policies promoting overseas employment.

Since the late 2000s, “negative” news started to take up a more substantial proportion of media coverage. This period coincided with a dramatic increase in the number of Korean participants. With increasing participants, more media reports focused on crime, violence, and accidents involving AWHP participants. The “negative” articles reached their peak in 2013 when two Korean participants were murdered. An official inquiry into the program within Australia made the Korean media take a more critical perspective on it.

### Topics

We identified eight major topics based on the analysis of collected newspaper articles: program information, policy information, life chances, promotion, safety, exclusion/exploitation, abuse of the program, and contributions.

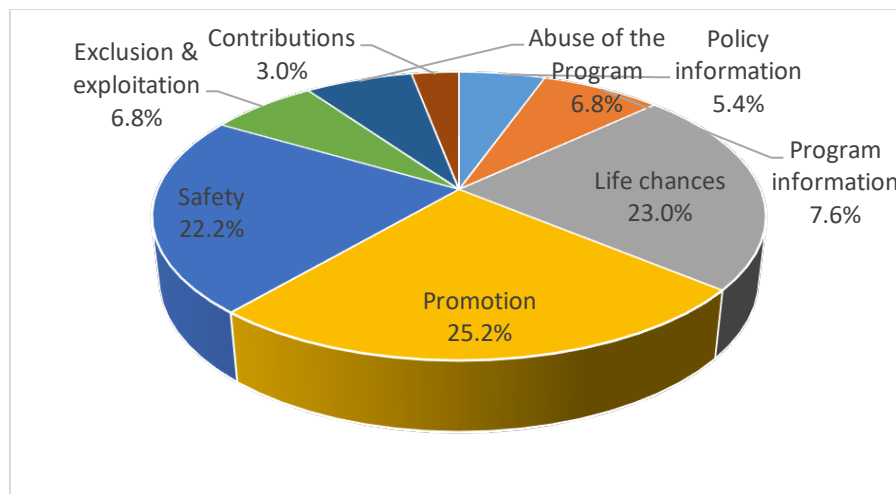


Figure 4. Article topics

Promotion accounted for the most significant proportion of all collected articles (25.2%). Most articles in this category promoted overseas job fairs, overseas study exhibitions, or migration exhibitions, organized by either the government or the private sector, as illustrated in the following article:

For the first time in Korea, the National Council of Youth Organization under the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, which is in charge of the Working Holiday Support Centre, is holding a “Working Holiday Fair” on 22 November. This fair was prepared in collaboration with the embassies of the countries that have a working holiday agreement with Korea to establish a sound culture of overseas travel by young people. (Munhwa, 21 November, 2003)

Promotion of the program was not limited to fairs or exhibitions. The experience of the AWHP was increasingly presented in cultural products such as books and films. The following article illustrates how AWHP participants’ stories were disseminated through the media.

The author of “Australian working holiday diary” was a librarian at a primary school in Gyeonggi-do. She recorded her journey as a working holidaymaker in Australia. The author’s story about skillfully picking strawberries and tomatoes makes readers smile.

Working in a sushi shop, she learned English. Young readers chasing the two hares of work and English at once would find this book funny. (DongA, 7 October, 2008)

Media coverage involving promotions and advertisements related to the AWHP has been gaining traction in recent years. Increases in commercial information about the AWHP indicated that it was attracting commercial services and products related to travel and language study.

The life chance category was also a major topic (23.0%). This category embraced a range of discussions about personal changes that Korean participants experienced during or after the program. Despite the diversity in personal motivation and background, participation in the AWHP was depicted as bringing positive outcomes such as a considerable income, English learning, and future careers. A detailed analysis of their experiences will be discussed in the qualitative analysis section.

Other categories included safety-related articles (22.2%), while “Exclusion/exploitation” (6.8%) covered the personal or structural disadvantages that Korean participants experienced. “Abuse of the program” (6.8 %) referred to the misuse of the program or misbehaviors that Korean participants committed while residing in Australia. The “Contribution” (3.0 %) category included articles dealing with the part played by Korean participants in bringing about positive outcomes or advances to either Korean or Australian society or to the program itself.

Similarly, “program information” (7.6%) delivered general information about the AWHP, covering the nature, eligibility, participant rights and obligations, visa requirements, and program application process, and updates about the program such as changes in its requirements and regulations. Newspapers provided tips and advice for effective preparation and participation in the program.

Although policy information (5.4%) is a small portion of the coverage, it deserves a close look. The topic included the working holiday agreement between Korea and Australia, policy initiatives intended to promote working holiday participation, and support programs run by the public sector. For example, the Korean government has established the Working Holiday Support Centre, which was renamed the Working Holiday Info Centre, and reinforced consular support services for Korean WHMs in Australia. Articles on these support programs were coded into the “policy information” category. This category also covered Australian policies relevant to working holiday participants. Australian tax policies for WHMs, social security policies for employees, such as superannuation, and minimum wage policies were deemed to be policy information. After a long period of absence, policy information was widely discussed from mid-2010.

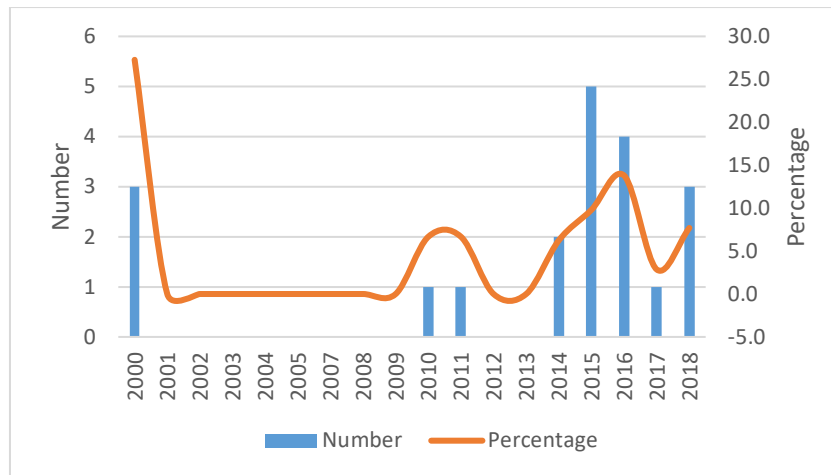


Figure 5. Policy information by publication year

The increased media coverage of policy information coincided with the Korean government's implementation of policy measures to encourage overseas employment. The Korean government utilized the working holiday visa as a pathway to overseas employment and actively promoted the successful outcomes of the program. With an increased number of accidents among Korean WHMs, the Korean government was also pressured to intervene in their safety. Additionally, significant changes related to the AWHP, such as WHM income tax, and exploitation experienced by AWHP participants might have influenced this growing coverage of policy information.

### **National interest, economic imperatives/employment, cosmopolitan experience and victimization**

*“A driving force for development”*: *A solution to youth unemployment in Korea*

After the Asian economic crisis in the late 1990s, South Korea experienced economic growth without job creation, which particularly affected young job seekers. Youth unemployment has emerged as an urgent issue. The unemployment rate of Koreans aged between 15 and 29 is three times higher than the overall working-age population (OECD, 2019; Statistics Korea, 2019). Creation of job opportunities for youth was a national priority, but the labor supply exceeded the domestic labor market's capacity. The Korean government began to look to overseas employment as a solution to youth employment and implemented related policy measures.

In 2006, the Korean government launched “Overseas Employment Promotion Measures,” rebranded as the “Global Youth Leader Training Program” in 2009. This program aimed to promote 50,000 overseas workers, 30,000 overseas interns, and 20,000 overseas volunteers. The Korean government launched another overseas employment project for youth under a new brand, “K-Move,” in 2013 (Lee, 2017; Park, 2015). Specifically, the government established the K-Move website ([www.worldjob.or.kr](http://www.worldjob.or.kr)) as an online information hub, K-Move Centers, and the K-Move School that offered specialized training programs. K-Move Centers were established in 10 countries as job agencies for Korean youth, and incentives were provided to those who participated in the K-Move training program and were successful in securing overseas employment (HRD Korea, 2019).



Through the contributions of the K-Move Centers, a strategic action plan titled “Short and Long-Term Policies for Overseas Employment” was published. This report identified countries with high potential for Koreans to find overseas job opportunities. The report ranked Australia 10th out of 100 on the grounds of its low unemployment rate, relatively high reliance on a foreign skilled labor force, availability of long-term residence, growth in Korean corporations in Australia, and the existence of an established Korean community (Seo, 2015). This program increased the number of people employed overseas from 1,607 in 2013 to 5,118 in 2017. Australia accounted for 7.5% of Korean overseas employment, which was the fourth-largest proportion following Japan (27.9%), the USA (21.1%), and Singapore (9.9%) (Open Data Portal, 2018).

As discussed in the previous section, Korean newspapers promoted the positive aspects of the AWHP by frequently including information related to policies and support programs. This aligned with the Korean government’s policy directives to encourage young Koreans to consider overseas employment opportunities.

The Korean media presented Korean WHMs as having made a significant positive contribution to the Australian economy and society in several aspects. Korean youth addressed Australia’s short-term labor shortage, particularly in the hotel, gastronomy, and agricultural sectors, “filling the 3D jobs that local people avoid” (Hankook, 23 April, 2009).

“Australia has a skill shortage. The door for investment immigration and working holiday visas will continue to widen,” said the Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs. ... The Minister said that Koreans accounted for the largest number of working holiday entrants in Australia and wished for young Korean participants to stay in Australia as a driving force for development. (Seoul, 8 May, 2008)

The Korean participants were seen as a vital source of the labor force for the Korean community in Australia. They also contributed to the Australian economy by spending a substantial amount of money on their accommodation, education, tourism, and social, and cultural activities in Australia. Additionally, Korean WHMs were depicted as facilitating human and cultural exchanges between the two countries. Australian culture has been brought into Korea, and these young Koreans promoted a Korean cultural wave in Australia.

An increasing number of Korean university students arrived in Australia with working holiday visas from the late 1990s to the early 2000s. A Korean cultural wave started to spread from Sydney (where Korean working holiday makers settled the most). (Hankyoreh, 11 May, 2016)

#### *A transnational mobility opportunity for Korean youth with low SES*

The temporary transnational moves among the young are increasingly seen as “rites of passage,” playing a critical part in youth transitions. Transnational mobility has been seen as a panacea to the problems of “hell-Joseon” (Cho, 2015) by both the Korean government and Korean youth. Similarly, life stories of AWHP participants presented in the media described how they became working holiday participants to escape from their current uncertain/hopeless life conditions involving unemployment or precarious employment.

Transnational mobility may not be possible for all, but rather only for some privileged groups (Jung and Jung, 2019). The AWHP was portrayed in particular as the choice of vulnerable young Koreans from low SES backgrounds who could not otherwise afford to study, work, and travel overseas.

After graduation [from university], Ms. Lee was moving from one casual job to another. She is planning to go to Australia for a working holiday “There may not be a permanent position for me. However, would it be better to try diverse experiences rather than to live a hopeless life as a casual worker?” (Hankook, 11 July, 2010)

Participation in the AWHP was described as bringing positive economic outcomes to Korean participants, due to factors such as high salary rate in Australia, underpinned by the protective wage arrangement for casual workers. Many articles reported that despite engaging in labor-intensive, often low-paying “3D” industries, many Korean WHMs earned a considerable income, which would never have happened in Korea. Some utilized their earnings to seek business opportunities or realize a future personal journey. The AWHP appeared to serve as a pathway for upward social mobility.

Mr. Kim opened a chicken restaurant after graduating in the political sciences from Inha University. He decided not to stick to his job search. The seed money was 100,000 dollars earned working as a cashier at a convenience store, a security guard at a supermarket, and a laborer at a construction site. He also raised money working as a cleaner during the AWHP period. (Chosun, 10 August, 2015)

Mr. Kim dropped out of high school as a year 11 student because he could not pay university tuition. Determined to make money, he left for the AWHP, picking grapes, wrapping products at a salad factory, and working as a laborer on a cable construction site. Even with minimum wage, he raised 80,000 dollars after two years. (Kyunghyang, 12 March, 2015)

The Korean media fostered “geographical imaginations” of Australia by depicting it as a land of opportunity with abundant jobs, a clean natural environment, and relaxed lifestyles. Korean newspapers praised Australia as a welfare state, with a world-class education system, high wages, and an egalitarian workplace culture.

Australia is an English-speaking country where Koreans can study English and get a job through a working holiday visa. Australia is a welfare state with an excellent natural environment and many jobs. It has a world-class education system, so many Koreans prepare for entry into university and short- or long-term language studies. (Kookmin, 1 March, 2018)

Career opportunities were the most commonly mentioned benefit of participating in the AWHP in the analyzed newspapers. Work experience in Australia created different opportunities for career development and possible new career paths. The AWHP offered participants opportunities to increase their cultural capital, such as English competency, and to strengthen their competitiveness in the job market. Some participants took advantage of their savings to start their own business back in Korea, while others experienced new

occupations such as party planner, cruise ship crew member, and tea blending, which were very new in Korea. They subsequently ventured into those occupations in Korea, as illustrated in the following examples.

Working as a white-collar worker in an IT company, Ms. Kim became bored with the repetitive daily life and left for the AWHP to find her dream. In Australia, she attended a party where she experienced Australian party culture. She conceived of being a party planner because she predicted that party culture would develop in the future in Korea. (Chosun, 2 May, 2017)

Ms. Lee laid everything down, choosing the AWHP as an exit. “I feel as if I was a machine to earn money.” While working at a farm for ten months to harvest cherry tomatoes, eggplants, zucchinis, and beans, she found agriculture in Australia, unlike in Korea, not a 3D industry. ... She became a different person after AWHP participation. She made up her mind to become a farmer, which had never been on her future job list. (JoongAng, 6 July, 2015)

Recommended by a friend, Mr. Lim went on the AWHP to Melbourne in 2011. He found the fashion of the Australians remarkable. They were not dressed formally but showed individuality. He would spend a whole day watching and taking photos of the fashion. “Every day, I posted fabulous photos on my blog”. (JoongAng, 27 April, 2016)

Mr. Han heard about the tea blending occupation during the AWHP. He decided to pursue this career, thinking that tea blending could be a new horizon in Korea. (Seoul, 15 October, 2016)

Newspaper articles indicated that many Korean WHMs chose the AWHP to improve their English skills, as implied in some research (Jung and Lee, 2017). The newspapers promoted the AWHP as providing “opportunities for poor young people in their 20s who have missed out on English study overseas” (JoongAng, 3 March, 2012).

Mr. Shim sought to find an ideal environment to immerse himself in English education. He lived on a farm where there were no Koreans. The farm owner was a native English speaker who was always ready to converse with him. (JoongAng, 3 March, 2012)

However, improvement in English proficiency was highly reliant on the participant’s choice of residential area and workplace environment. For instance, those who lived within the Korean community and whose employers were Koreans lacked the chance to expose themselves to English-speaking environments.

The working holiday program is preferred as an opportunity to learn English while working. ... Ms. Shin worked on a farm and all she needed was the exchange of simple greetings. She studied English at a college by spending the money she earned through the working holiday. (Hankook, 22 July, 2010)

Self-discovery and self-actualization or the search for a meaningful life are often cited as reasons for transnational mobility among youth (Jung and Jung, 2019). The Korean media has increasingly presented the AWHP as a path for new lifestyle opportunities. The

newspapers reported that many Korean participants developed a sense of confidence and independence while having diverse, adventurous experiences. Many young Koreans experienced an Australian culture and lifestyle that embraced diversity, freedom, and a better work-life balance compared to the rigid Korean culture in which they grew up.

Working at a marketing division of a university in Melbourne, she found that people maintained their work-life balance in Australia. She saw employees taking a nap on the lawn at lunchtime and a food shop owner dancing with customers. (Seoul, 2 January 2017)

The AWHP provided a chance for self-reflection and choice in diverse ways of life.

During the working holiday program in 2009, he decided to become a farmer. It was surprising to see farmers who were satisfied with what they possessed. Coming back to Korea, he asked himself if he was happy with the repetitive routine of office work. He sought work that he would be content with, and his conclusion was farming. (Segye, 12 July, 2014)

Some Korean youth explore other countries because of existential longing (Cho, 2015). Research on Korean WHMs in Canada found that the pursuit of an individualized or true self by escaping their family was one of the driving forces towards transnational/temporary migration (Yoon, 2014). LGBTQI youth also chose a temporary or permanent migration to escape pressure from their homophobic families and society. Some participants (re)discovered or consolidated their self-identity/sexual orientation while participating in the AWHP.

Eddy left for the AWHP to forget his identity problem. There he saw a “different” culture. There was another gender choice for a sexual minority group on the employment contract. The workplace he joined had a separate toilet for sexual minority workers. He resolved confusion about his sexual identity by considering social considerations for sexual minority groups in Australia. Gaining confidence about his sexual identity, he decided to come out as a transgender back in Korea. (Hankyoreh, 30 June, 2016)

The participants also appreciated the Australian culture embracing diversity, freedom, and flexible gender roles, making friends from different countries, and learning about diverse cultures and ways of thinking.

I cannot forget the scene I saw while doing the AWHP. Many times, I saw Australian dads in a suit playing with their children in the park. I have never wanted to have babies, but I could have two to three children in this environment. (JoongAng, 24 June, 2015)

Cosmopolitan aspiration has frequently been used to explain the motivations behind transnational mobility (Jung and Jung, 2019, Dalton and Jung, 2018, Jung et al. 2017). The analysis of newspaper articles implied that these young people held mobile aspirations. As Robertson et al. (2018) explained, the Korean youth “aspire to be mobile and want to construct their futures through desires of mobility” (Robertson et al., 2018: 615). Most did not want to go back to Korea and sought long-term residence in Australia, a new working holiday visa in other countries, or moving to another country for travel or temporary living (Jung, 2018; Jung and Lee, 2017). :

Ms. Shin is doing her second working holiday in Melbourne, Australia, following one in Japan. She worked on a tomato farm, and not in a café. Her initial purpose was travel and short-term money making. However, she intends to stay overseas until the age of 30. She also considers permanent migration. (Kookmin, 15 June, 2017)

Mr. X came back from Australia last year, and is now preparing to head back to Australia because he cannot bear the high-pressure Korean work culture. “It is difficult to buy a house even though we work hard, so difficult to get married. I do not know if I can continue to live in Korea for the rest of my life. I wish to leave this country forever someday.” (JoongAng, 24 June, 2015)

Similarly, “living in a foreign country for a month” has been very popular among the youth in Korea. Transnational mobility is anticipated to offer better life opportunities, competitive skills, and global networks so that they can be the most cosmopolitan and agile workforce.

*The unexpected cost of the AWHP: “Working holiday is an illusion”*

Recently, more articles cautioned against only having optimistic expectations of the AWHP, presenting the hardships that some Koreans had faced in Australia. These articles challenged the intended aims of the program, namely, language learning, work experience, and travelling, and emphasized that the real experience of the AWHP was far from what participants expected. The Korean media increasingly reported on exploitation, crime, racial discrimination, and violence, portraying Korean youth as merely filling the bottom of the ladder of the Australian workforce.

Working holidays are only an illusion. I instantly realized that the information in the books and on the Internet is completely different from reality. There was no job, no time for English study, and no chance to mingle with local people. (Kyunghyang, 15 June, 2010)

Guides for the AWHP present the words of “dream,” “passion,” and “challenge.” However, what I experienced was the life of migrant workers who filled the low-wage labor of Australia. (Kyunghyang, 8 June, 2010)

The media also covered Australians’ hostility toward Asian people as a risk factor for WHMs.

Mr. Kim revealed a bad memory in which some rural Australians made a threatening scene by throwing beer bottles and spitting at Asians. (Segye, 30 November, 2013)

With a growing number of Korean participants in the AWHP, news on related accidents or violence also increased. Korean participants experienced safety risks, including traffic accidents, crime, and violence. In particular, two separate murders of Korean WHMs Min Tae Kim and Eun Ji Ban in 2013 led to a spike in media concern in both Korea and Australia. These two murders accounted for about 60% of all the collected newspaper articles on the AWHP. Following the murders, the media criticized the Korean government for not collecting exact data about AWHP participants and not offering any policy measures to protect them. The media reported on crimes involving Korean participants, either as victims of crime or as perpetrators. As Korean WHMs usually mingled with other Koreans (Jung and

Lee, 2017), the crimes were mostly against other Koreans in Australia. However, some cases were crimes against Australians, which led the Korean media to depict the offender as an “ugly Korean.”

An ugly young Korean committed sexual assault in the morning. According to NSW Police, Mr. A sexually assaulted a woman in Sydney in one case, and attempted a sexual assault in another case. CCTV caught him, and the police arrested him. He reportedly entered Australia with a working holiday visa and stayed for about one and a half years. Police arrested another young Korean as he set fire to his own body in Cairns airport. He reportedly did this after being angry about missing a flight. (Segye, 24 July, 2015)

*Exclusion and exploitation: “Like a Band-Aid that can be thrown away”*

Only recently has the Korean media presented a balanced view of the AWHP by paying attention to labor exploitation, shifting away from the promotion and information-providing supported by governments and businesses. Newspaper articles concerning exclusion and exploitation in the AWHP started to appear in 2013. In particular, the publication of Berg and Farbenblum’s research report, titled “Wage Theft in Australia,” ignited a critical review of the AWHP. The report revealed that workplace exploitation of the AWHP was endemic and severe (Berg and Farbenblum, 2017). This issue developed into a national concern in Australia, which in turn attracted media interest in Korea.

The vulnerability of WHMs as temporary migrants has been well presented in the literature. Howe and Nikoloudakis (2017) modelled the dimensions of WHMs’ vulnerability: 1) they are temporary migrant workers who are young and inexperienced in the labor market, 2) they are employed in unskilled low-paying industries such as hospitality, cleaning, and food processing, and 3) visa conditions constrain their engagement in the labor market. For example, they are required to work on a farm to gain a second visa and can work for the same employer for only six months.

The Korean media paid attention to these structural barriers and exploitative working conditions and underpayment experienced by Korean WHMs. The media highlighted that the language barrier caused Korean youth to primarily accept low-paying, unskilled, and labor-intensive jobs, filling the bottom of the labor market that they would not usually work in if they had remained in Korea. Similarly, they were reported to be reluctant to complain about workplace exploitation because of fears about their visa extension, a lack of information, and a lack of awareness of their rights as workers in Australia.

Korean WHMs are young blood that supply cheap labor. They do not complain, however much they get paid, and even when they are injured. They are like a Band-Aid that can be thrown away. (DongA, 10 December, 2011)

Korean WHMs are all over the meat processing factories in Australia, a livestock industry powerhouse. They work in an abattoir, which requires hard labor. Hundreds of people are waiting for the job, even if they have not experienced that type of tough work. Korean young people are filling the bottom of the labor market as South-East Asians take up the industries that Koreans avoid in Korea. (Segye, 20 March, 2013)

*Reliance on the ethnic economy: Inevitable co-ethnic exploitation*

Due to difficulties in finding a job in the local labor market and language barriers, most Korean participants ended up working with Korean employers. A study of AWHP participants (Jung and Lee, 2017) found that two-thirds of participants worked for Korean employers. Despite the benefits of avoiding language constraints and racial discrimination, working with Korean employers imposed a different type of exploitation such as informal employment without written contracts and lower wage rates than other local employers (Jung and Lee, 2017). Some Korean participants reportedly failed to receive minimum wage and experienced delays in wage payments. Recent newspaper articles have extensively covered such co-ethnic exploitation.

Sarcasm about “Koreans prey on Koreans” is common among Korean WHMs. They even get less than the minimum wage when working with Korean employers. Salaries are paid in cash to avoid tax, and delays in payment occur often. The cleaning industry often requires employees to register as their own business. In that case, employers shift the tax onto employees. (Hankyoreh, 23 December, 2015)

Some Koreans work as “brokers” who arrange work at farm or a meat processing factory for those who want to obtain second visa. Most brokers run a boarding house and offer transportation for commuting but often charging expensive fees.

Mr. Jung has to bend his back to pick strawberries at the height of his ankles. He receives 10 dollars an hour, but receives 5 dollars during probation. Most workers stay in accommodation connected to the farm and commute in a van run by the accommodation. (Naeil, 26 June, 2015)

Overcrowded and expensive accommodation was frequently indicated in the media as a difficulty for temporary migrants in Australia.

Sometimes, 10-15 people stay in a house with one or two toilets. These so-called chicken coup accommodations are run mostly in regional areas where working holidaymakers usually work. Accommodation providers broker jobs and run shared accommodation, taking some of the workers’ wages for accommodation. (Hankyoreh, 23 December, 2015)

It might not be fair to completely blame Korean employers and accommodation providers for this situation, because some workers preferred informal employment arrangements to avoid tax and chose overcrowded accommodation to save money.

*Abuse of the program: Sex work*

Abuse of the AWHP by Korean participants was also a particular concern of the Korean media. Examples included participants engaging in sex work, drug dealing, and gambling. Notably, sex work emerged as a significant concern for the Korean government and the media. The government understood migrant sex as a consequence of the Korean government's criminalization of prostitution (Jung et al., 2016). Sex work through the AWHP dominated Korean news coverage of the AWHP from 2011-2012. In alignment with the Korean government's policy, the Korean newspapers depicted those performing sex work in Australia as former prostitutes in Korea and criminals. In Australia, working in the sex industry under the AWHP is not a crime.

Eradicating thriving Korean women's prostitution in Australia was the government's policy. The government strengthened its investigative power to crack down on the workers behind the crime. According to the Ministry, the number of Korean sex workers was almost 1,000, and a considerable number of them were assumed to abuse the AWHP. (Segye, 3 December, 2011)

The media reported in detail how some WHMs fell into the industry while searching for employment:

[Title: Ugly Koreans put the nation to shame.] With high expectations, Ms. Kim went to Sydney with a working holiday visa. She met a local Korean who took her to a brothel. The local said sex work in Australia was legal with the working holiday visa. Ms. Kim tried to escape a few times, but she was forced into sex work under 24-hour surveillance and her passport was retained. (Segye, 25 April, 2007)

The Korean media branded sex work as a national shame and reiterated government policies to investigate, prevent, and punish overseas prostitution.

A negative image of Korea as a prostitute-exporting country is prevalent in Australia. The Korean police raised the concern that sex work would damage the image of Korea. (Seoul, 30 June, 2012)

## **Conclusion**

The longitudinal assessment of Korean newspapers related to WHM in Australia found that the media reinforced the culture of migration among Korean youth, framing the program as a government strategy to tackle rising youth unemployment and as a way for young people to escape from uncertain life conditions in Korea. The AWHP is framed as a choice for vulnerable youth from low-SES backgrounds lacking the financial, social, and cultural capital to pursue other forms of overseas experience, work, study, and travel. In particular, the media constructed positive geographical imaginations about Australia, which might have impacted people's decisions about which country to migrate to.

Until recently, the Korean media reinforced the prevalent culture of migration and the government's globalization initiatives and K-Move program, encouraging overseas youth employment. The media, through the provision of information via various events, played a critical role in disseminating the positive outlook of the AWHP. With the growing number of AWHP participants, Korean newspapers began to pay attention to participants' divergent experiences. The media covered the positive contribution the AWHP could bring to



participants using keywords such as “high income,” “new career development,” “independence,” “freedom,” “new lifestyle,” “work-life balance,” “gender/sexual diversity,” and “learn English.” The murders of two WHMs in 2013 impacted both the amount of media coverage and its tone. The plight of temporary migrants was more frequently reported, with a focus on safety concerns, racial discrimination, exclusion, and exploitation, in particular, co-ethnic exploitation and crowded housing. The Korean media also pressured the government to play a more assertive role in protecting and providing proper support for young Koreans.

First, the Korean media actively promoted the positive outlook and outcomes of the AWHP, which served a national interest in tackling soaring youth employment. There might be different framing of temporary migration between sending and receiving countries. The research on the media representation of WHP in the Australian media is required. Second, the analysis implied that the media could strengthen the culture of migration and geographical imagination, which might influence migration decisions about which country to migrate to. To gain a deeper understanding of the lived experience of temporary migrants, more discursive space in the public sphere needs to be given to migrants. Given the prevalent use of social media among youth and temporary migrants, further research on the analysis of SNS/YouTube related to WHMs would be useful for supplementing this print media analysis.

Owing to COVID-19, there have been massive changes in temporary migration flows, including the AWHP. Still, youth in the globalized world regard temporary migration as a rite of passage and part of their lifestyle. Hence, interest in temporary migration among youth is not likely to decrease.

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