

Bonding and Bridging Migrant Workers to Korean Society: A Study of Migrant Workers' Television as a Counterpublic Sphere

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This article presents Migrant Workers' Television (MWTV) in South Korea as an example to show efforts made by migrant media to be a part of the public sphere. Relying on both public and counterpublic sphere theories, this article shows that media created by migrant workers in Korea acts as a tool bonding migrants with each other and as a bridge between migrants and society. This is achieved through the activities migrants undertake while producing media. A content analysis of more than 200 program items produced by MWTV, a migrant worker media production nongovernmental organization, illustrates that MWTV's programs strive to build a united community among ethnically diverse communities of migrant workers. Additionally, the article's content analysis shows that MWTV reaches out to communicate with the general public as a counterpublic medium.

A recent United Nation's world population report stated that there has been a steady flow of migration from less developed countries to more developed ones for more than half a century (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2011). The report stated that the native population in developed countries has been decreasing as a result of low fertility and high mortality. Korean society is at the center of the change. Since the 1990s, Korea has seen a rapid increase in the number of immigrants entering the country for work or marriage. Social and political reactions to this demographic change occur as a result and can be divided into opposing sides. A conservative perspective emphasizes assimilation of a migrant population to "construct a common culture" (McLaren, 1995, p. 48) and reducing such ethnic groups to an "add-on" to the dominant culture" (Ibid., p. 49). For example, Huntington (2005) found that immigration from Latin American countries to the United States threatens Judeo-Christian identity and the tradition of democracy. One solution is to educate and assimilate new immigrants into mainstream society. The fact that Korean television shows have approached assimilated migrants as one of "us" and other people as strangers is an example of the conservatism (Lee, 2006). On the other hand, there is a body within many societies, including South Korean society, that advocates a pro-immigration perspective and the creation of a new national identity to embrace immigrants as new participants in society. Putnam (2007) argued that the short-term withdrawal from community activities resulting from migration can be remedied with "permeable, synthetic, 'hyphenated' identities" (p. 161).

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Discourses of multicultural (*damunwha*) society are efforts to embrace migrants as a part of Korean society (N. Kim, 2009). Regardless of a difference of opinion on assimilation and hybridization, these discussions show that migration has brought inevitable changes that ask for social attention.

In general, the media's reaction to migration has been confusing. Multiculturalism has become a critical part of globalized media culture (Thussu, 2000; Tunstall, 2008), but tens of millions of transnational migrants fail to receive adequate or fair media coverage. Migrants attract such attention during moments like protests or riots (Duprez, 2009; Foster, 2006; Kaye, 1998; K.-H. Kim, 2009; Rosello, 1998). However, other than such occasions, which tend to emphasize social upheaval or negative social sentiment, migrants are mostly hidden in the back alley of globalization. Considering the negativity regularly instilled by mainstream media portrayals, migrants' normal places in their host societies seem to be overlooked or even ignored not only by mainstream media, but by opinion leaders in most immigration societies.

This does not necessarily mean that migrants live outside of settled society. Existing studies prove that migrants participate not only in economic activities in host societies, but in cultural ones (Caglar, 2004; Cunningham & Nguyen, 1999; Echchaibi, 2002; Georgiou, 2001; Karanfil, 2009; Lee, 2001; Shi, 2009). Naficy (1993, 1999), in particular, found that migrants have built exilic ways of media activities, in that migrants take advantage of every possible means for communication to share their common cultural and political interests. These studies found contraflows of media amidst globalization (Thussu, 2007), but they mostly focus on a diasporic aspect of migration. They draw pictures of migrants with shared ethnicity or culture trying to (re)connect with their old homes. The studies are limited in the sense that they tend to use ethnicity as an exclusionary feature rather than one facilitating social inclusion (Anthias, 1998). An obvious outcome from this tendency is a picture of migrants isolated from society in general yet bonding among themselves (Fleras, 2009; Putnam, 2007). A series of ethnic media studies in Canada clearly confirmed this by showing that ethnic newspapers deliver more news from migrants' homelands, providing opportunities for reconnection, and less from settled neighborhoods, with a negative focus on crime and with misrepresentation of migrant lives in settled neighborhoods (Ahadi & Murray, 2009; Fleras, 2011; Kong, 2013; Lindgren, 2011a, 2011b; Ojo, 2006; Yu & Murray, 2007).

Nonetheless, efforts to bridge different communities have not been overlooked entirely, as an emerging body of literature aims to identify the efforts of migrant media to connect migrants to mainstream society (Awad & Roth, 2011; Echchaibi, 2002; Lee, 2012). In addition, research on migrant identity shows that migrants not only keep their old identities but acquire and develop new ones after settlement by stepping out of their immediate migrant communities and exploring their new society (Burch, 2002; Clifford, 1994; Tomlinson, 2003). Migrants who construct a new identity do so naturally finding bonding elements among migrants, as well as bridging ones between migrants and other members in society (Colic-Peisker, 2002; Oliver & O'Reilly, 2010; Toro-Morn, 1995).

The Global Public Sphere and Migrant Media

The significance of Migrant Workers' Television (MWTV) is in its peculiar position at the crossroads of economic globalization, international human migration, the advent of new media for ordinary

people, and the creation of a new transnational public sphere. Habermas (1974) defined the public sphere as "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed" (p. 49). The most critical elements of the public sphere in his conceptualization are critical discourses to society and active participation among equal members. The original approach to the public sphere, based on salons and literary media during the enlightenment era, is often credited for providing a new framework for modern democracy (Fraser, 1990). At the same time, such a perspective is criticized by many scholars for its male-dominated, centralistic, and bourgeois-focused tendencies (Fraser, 1990; Gitlin, 1998; Keane, 1995; Schudson, 1992). Habermas (1996) later acknowledged this criticism, stating that "the institutional core of 'civil society' is constituted by voluntary unions outside the realm of the state and the economy and ranging . . . from churches, cultural associations, and academies to independent media" (p. 453). Habermas' conceptualization of the public sphere and its relationship to media has continued to evolve in the area of contemporary media studies, to take into account the globalization of communication media. Curran's (2000) model of core, civil, professional, social, and public media sectors and Keane's (1991) model of public service broadcasting demonstrate perspectives on public sphere from media studies. In both models, local, national, and international media organizations play their own distinct roles by contributing to general public spheres.

Meanwhile, global migration has initiated discussions of the global public sphere and its relationship to universal human rights, the limits of nation-states, and the emergence of a new international system (Benhabib, 2004; Fraser, 2007; Keane, 1998; Kögler, 2005). Attempts to overcome exclusiveness of nation-state-based public spheres engender a new concept of public sphere based on humanity and communication. Chouliaraki (2013) called this expansion "a move from the communitarian solidarity of a nation-bound bourgeoisie towards shared vulnerability as a cause for solidary action upon all humanity" (p. 111). For Chouliaraki, communication beyond national borders and ethnic or national differences is considered essential to promote mutual understanding among migrants and between migrants and existing members of a host society. The expansion is different from capitalist globalization currently driven by commercial transnational corporations, as the global public sphere appreciates differences and attempts to encourage diverse voices. Calhoun (2002) asserted that individual differences, shared and celebrated in public communal spaces, are the foundation of democracy. Such a celebration of differences is unlike "atomized, isolated" individuality with extreme similarity to one another, which opens up a space for totalitarianism (Arendt, 1958, p. 323).

Counterpublics provide a useful theoretical contribution to the discussion of the public sphere (Calhoun, 2002; Fraser, 1990; Warner, 2002). They are specifically related to minorities in society, as Fraser defined them as "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses" (1990, p. 67). Subaltern counterpublics exist to gain recognition for existing differences and to broaden discursive spaces in a society in which public discourse is under pressure to reach integration. It is important to remember that counterpublics are part of the general public, and counterpublics contribute to the general public with their own discursive agendas and territories. Calhoun (2002) saw interrelation and integration between counterpublics and the general public as critical features of functioning public spheres. However, Gitlin (1998) maintained that it is hard to find in modern society the kind of interrelation and integration described by Calhoun (2002). Rather, Gitlin witnessed proliferation of distinct publics, not "the creation of a public—an active democratic

encounter of citizens who reach across their social and ideological differences to establish a common agenda of concern and to debate rival approaches" (Gitlin, 1998, p. 173). In fact, he observed the centrifugal dissolution of a unitary public sphere that is "weak, riddled with anxiety and self-doubt" (Ibid., p. 170). Gitlin saw the rise of sphericules creating a mosaic relationship with the public sphere. Sphericules rarely interact with each other to produce the public sphere, but stick to their own differences. There is more communication within sphericules, but less between them.

To clarify specific differences between sphericules and counterpublics, the major difference is that "counterpublics contested the exclusionary norms" of the existing public sphere (Fraser, 1990, p. 61). In other words, counterpublics seek broader participation in wider publics, or society-at-large. In her account, Fraser (1990) considered two main functions of counterpublics to be "withdrawal and regroupment" and "bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics" (p. 68). The existence of a wider, public sphere is assumed, and such a public sphere is worth fighting for or against. This modernist approach to the public sphere, in turn, worries about the emergence of depoliticized, fragmented sphericules (McKee, 2004). As a backdrop, the modernist approach has the closed boundaries of nation states, but globalization and the advancement of communication technologies enable minorities to find their own communities beyond national borders and to stay enclosed within them (Cunningham, 2001). In this respect, members of sphericules are not much interested in participating in *the* public sphere but to maintain their own spheres. For example, migrants, as "they are social fragments that do not have critical mass," have limited chances to get proper attention and have a minimal effect on national politics (Ibid., p. 134). Rather, according to Cunningham, they find their places in globalized and mediatized sphericules, which rarely interact with the national public sphere in Australia. In short, counterpublics fight for spaces on the main stage, while sphericules can stay invisible and be connected to somewhere else (Hartley & Green, 2006, p. 347).

The question of whether migrant communities are counterpublics or sphericules—or whether a migrant community is closer to a counterpublic or sphericule—arises. Both a counterpublic and a sphericule exist in relations with a public sphere, but the former presupposes more interactions with a public sphere, while the latter, with limited relationships, except physical coexistence in a same sphere. Most studies focusing on migrants' identities find that a migrant community is better characterized as counterpublic. When migrants settle in a new environment, they are, in a sense, forced to assimilate to and learn from that new environment. However, migrants also bring with them their cultural background. In this sense, Park (1928), almost a century ago, called migrants marginal men and saw the mixture of old and new identities as natural. Park also found that there was a certain stubbornness among migrants to keep their cultural background within their migrant community, as well as "a desire not to mingle" (Park, 1922, p. 6).

This tension becomes more complicated with modern communication technologies, which provide better chances to reconnect with or keep connections to old homes. For example, Karanfil (2009) and Madianou (2005) both found that satellite broadcasting has become a must-have product among Turkish immigrants in Australia and Greece, respectively. A satellite dish, in these cases, is a symbol of "otherness" and "(be)longing" (Echchaibi, 2002). However, that symbolism can betray the complex nature of media activities occurring under the roofs of satellite dishes. First of all, various demographic elements

decide media consumption behaviors among migrants. For example, first generation migrants tend to long for some kinds of reconnection to their homeland, but later generations are more open to change and reinvention of their identities (Charef, 2009; Echchaibi, 2002; Hargreaves & Mahdjoub, 1997; Madianou, 2005). Second, moments of bonding mostly occur when migrants are required to interact with their host society and its mainstream media, often complete with negative portrayals of migrants. When a boundary of otherness is drawn by a host country's mainstream media, and only when such otherness is further asserted by a host society, migrants take essentialist stances (Madianou, 2005; Ojo, 2006). To summarize, unlike how it may seem upon initial appraisal, the mediascape of migrants today is complicated and diverse, with continuous tug-of-wars between bridging forces to a host society—for the public sphere—and bonding forces among migrants, all constituting a sphericle. Considering this tension between bridging and bonding, it is interesting to consider how migrant workers in South Korea handle such tension with their own media production activities.

What Is Migrant Workers' Television?

MWTV is a media production group organized by migrant workers in 2004 to communicate migrants' human rights issues and to promote the right to know (MWTV, 2013). Its main activities include offering television program production, giving media production education for migrants, hosting an annual film festival called Migrants' Film Festival (MFF), and maintaining a multilingual website, mwtv.tv. To understand MWTV, a detour to recent immigration history in Korea is warranted. Until the late 1980s, Korea was a country characterized by emigration, with not much experience of immigration. From the late 1980s, Korea began attracting and accepting immigrants again, especially from other Asian countries, due to its economic development. The Korean government allowed migrant workers to enter the country as trainees from 1991 to 2005, and it did not bestow on them the same labor rights that Korean workers enjoyed. The special trainee status of migrant workers put these workers under unfair labor conditions and limited their stay in the country to three years maximum. As a result, more than 80% of 200,000 migrant workers overstayed their visa sojourn and became undocumented workers. The Korean government worried that these undocumented workers might stay permanently in the country and could threaten Korea's pure-blood national identity (N. Kim, 2009), so the national government started daily crackdowns on undocumented workers. It was mainly at this point that migrant workers started to organize demonstrations for more humane treatment, better legal status, and longer stays (Jeong, 2012).

Migrant workers' struggles, which have lasted over two decades now, have produced several outcomes in their favor. First, in 2003, the Korean government decided to grant an amnesty to more than 200,000 undocumented workers. Second, the trainee program was replaced by the Employment Permit System (EPS), which guaranteed basic labor rights. In addition, migrant workers organized several migrant workers' unions in collaboration with Korean workers. Culturally, in the middle of this escalating labor unrest, a few migrant workers became frustrated with the indifference among native Koreans about migrant conditions and judged that rare coverage and unfair representation in Korean mainstream media were the main culprits behind the apathy (Lee, personal communication, June 2008). Moreover, the political demonstrations and labor strikes produced organic grassroots cultural activities of their own, such as a rock band called Stop Crackdown and video production activities. In the end, these activities led to the launch of MWTV with various kinds of support from Korean nongovernmental organizations (NGOs),

media activists, and labor unions. In 2006, MWTV received a license from RTV, which was a public access channel for a satellite broadcaster. MWTV then produced its first programs, *World of Migrant Workers (WMW)* and *Multilingual Migrant Workers News (MMWN)*. They were produced regularly with licenses from RTV until 2009. Under worsening financial conditions from 2009 on, MWTV discontinued *WMW* and migrated its programs to the Internet. It kept broadcasting *MMWN* and started a new program called *Video Web News (VWN)*.

Organizationally, from producers and directors to hosts and guests, most of the production staff are migrant workers, while Korean natives provide technical and educational support. This organizational structure, with leadership by migrants in the production department, has been maintained from the media outlet's birth, as both migrants and native Korean understood that making migrants' voices heard was the most important mission for the organization (Lee, 2012). Later, foreign students and marriage migrants joined the organization to change the staff composition of MWTV. The most recent and significant change that MWTV has made was to change its title from Migrant Workers' Television to Migrant World Television in 2011. MWTV's 2011 annual report (MWTV, 2011) states that there had been a long discussion among stakeholders regarding the name change, with the aim that it would reflect demographic changes within the migrant population in South Korea, especially as a result of increasing marriage migration.

Regarding program changes and MWTV's financial difficulties in the late 2000s, it is critical to know what had happened during 2008 and 2009 in South Korea. It was during this time that Korean society underwent significant changes in many areas including politics and even society after 10 years of liberal governments. Everything with "public" as part of its mission was reexamined by the newly elected conservative government, headed by President Lee Myung-Bak, as the new government sought to approve or deny a legacy of decisions made by the previous liberal governments (Bae & Lee, 2013). The new conservative government started to alter existing policies that were deemed liberal, which had the effect of decimating direct and indirect public support that MWTV had been getting through various channels. In addition to that, one of MWTV's key members, Minod Moktan, was arrested in front of the MWTV office and deported to Nepal after living in Korea for more than 18 years. The Korean government stated that the arrest was intended to stop his cultural and political activities related to migrant workers in Korea (Lee, 2012). Critics charged that the deportation was clearly aimed at silencing MWTV's criticism against the Korean government's migrant worker policies. The last steady but noticeable change affecting MWTV was the increase of marriage migrants and refugees. Marriage migration surged from 25,182 in 2001 to 125,087 in 2009, as many lower-income Korean men sought brides from abroad. More than 80% of marriage immigrants were females from China, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Cambodia (Korean Immigration Service, 2010). Also, the application numbers for refugee status kept increasing during this time, from 37 in 2001, to 717 in 2007, and to 324 in 2009. In sum, Korean society was experiencing a lot of changes surrounding immigration during this time period. Likewise, MWTV faced unprecedented challenges, which led to the cancelation of *WMW* to start *VWN*.

A look at the formation of MMWN's flagship program *WMW* can serve as a brief introduction. The program used a panel discussion format to deal with migration-related topics, such as legal advice for immigration issues, discussion of inhumane or unfair working conditions, and information about cultural activities for migrant workers. The 30-minute program was composed of approximately six segments and

produced once a month. It was hosted by an MWTV anchorperson, and its panel members were from various relevant groups, such as migrants, NGO workers, or lawyers. All the video inserts and panel discussion were produced by MWTV in Korean. Minod Moktan, one of the leading anchorpersons for the show, said that *WMW* was to do what Korean mainstream media did not do, which was to approach migration issues from a migrant worker's viewpoint and to provide practical solutions for the difficulties migrant workers were experiencing (Lee, personal communication, June 2008). In 2009, *WMW* was suspended, and *VWN* was launched in its place. There was no longer an anchorperson or studio, mainly due to lack of financial and production support from RTV. Most stories were around two minutes long with narration dubbed in different languages. For the purposes of this article, I have chosen *WMW* and *VWN* for a further analysis, as they have been the flagship programs before and after 2009 and have more episodes than others.

Research Questions and Methodology

This article aims to contribute to existing literature on migration and migrants' use of media by analyzing how media activities undertaken by migrants work as a bonding and/or bridging agent (Putnam, 2007). More specifically, by studying a migrant workers' media production NGO in Korea, called Migrant Workers' Television, this article answers the following questions:

1. How do MWTV productions attempt to bond migrants with different social backgrounds?
2. How do MWTV productions strive to form a bridge between migrants and existing Korean society?
3. How does the public sphere and subaltern counterpublic sphere affect societal bonding and bridging processes?

To answer these questions, this article analyzes MWTV's programming to see how media content is composed and articulated and how migrant workers are represented in these programs. More specifically, two types of data are used. First, 250 items sampled from MWTV's two flagship programs produced in different timeframes have been chosen for analysis. Selected items have been categorized based on program content to identify their significance and contribution to Korean society. Second, program content was analyzed to find how migrants are portrayed. In addition, in the summer of 2008, participatory observation was undertaken for two months, tracking MWTV's production activities from staff meetings and field shooting to studio live-to-tape production. Interviews with MWTV's key staff, both native Koreans and migrants, were video-recorded. The participatory observation conducted was intended to garner a deeper understanding of MWTV's distinct approaches to the issues of migration.

Distinctions of a Counterpublic in Program Content

I analyzed 180 packages from 20 episodes of *WMW* and categorized 125 items from *VWN* based on main subjects. The categories used are Migrant, Labor, International, Refugee, Korea, and Culture, as they were issues covered frequently by both programs. Many video items were indexed in more than one category because they often had more than one element. For example, when an item was about the International Labor Organization (ILO), it was indexed both in the International and Labor categories. An

item about Burmese migrants' New Year activities is in Refugee and Culture. To review the definitions of each category:

- Migrant: issues related to the general migrant population (i.e., marriage migrants or the second generation migrants)
- Labor: labor issues concerning migrant workers and the working class in South Korea (i.e., Migrants' Trade Union, the EPS)
- International: issues beyond Korean society (i.e., terrorism, global politics)
- Refugee: refugee issues both in Korea and in other countries
- Korea: how to live and adjust after migration; Korean politics
- Culture: cultural events such as film festivals and rock concerts

Two programs with 243 items were indexed 351 times (Figure 1). Labor issues were most commonly discussed with 129 packages (37%). This was followed by Culture with 87 (25%), Migrant with 50 (14%), International with 49 (14%), Korea with 27 (8%), and Refugee with 9 (2%). In relation to the previous discussion in this article regarding the public sphere and the bonding or bridging forces of migrant media, the selected categories were regrouped as either bonding or bridging, which facilitates further analysis. The bonding categories are those that help build an identity and unify community members. Categories like Labor and Migrant belong to the bonding category. The bridging categories, on the contrary, are those that try to connect migrants and their particular migrant community or communities to Korean society and international communities. Such bridging categories include the categories of Korea, International, Culture, and Refugee. When the items were regrouped, the number of bridging items (49%) was almost equal to the number of bonding items (51%). This indicates that, as a minority medium, MWTV strived to perform two functions at the same time.

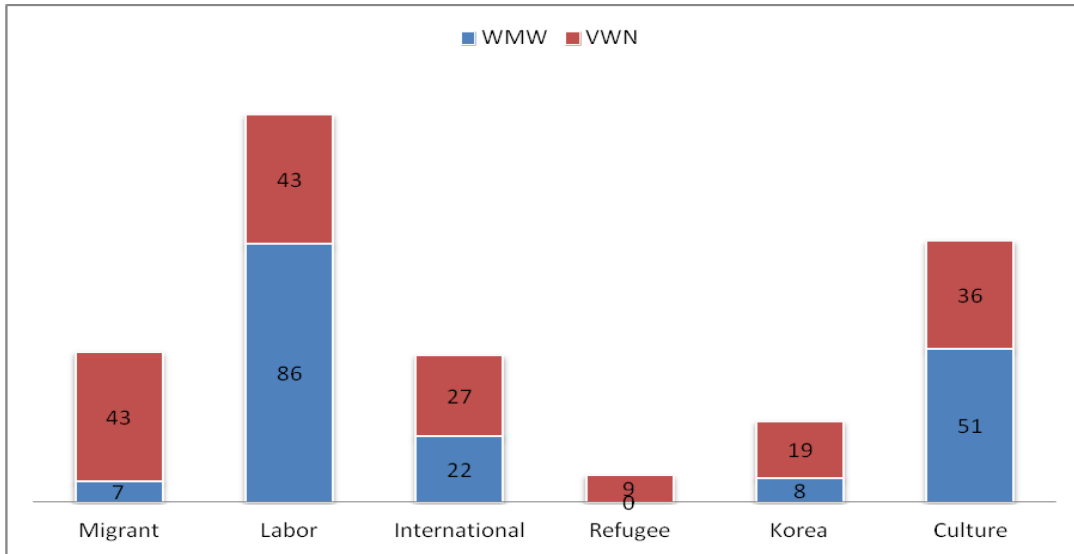


Figure 1. Number of discussions on each topic.

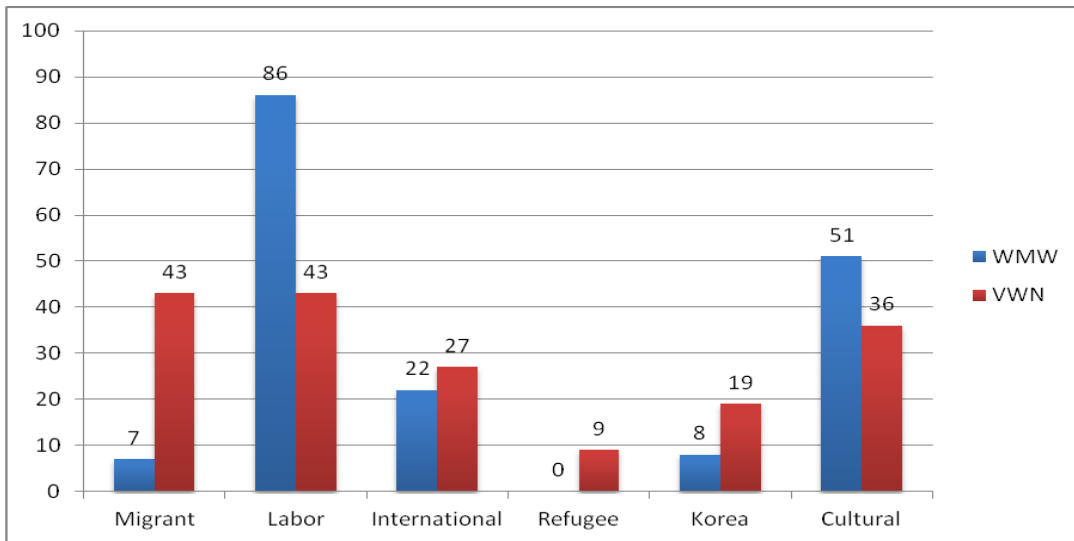


Figure 2. Item number change.

Different production environments between *WMW* and *VWN* were reflected in subject differences covered by each program (Figure 2). The most drastic decrease was in the Labor category, which was halved from 86 items (49.4%) to 43 (24.3%) between *WMW* and *VWN*. The biggest increase was found in the Migrant category from 7 items (4%) to 43 (24.3%). This category included not only issues related to migrant workers but also issues related to migrants in general, such as marriage migrants and the second generation. The number of Refugee items jumped from zero to nine (5.1%), while items in the Korea category doubled from 8 items (4.6%) to 19 (10.7%). The changes found in Figure 2 display the effort MWTV made to address social changes and to reach out beyond the immediate communities of migrant workers to general migrants, refugees, and Koreans. The *WMW*'s concentration on Labor items, with about 50%, was diversified to Migrant and other bridging categories in *VWN*.

The most significant change was the Labor category, which took 50% of *WMW*'s items but shrunk to 25% when *VWN* was broadcast. What happened to cause this reduction? This question may be answered by the policy changes, like amnesty in 2003 and the EPS in 2005, and by increased marriage migration and refugee settlement. To elaborate a little more, first, the status of migrant staff at the television station became diverse and included marriage migrants and refugees, who normally possessed a more stable legal status. During participatory observation in 2008, a lot of foreign students and marriage migrant volunteers seemed to work more freely than others due to their legal stability. Students and marriage migrants did not fear deportation. On the contrary, the unstable legal status of migrant workers hindered their participation, with two staff members being deported in the early days of MWTV as well as Minod Moktan's deportation in 2009 (M.-S. Kim, 2005; Lee, 2012). This shift to a general migrant population in staffing seemed to broaden program subjects in MWTV's presentation. Second, programming change may have been caused by the easing of tensions between migrant workers and the Korean government, as well as continuous efforts of the Korean government to nurture greater respect for multiculturalism. The liberal governments led by Presidents Kim Dae-Jung and Rho Moo-Hyun, from 1998 to 2008, articulated migrant issues as part of the discourse of globalization, which legitimated the presence of the migrant population and pressured the Korean public to accept it as an inevitable step for Korea to be a member of the global village (N. Kim, 2009). Third, there has been an increasing appreciation of migrants in South Korean society, not only for their contribution to the economy but also, to some degree, to culture and society. A clear proof of this is the increased cultural activities by and for migrants, as well as the various multicultural education programs that have been adopted by the Korean education system. Such developments provided a rich cultivation ground to diversify MWTV's content to wider migration topics. In sum, this survey of social and cultural changes in Korea explains the programming differences between *WMW* and *VWN* programs and proves that MWTV programming changed because it was adapting to outside changes. There was a close correlation between society's and MWTV's development. The social and political changes in Korea were very likely in continuous sync with MWTV and its programs (Figure 3). Migrant workers' struggles and, later, MWTV's participation in the migrant labor movement, likely led to government policy changes such as the EPS and the amnesty from deportation. These policies resulted in changes among the migrant population and MWTV's programs. The examination of program item changes between the two selected time periods—namely pre- and post-2009—demonstrates MWTV's communication with the general Korean public.

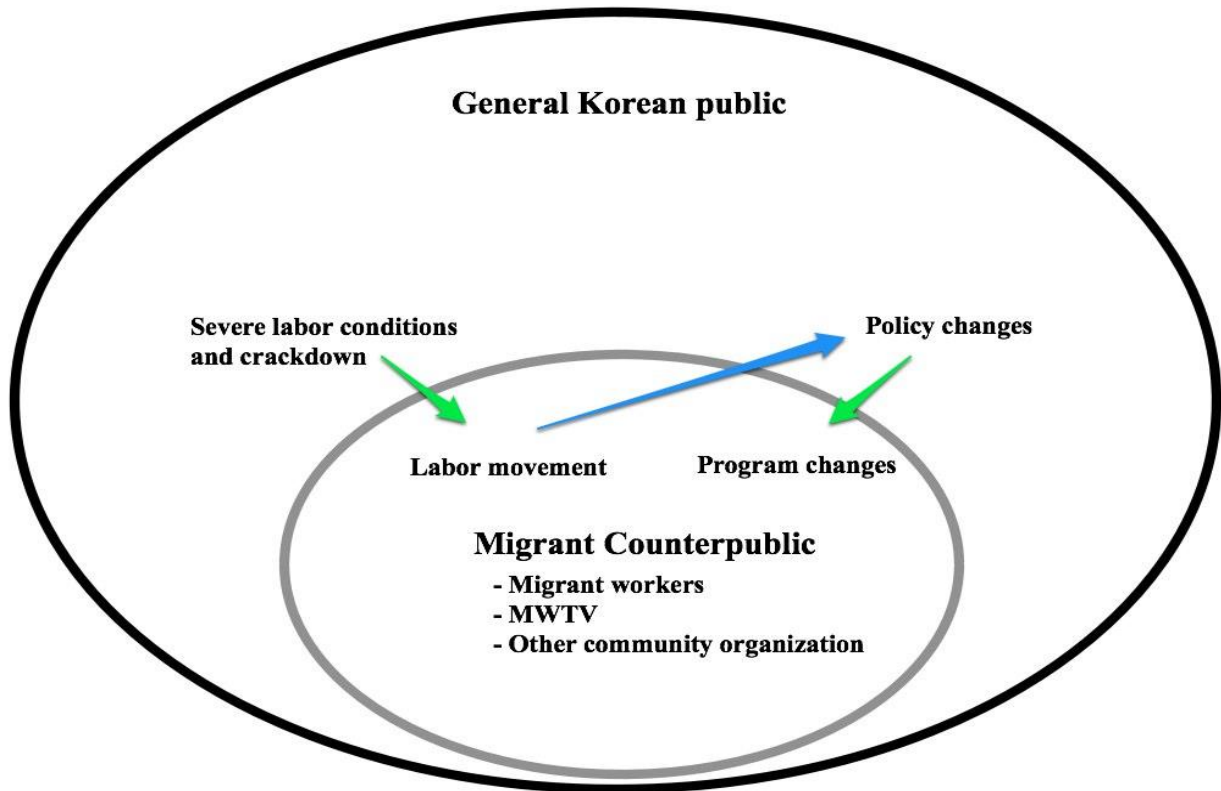


Figure 3. Interactions between the Korean public and the MWTV counterpublic.

Efforts to Bond as a Counterpublic

After finding MWTV's continuous interaction with the Korean public, the question to answer remains: Is MWTV different from mainstream media in content? To investigate this question, it is necessary to examine MWTV's programs more closely. The existing literature about migrant representation in Korea shows that migrants are often portrayed as inferior and unhealthy intruders and as recipients of social services (K.-H. Kim, 2009; Lee, 2006; Won, 2003; Yang, 2007). Lee (2006) finds "otherness" as a dominant discourse among Korean television programs, and the otherness becomes a tool to approach and recognize other Asians, including Asian migrants. Given that this is the dominant discourse in mainstream media, how differently does MWTV present migrants in its programming? To answer this, a closer look at both programs, *WMW* and *VWN*, is needed.

Among indexed items, labor issues were dominant, at 37%, and half of *WMW*'s programming was devoted to labor issues. This clearly demonstrates class as a critical element among migrant workers in Korea. *WMW*'s programming included information about new governmental regulations, migrant worker labor union issues, NGO support groups, and relevant economic changes. More often than not, *WMW*'s

stories covered events such as discussion forums, symposia, and press conferences related to the issues of migration and labor. All stories were about contemporary changes facing migrants and took sides with migrants whenever necessary. Thus *WMW*'s inclination toward migrant workers resulted in the display of a totally different picture from the one created by mainstream media in South Korea. For example, one year after the EPS was developed, *WMW* had an episode to assess the effect of the new system, with items like "How much have migrant workers' lives changed one year after the EPS?" and "Search for a better system one year after the EPS." By showing that the lives of migrant workers were not much changed, *MWTV*'s producers argued that problems remained—even with the EPS—including chronic labor abuses and issues related to workers changing their workplace. To support this, *WMW* brought forward cases of labor exploitation, such as unpaid wages, inhumane crackdowns, unfair labor practices, and forced deportation. In one episode, *WMW* interviewed deported Bangladeshi workers, covered the death of a Turkish worker in a detention center, and reported on several sexual harassment cases. In another episode, coverage started with a continuing crackdown in Ansan (an industrial city just south of Seoul), moved on to a news conference criticizing the inhumane nature of the crackdown, and finished with interviews of arrested but released workers. The interviews focused on the legal status and the life backgrounds of the workers, including where and how they got arrested and how to prepare for and respond to a future crackdown.

The second most prevalent category of coverage was about the cultural activities of migrant workers, and it remained relatively consistent between *WMW* and *VWN*: 29% and 20%, respectively. All types of cultural activities were covered, from musical performances and photo essays to educational programs and community activities. This cultural coverage seemed to serve two purposes: acknowledging difference and finding similarity. One item covered the trip to Korea of a Buddhist monk from Burma who visited Burmese workers' homes and performed Burmese traditional rituals in Korea. There was an item introducing a Nepalese wedding ceremony in Korea or Mongolian community activities in Korea. These items normalized difference, as they recognized the fact that all migrants were from cultures different from Korea's. For example, a photo slideshow showed a diverse group of migrant workers in the same workplace, working together. A Mongolian worker shared his story about how he had never imagined working shoulder-to-shoulder with Indonesians before he actually set foot in his workplace in Korea. The story coverage provided chances for migrants to find that they were all on the same boat, in a sense. Through *MWTV*'s representation of migrants, one was not Burmese, Mongolian, or Nepalese anymore, but a migrant in Korea. Ethnicity became secondary to their current status as migrant workers. They came to see themselves as members of a migrant community, establishing a moment of bonding for a counterpublic. Migrant workers in Korea formed a community foundation based on their social or class status and on a newly acquired migrant identity. *MWTV*'s cultural coverage created an imagined community as a counterpublic sphere shared by Korea's migrants.

The outreach effort to the Korean public is clearer when considering the bridging categories of items. The third most covered category is International, or items relevant to migrants' home countries or world affairs. There was a big difference between *WMW* and *VWN*, as the former covered broader international topics than the latter. For example, in the earlier episodes, *WMW* included news commentaries on the immigration laws in the United States, Israel's bombing attack on Lebanon, and the well-publicized Mohammed cartoon protests in many Muslim countries. On the contrary, *VWN* did not show an interest in these types of broader topics, focusing more narrowly on migrants' home country issues,

such as Tibetan freedom and the Burmese military government. It seems that MWTV evolved to reflect the direct needs of its audience, whose members had specific needs to be reconnected with their homelands. Another interesting observation in the International category is the fact that almost all of the items paid keen attention to political topics. For example, one of the most frequently covered international news items was the Burmese democracy movement. This is unusual considering that Burmese were not the largest migrant population in Korea, with an estimated 5,000 legal and undocumented migrants in 2008 amounting to less than 1% of the Chinese migrants at that time (Korean Immigration Service, 2010); moreover, it is interesting to find that Burmese politics were covered in almost every other episode by both *WMW* and *VWN*. There could be several reasons behind this decision. One possible reason might be that many MWTV staff members and volunteers, including a producer, were from Burma and had a more stable immigrant status as refugees. With their refugee status or while applying for it, Burmese workers could stay longer than other migrant workers, had more time to adapt to Korean society, and achieved more financial security that enabled them to participate in political and cultural activities like political demonstrations and MWTV. Another element to consider is migrants' typically keen interest in democracy. As most migrant workers have been from Southeast Asia, where democratic political systems have still been works in progress, the Burmese case could have provided an interesting case to watch. Many MWTV staff regarded their movement in Korea as an extension of greater democratic movement, not unlike many Korean liberals (N. Kim, 2009). MWTV's coverage was not only targeted at Burmese migrants in Korea but also for others, including Koreans. It constituted a moment of an imagined alliance among Burmese, other migrant workers in Korea, and Koreans. In this imagining, the class struggle that migrants faced—seeking better labor conditions in Korea—was not an isolated one but rather a part of a broader democratic alliance in the world. It is important to point out that this manifest interest in international news defies the image of migrants as isolated economic entities. Rather, this case displays their interest beyond national borders to participate in a global public sphere (Silverstone, 2001).

This bridging tendency is shown to be stronger in the fourth category of media items, Korea. MWTV's effort to reach out to the Korean community displayed the migrant community's desire to be a member of the public. MWTV's program items included cases of migrants working for Korean society, not only as workers in factories but also as members of society. Items presented migrant workers rescuing Koreans from a house fire, migrant workers' children in school learning to be "Korean," and migrant brides working and living with their Korean families. One particularly interesting example is the coverage of the Migrant Workers' Mini-World Cup, which was aired in June 2006. The timing of this event and its airing was symbolic, as the event was held simultaneously with the 2006 FIFA World Cup. When the nation paid full attention to the global event, the harshest crackdown was underway, which resulted in the deaths of several migrant workers. The Korean media obsessively followed the international soccer event and did not spare any coverage for the large-scale crackdown or even the workers' deaths. The celebration of a global village with soccer games seemed to provide a perfect cover for the Korean authorities to arrest and deport migrant workers. Thus, it was one of the worst times for migrants to live in South Korea. In other words, there were two forms of globalism that collided at that time. One celebrated a manufactured global event with commercialism and nationalism, and the other oppressed a real globalization with human lives at stake. One event, global in nature, pitted two sides against each other. To reveal this irony, migrant workers organized a Mini-World Cup with 12 teams of migrant worker players competing. The Migrant Workers' Mini-World Cup and MWTV's coverage of it served two purposes. First, it exposed

the irony of what was occurring in front of the unseeing eyes of the Korean public. The event and its coverage tried to create noise to attract attention to and raise the issue of migrant workers' suffering. Thus the coverage contrasted the two "World Cups" to point out that the global village was not far away—rather, it was very close to home—and that it was being destroyed. Second, the soccer event enhanced a feeling of community among migrant workers who felt threatened and alienated by the nationalist craze during the FIFA World Cup. And MWTV's coverage sought to give hope to migrant workers who were hiding underground for several months and were afraid to enter public spaces. The "pure-blood" nationalist discourse on the rise during the 2006 FIFA World Cup was being challenged by a newly emerging ideal of multiculturalism close to home.

The other area of concern in the category Korea dealt with the daily life of migrant workers. It showcased, for example, the education of migrant workers' children, volunteerism for Korean community activities, and cooperation between migrants and Koreans. MWTV's programs in this category showed an image of migrants as active participants and well socialized in society, which is an image usually overlooked or ignored by the mainstream Korean media. One item featured the heroism of Mongolian construction workers who saved Koreans from a house fire. After the video insert following the incident, it was reported that the Mongolian workers who had been dubbed heroes needed to leave the disaster scene immediately after the rescue due to their undocumented status. The anchor stated that the rescue was a natural act of humanity—one to be taken by or for any human being—but that the risk of deportation was neither natural nor humane. The rescue earned the undocumented workers a three-year extension for their stay and work, but it was pointed out by the program's anchor that even this solution was temporary, and these heroes were to leave Korea eventually. The program presented the migrant workers' act as humane and Korea's immigration policies inhumane. It showed that migrant workers deserve to be members of Korean society but were hindered by the Korean government's policies. The program questioned the validity of the contemporary migration system and concluded with a proposal for the full acceptance of migrants as fellow Korean citizens. In sum, MWTV showed that migrants were as normal as Koreans and deserved to live with a status equal to that of Koreans—or even as Koreans.

Conclusion

In South Korea, increased immigration has resulted in more media coverage of migrants and migrant workers. However, the Korean mainstream media keep the traditional discourses of pure-bloodedness, nationalism, and patriarchal benevolence. That is the reason why MWTV is notable regarding its approach to migrants, their roles in Korean society, and society's images and treatment of workers. The content analysis of MWTV's programs demonstrates that MWTV's programs are centered on three important themes: migration, shared differences, and contribution. It also shows that MWTV has two main missions: bonding migrant communities based on class and immigrant experiences, and bridging differences among them and between Koreans and migrants. The missions are to normalize migrants in Korea as ordinary members of society and to ask Koreans to embrace migrants as a part of the general public in South Korea. In other words, MWTV's presentation of migrant issues creates a counterpublic to enhance and broaden the existing Korean public. To achieve this, MWTV's programs build a migrant identity around shared class and social status. They also challenge the mainstream images of migrants as needy, as intruders, or as job stealers, by showing various private and public contributions that migrants

make to Korean society. The articulation of a new identity forms the foundation for an international community among migrants in Korea. As a counterpublic, it seeks to communicate with mainstream society through migrants' cultural activities. In this sense, MWTV plays an important role as a medium to represent migrants to the Korean public, and it represents migrants in a significantly different way compared with mainstream media in Korea. To borrow Hall's (1992) famous phrase, "it broke in; interrupted, mad an unseemly noise" (p. 282), MWTV makes noise with revelations of their presence and intrusions in the public sphere. Making noise forces Koreans to reframe their existing perception to recognize not only the economic participation of migrants but also cultural and political contributions. It eventually pushes Koreans to broaden their horizon to include migrants as one of many different publics in Korea.

It is difficult for a minority group like the migrant worker population in Korea to remain alienated from the general public because self-alienation for a minority only means continuation of the status quo. Being a member of a social minority group means that there is a constant need to talk to and persuade the majority to garner better living and working conditions. Thus the emergence of sphericules is not the concern of minority media like MWTV. Rather, when mainstream media serve and enhance stereotypes possessed by the majority in society, the role and mission of minority media like MWTV becomes clearer. It is critical for a minority group to have its own media tools to communicate among themselves, to build a community, and to reach out to the majority to showcase their lives—not to mention the crucial importance of presenting the troubles they face as a minority in society. MWTV is a critical case to show that a microlevel, counterpublic sphere is established to create a dialectic relationship with the main society through bonding and bridging. As current communication technologies develop to give more opportunities for ordinary citizens to speak out (Deuze, 2006), as globalization produces more migrants in the world, and as racial and ethnic conflicts become more prominent, a minority medium like MWTV and its counterpublic provide Korea and Koreans with an opportunity to understand others and each other, facilitating the creation of a successful public sphere.

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