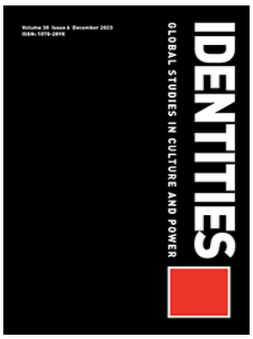

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'My life would have been happier in Germany': Korean guestworker nurses' journeys to Germany and to the US

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights the little-known experiences and memories of Korean 'guestworker' nurses who 'twice migrated'; first moving to Germany and then migrating to the US in the 1960s and 1970s. Based on extended, repeat interviews with four former nurses, their stories underscore how little is known about this wave of Korean migrant women, specifically, and why they decided to migrate, where, and how. The findings highlight how these women were agents of their own mobility, seeing the opportunity to migrate to Germany as the means by which to acquire independence and autonomy as young women. Further, their stories showed how twice migration to the US was not always experienced as a positive and more advantageous destination, particularly for the women. Instead, it was presented as a choice that many were forced to make, often because it was seen to benefit their spouses or children.

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Main text introduction

Myung Hee, a young nurse from South Korea, first arrived in Hessen, Germany in 1969. She marvelled at the fact that the cupboards of the dorm kitchen where she stayed were fully stocked with rice, a thoughtful gesture to make the newly arrived Korean nurses feel a little less lonely and homesick. Myung Hee never forgot the friendly 'head nurse' who oversaw her ward, who befriended the new Korean nurses and even made them dinner occasionally. Even now, after all those years in the US, she recalled how happy she had been in Germany. Similarly, Young Ae remembered the neat little dormitory buildings where all the nurses lived. She remembered the strong coffee and Frühstück that the Korean nurses learned to eat and love, especially the sweet

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jams and butter spreads on fresh bread. To this day, she still loves the dense rye bread that was so ubiquitous there and always asks her friends in Germany to send some over when they can, as it is not that easy to find in the Seattle suburbs where she has resided for 21 years.

In 2013, both South Korea and Germany celebrated the 50th anniversary of the start of Korean guestworker migration to (West) Germany. In South Korea, this 'Gastarbeiter' migration to Germany is sometimes referred to as 'Padok' or dispatchment, and the nurses were sometimes referred to as the 'Padok nurses', which also suggests that these women were sent there without having the choice to do so. The (former) President Park Geun-Hye celebrated and commemorated this anniversary in a rousing speech where she praised those who were 'dispatched' to Germany as being the engine to kickstart the economic 'Miracle on the Han River' through their 'blood, sweat, and tears' (Park, 2013). The Korean nurses and miners who had gone to Germany from 1966 to 1973 were generally considered in South Korea to be heroes because they sent back so much in remittances, totalling over 100 million US dollars (Lee and Moon 2013). While governmental discourses often focused on these remittances that individual workers had sent, this often meant that the social costs of migration to families in particular, were often ignored (Parrenas, 2001).

In more recent years, some work has been done, both in Germany and Korea, on this wave of guestworker migration. Scholarship in Germany or involving the Korean nurses still residing in Germany discussed the experiences of these 'Padok' nurses, their memories, and the first years of their lives in Germany working (see Berner and Choi 2006; Roberts 2012; Ahn 2019; Eun 2017) as well as fighting for the right to stay in Germany (Roberts 2012) and the ways they made new lives and negotiated their diasporic attachments (Kim 2019). Transnational short-term visits made by these nurses back 'home' to Korea were also part of their larger migration trajectories (Ahn 2019).

While the existing research has focused on the life stories of Korean guestworker nurses, there is scant research that focuses on those who left to 'twice' migrate (Cohen, 1996) to other Western countries, namely the US and Canada. 'twice' migration in general remains under-researched in migration studies, with some notable exceptions (see Della Puppa and King 2019; Agrawal 2016; Sardinha 2019). In response to this gap, I focus on the stories and memories of some of the women who first migrated to Germany as guestworkers, and who then moved to the US. In focusing on these women's accounts, the article highlights how there were different circumstances and factors for why some Koreans migrated to the US, often in ways that disrupt and challenge the dominant narrative that states that the US was always meant to be their final and preferred destination. Their accounts also reveal how they were active agents in negotiating their mobility, and where economic opportunities were only just part of these women's stories of why and

how they left Korea. Their accounts also reveal what feminist migration scholars have long argued; that we need to pay attention to the gendering of migration and that women have played a significant role in migration streams (Bastia 2013).

Design

In this article, I focus on the stories of Korean women who migrated from South Korea to (West) Germany in the 1960s as 'Gastarbeiter' nurses, who then eventually migrated to the US. The women in the article are the following: Young Ae, age 72; Jung Sook, aged 69; Myung Hee 83; and Mirae 83. The interviews featured in the article were drawn from a larger project of 20 interviews conducted between July 2018 to July 2021 of Korean Gastarbeiter who 'twice migrated' and settled in the US.

Sample

The participants were recruited using a snowball sampling method that started out with asking two family friends who had extensive Korean-American networks, and were still in close touch with other Korean former guestworkers, to participate in the study, Jay aged 72, and Mirae, 83. Jay was the gatekeeper who had helped a lot of people who had gone to Germany stay in touch over the years. Jay had been a nurse in Germany as well. While Jay had helped facilitate all these interviews and had done most of the legwork in convincing people to speak with me, Jay declined to be interviewed. They volunteered to contact their local Korean friends and acquaintances via text and phone, most often through KakaoTalk (a popular Korean direct messaging service akin to Whatsapp). Their local networks included those who lived in NYC, as well as New Jersey and Connecticut, as well as LA and Chicago.

Data collection and the interview

The interviews were semi-structured, each lasting between two to three hours. I was the sole interviewer and the interviews were conducted in Korean. These interviews were conducted in-person, face-to-face, and were in restaurants, cafes, and in their homes, as well as via telephone conversations.

Data analysis

Using thematic analysis, the interviews were coded in answer to the research questions of 'why did they migrate to Germany? Why did they "twice" migrate

to the US?' Codes were generated using an inductive approach and then grouped into relevant themes, which then were further grouped into core themes. These explanations included motives such as being able to earn an independent wage; wanting to travel and see a world outside of Korea; getting away from social and familial expectations of young women; wanting to have a career and work. These were all grouped into a core theme of 'autonomy'. For those who were married, and especially those with children, going to Germany was about trying to achieve 'career-related' autonomy, in being able to take advantage of the professional opportunities as skilled workers, particularly as it related to helping bring their children and spouses over to Germany as well. Moreover, the data showed that the explanations for leaving could be further grouped into two main themes of 'agency' and 'structure' that differed when it came to Germany vs. when it came to migrating to the US. These themes were to do the degree to which they had the ability to exercise agency in relation to their mobility, as well as the degree to which they recognized the structural constraints that circumscribed their choices.

At the same time, the core themes that were generated relied not solely on the inductive but also deductive approach that took into account feminist research on gender and agency, particularly in relation to labour migration and migration policies (Barber, 2000; Bastia 2013). In particular, feminist research on the concept of autonomy (see Hirschmann 2003; Bastia 2013; Song 2010; Daya 2009) provided a theoretical link to the themes.

Background and literature

The Federal Republic of Germany in the aftermath of WWII, experienced a post-war economic boom (referred to as the *Wirtschaftswunder*) that also brought with it a significant shortage in German male workers (Chin 2007). As one possible means to remedy this, the Federal Republic signed its first guestworker labour recruitment treaty with Italy in 1955, inaugurating the start of guestworker migration to Germany. In 1960, the Federal Republic signed similar treaties with Greece and Spain, and further signed a labour recruitment treaty with Turkey in 1961 (Schönwälder 2004). Between the years 1959 and 1961, the number of foreign workers increased from 167,000 to 549,000 (Schönwälder 2004).

The first wave of nurse migration from South Korea to Germany occurred in 1966, negotiated by physician Lee Su-kil, who worked at the University Hospital in Mainz, and had arranged for Korean nurses and nursing students to be placed in German hospitals (Jung 2018). An agreement was then brokered between Korean non-governmental organizations and the DKG or German Hospital Federation that brought over more Korean nurses to Germany (Jung 2018). Eventually, there was a government-led agreement

between Germany and South Korea in 1971. Between 1966 and 1977, Germany 'officially' recruited about 10,000–12,000 Korean nurses as guestworkers to Germany (Jung 2018), and eventually about 8000 Korean miners (Roberts 2020). However, new archival records from the German government in recent years showed that there were more Korean nurses who had gone to Germany than the official figure of 12,000 (Na, 2019). Overall, the guestworker wave of out-migration was considered the largest voluntary migration from Korea in the country's history at the time (Lee and Moon 2013).

As scholars have noted, Germany never intended to have permanent immigration as it was trying to 'import labour not people' (Castles, 2006: 742). This meant that guestworkers were recruited for short periods of time, with limited rights, and the German state worked to minimize family reunification (Castles, 2006). Yet, by the late 1960s, recruitment of foreign workers did indeed lead to family reunification, as workers who were already in Germany could get their employers to request family members, including children (Castles, 2006). Even after the recruitment stop in 1973, many guestworkers and their families applied for settlement. While some were allowed to remain, the exclusionist policies towards African and Asian countries that limited recruitment and settlement by these citizens to Germany 'in all probability' continued to shape the practice of allowing individuals to renew work permits or opportunities for residence in Germany (Schönwälder 2004).

While Korean nurses were migrating to Germany, a seismic shift in US immigration policies made it possible for Koreans to migrate en masse to the US after 1965. Immigration to the US from Korea and Asia Pacific was made possible because of the Hart Cellar Act. Congress enacted changes to the earlier McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 that maintained immigration from Northern European countries (Reimers 1983). The 1965 Hart-Cellar Act changed this by eliminating the national origins quota altogether and introduced a preference for Asian immigration especially for those who were highly skilled, such as doctors, nurses, scientists, and engineers. The first wave of Korean immigrants came to the US on these initial visas, including many of the Korean 'Padok' nurses from Germany. Thus, after the 1965 Immigration Act, Korean immigration to the US rose from just 11,000 in 1960 to 290,000 in 1980. Korean migration to the US reached its peak by 1987, with over 35,000 Koreans arriving annually making Koreans the third-largest immigrant group in the US at the time (Yoon 2012). The US still has, by far, the largest population of South Koreans living outside of South Korea in the world, with about 1.063 million South Koreans residing in the US in 2017 (O'connor and Batalova 2019).

While the Hart-Cellar Act opened the doors for immigration to the US for many countries, it is important to note the reasons for why Koreans emigrated to the US in this period. Mass immigration to the US was a direct

outcome of the militarization, war, and occupation of South Korea before and after the Korean War from 1950–1953. Moreover, South Korea experienced rapid economic and industrial development in the 1970s and 1980s, which resulted in the creation of an urban, highly educated, middle-class population who left for the US in search of greater economic mobility. But it is important to emphasize how Korean migration is also a 'global phenomenon linking multiple countries in multiple ways' and many came not just as economic migrants but as students, military brides, adoptees, as well as labour migrants, including guestworkers (Yuh 2005). Yet, existing literature on Korean migration to the US tends to view it through the lens of the nation-state, usually in terms of the country of settlement, and tends to focus on these economic immigrants' relative assimilation and material success (see Eui-Young 1983; Eui-Young, Choe, and Il Han 2000; Min 1996; Yoon 1997; Light and Bonacich 1988; Edna, Light, and Choy Wong 1977). This article thus seeks to expand our understanding of Korean migration by focusing on a little-discussed wave of labour migration from Korea, to Germany, and then to the US. The stories of these Korean migrants will show how these waves of migration are a result of complex histories between multiple countries and were born out of specific migration and citizenship policies implemented at the time.

Further, the article centres on the stories of Korean women migrants, whose migration journeys were shaped by the choices they made in response to the structural constraints and opportunities they encountered. I aim to highlight the centrality of their autonomy in making decisions to migrate to Germany and to the US, as well as point out the structural constraints that shaped their choices. In order to do so, I broadly draw upon the growing body of feminist scholarship on international migration that has addressed the agency and autonomy of women migrants within migration processes. These perspectives have highlighted women's capabilities by way of their decision-making processes and migration strategies (see Bastia 2013; Hirschmann 2003). Researchers have also demonstrated how women migrants make autonomous choices as a way of exercising a degree of control in their lives, particularly in relation to managed migration policies, but also where it can disrupt patriarchal structures (Song 2010). In a similar vein, research in this field has shown how women migrants bodies are not just 'sites on which power relations are inscribed' but are also 'sites of performance in their own right' (Dowler and Sharp 2001, 169). These scholars have sought to address a significant gap in international migration research that tends to see women as having very little autonomy when it comes to migration (Bastia 2013). This scholarship also broadly aligns with a growing body of critical migration and border scholarship, often referred to as the 'autonomy of migration' perspective, which highlights migration as a source of agency and sees migrants as actors who 'restructure sociospatial contours across global regions' (Rodríguez 1996, 27).

Thus, feminist scholarship that focuses on agency and decision-making by women migrants, as well as the growing body of work that engages with the autonomy of migration have offered an important lens through which to understand and interpret the practices that women migrants utilize within migration processes.

Leaving for Germany: seeking autonomy and finding their voices

Jung Sook, 69, who had not yet retired, and still was working at the dry cleaners' shop in Queens that she and her husband owned, was considered the 'baby' of these group of ladies. She had first moved to Germany when she was 20 years old, as a nursing assistant. More than anything, Jung Sook always had dreams of travelling and seeing Europe. She told me that these dreams stemmed from seeing picturesque images of Italy and Austria in books. Like so many young people, she wanted to see the world, especially Western Europe. As Jung Sook pointed out, the only way this was possible for young Korean women at the time, even those with some means, was to find work abroad. Becoming a nurse and migrating to Germany as a guestworker became Jung Sook's opportunity to see the world. Jung Sook did not have a nursing background but discovered that she only needed to finish a basic nursing training course in Germany or Korea to be eligible to work as a nursing assistant in Germany.

Being a young woman of some means in Korea at the time also meant that there was an expectation to get married, usually through an arranged marriage. Leaving for Germany presented Jung Sook with a welcomed opportunity to delay this process:

> Oh no, my parents didn't want me to go of course, and my two older sisters had arranged marriages. So, if I hadn't gone to Germany, I'd had to get married, and I didn't want that. It took about 50,000 Korean Won to get the paperwork done, and that's about the price of a dowry, so I said to my father that I'd rather that he gives it to me instead to arrange for my Germany trip than for a marriage. My father said okay, and that he trusted me.

Despite the official narrative told by the Korean government and media at the time of 'Padok' nurses being 'dispatched' to Germany to help them in their time of need during labour shortages, the reasons for why many of these young women left were of course, more complex and a result of their individual circumstances, ambitions, and desires. In other words, rather than being 'dispatched', young women like Jung Sook were making active choices, albeit within the limited circumstances and conditions available to them at the time.

It was possible to become a nursing aide in Germany by taking a basic training course, so it was an opportunity that became available to many

young women. It was likely that there were lots of other young women like Jung Sook who came because they wanted to travel, leave the country, see the world, and seek opportunities elsewhere, not necessarily because they wanted to pursue professional careers in nursing and healthcare.

Young Ae, 72, was the youngest out of six siblings, and by the time she came of age, her family, who had been more affluent when she was younger, had run out of money to finance her university education. While university education was out of reach financially, nursing school or teachers' education was less expensive and therefore within reach for more families financially. These were also professions that were available to young women at the time.

Young Ae said:

> Of course, because that was a very difficult era for people and young women also wanted to make something of themselves and get jobs. I too, really wanted to get out there rather than just be at home and I wanted to make my own money and get a good job. That's why I was so happy to go to nursing school. But leaving Korea and to go to a foreign country, it seemed so far and wasn't easy. It was a very big deal, and my parents were worried because to have their daughter say that she wanted to leave, they'd thought never see me again, so of course, they didn't want to let me go at first. But my mind was made up already and I had planned it all ahead of time. I'd put in the application right away and gotten that all taken care of and so what could they say? They didn't want to give me permission, but they eventually did.

As it was with Jung Sook, Young Ae speaks to how she was fiercely determined to go to Germany, and that despite her parent's disapproval, she found a way to finance her journey, to fill out the necessary paperwork and make all the requisite arrangements, all on her own. Similarly, it was noteworthy that Jung Sook's departure to Germany was made possible by negotiating with her parents over the spending of her dowry money. She had to convince her father to let her have the money set aside for her should she have gotten married, to pay for the paperwork and related fees. For Jung Sook, she said she never forgot her father's love for her that was expressed and materialized through that dowry payment.

Jung Sook and Young Ae had very different reasons for wanting to go to Germany and had different expectations for what they would encounter. Jung Sook laughed and had said that she was never very academically-oriented and hated nursing work, but she realized that this was the only means she had available at the time to be able to see Italy and Austria and to travel, and to get away from having to get married. In contrast, Young Ae was excited at the prospect of having a career and of working to earn her own money and to have a sense of purpose with her work, all in a new and completely foreign place.

Yet, both women's stories showed how they desired *independence* and self-sufficiency. This independence was not only about gaining financial independence but also, and more importantly, about freeing oneself from parents and their expectations to be able to make decisions about their own lives. Significantly, for these women at this time, being able to exercise some degree of agency at this age was very difficult for most if not all young women who lived in patriarchal, conservative Korean society at the time. These women were determined to leave and it took considerable ability to find and utilize their resources to do so.

While most of the young Korean nurses whoHere Mirae talked about the things she need had gone to Germany were single, there were also women who were fully trained and were already working in Korea as nurses. This also meant that in some cases, these women tended to be slightly older, married, and with children, like Myung Hee and Mirae.

Mirae recalled:

> I got married to my husband who had a job in Korea. We then had two kids. After this, I thought about going abroad. This was 1962 and at the time, the Philippines was doing well, compared to Korea, so I put in an application to go there as a nurse. I also put in an application to go to Germany, and one for the US . . . I made it a goal to leave Korea to work in a foreign country. And because Germany got back to me before the others and [they] secured a visa for me, I went to Germany.

Nurses are 'moving professionals' who have always migrated with the general pattern being that nurses move from developing countries to more developed countries (Kingma 2006). 'Source' countries included the Philippines, as well as South Korea (at the time). Significantly, while Mirae said that her goal was to go abroad for work, it was not unusual at the time that she would have considered other countries, such as the Philippines or the US.

As with the others, Mirae's journey to Germany resulted from her ability to negotiate her mobility, and to the extent to which she was able to exercise a degree of autonomy in making or finding opportunities to work abroad. The women interviewed emphasized that they were autonomous agents who were able to negotiate for themselves in order to most of the opportunities that were available to them at the time.

Further, another aspect of the guestsworker programme that challenged the narrative of 'dispatchment' to Germany was in how they emphasized that they were responding to recruitment of nurses from Korea. In other words, they described the recruitment call as something that signalled the need as well as the desire to have these nurses come and work in Germany as skilled workers. These nurses quickly learned that the nursing education system and the organizational structure in Germany were different to those in Korea. In

comparison, nurses were more highly trained in Korea, and were thus expected to take on more of the medical duties than they were given in Germany. This became evident once they had commenced working in hospitals in Germany (Roberts 2012; Ahn, 2014).

Myung Hee said:

> Yes, it was very busy. We worked in the surgery. It's just like here, and you just go where they needed you. If you saw people running towards someone, you did the same. You didn't even know German at first, so you just saw people and followed. We worked really hard and I remember that they really liked the Korean nurses because we worked so hard. But then we started to learn German and could better communicate, and if we thought differently, we learned how to communicate our different opinions, and sometimes there were even disagreements. (Laughing) so they said that they liked us much better when we couldn't speak German!

Myung Hee here spoke about work as having a steep learning curve in the beginning, when there were significant language barriers that made taking on the role in the surgery wing where she worked more demanding. But Myung Hee is also narrating a process of her finding her *voice* at work, not just in being able to find the right words to articulate her thoughts, but in finding the confidence to do so. Learning that her work was a valued resource enabled her to be able to better negotiate for her own voice to be heard.

Equally important, her voice disrupted how she was seen by her German colleagues who expected her to a stereotypically passive and 'soft angel' as was often depicted in German newspapers (Roberts 2012; Ahn, 2016). Being heard at work was, in a small way, pushing back against being positioned as the foreigner from a poor, lesser developed nation who should remain passive and quiet, grateful for work and a wage.

Maintaining relationships in Germany: negotiating 'gendered geographies of power'

Marriage within a transnational context reflect how migration have impacted women positively and negatively. A great deal of the literature on marriage and migration has reinforced the view that it was the men who migrated and that it was the women who 'simply followed' the men (Palriwala and Uberoi 2008, 26). In contrast, these Korean nurses were the ones to initially migrate, and it was their husbands who followed.

Mirae said:

> I left my husband and two children. Yes, it was a bad story, a sad story. I wasn't sure about my husband, but I wanted to bring my two children to Germany. So, after three years, I was able to bring my two children to Germany, and so they came, and we lived there together.

For the women who had gotten married and started families in Korea before migrating to Germany, leaving was a difficult experience for the entire family. These women had to face opposition from within their individual families as well as deal with the larger social stigma towards female labour migration. This was often attributed to Korea's uniquely strict Confucian model that was influential in Korea for far longer than in neighbouring Japan and China. There was (and continues to be) a great deal of social pressure for married women to leave the workplace once they were married or had their first child (Choe 2006). Correspondingly, there were less women in the workforce during this time.

Mirae's husband, Seo-Jun, for example, had initially stayed behind in Korea, working part-time as an English Korean translator for the US Army, whilst also taking over childcare duties in lieu of Mirae. As Mirae explained, after waiting for three years, she was able to have her two children join her in Germany. Here she explains what it was like for them when they first arrived:

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> The kids, at first, they were under 10, one was 5 and one was 6. They didn't want to leave the house because they were scared. I was single and just trying to raise my children then alone, because my husband, he didn't want to emigrate to a foreign country to follow his wife! He said he wanted to try and come to Germany on his own. In what way would this happen?! My son, he was only three when I left and so when he saw me next, he was six, and he had grown so close to his dad in that time, and he became a stranger to me. So, when he first got to Germany, he hated it and just kept saying he wanted to go home to Korea. He'd pack his suitcase/trunk and try to leave. He was so little–how would he even get on a plane by himself?! So, because of this, my husband came to Germany.

Mirae never forgot how difficult it was for her to work full-time alongside being the primary caretaker because of her husband's refusal to join the rest of the family in Germany. According to Mirae, Seo Jun's refusal to come to Germany stemmed from having to be Mirae's dependent, which meant having to accept the non-traditional role of being the primary caretaker rather than the main breadwinner. Gendered migration and state-sponsored migration re-ordered and disrupted the existing patriarchal structures in the Korean family; the guestworker programme allowed for dependents to be sponsored, but they were not allowed to work once there. These guestworker programs were designed to be short-term labour solutions and were never meant to be a path towards immigration (Ellermann 2015). It is

also significant that the laws regulating these visas and their dependents were rooted in gendered assumptions about migrant workers (male) and their spouses (female).

Moreover, the Korean nurses often had the ability to renew their visas after the first three years, because there was still a shortage of qualified nurses. In contrast, in 1973, German Chancellor Willy Brandt abruptly ended the guest-worker visa program for many industries, called the *Anwerbestopp*, (guest-worker ban) including mining because of waning support for them by the public and because of the recession/burgeoning oil crisis (Jurgens, 2010). This ban prohibited the hiring of workers from outside the EEC region on jobs lasting for more than 90 days (Martin 2004). While this ban was temporary in certain sectors, such as in healthcare, it remained in place for other sectors, including mining. This also had many knock-on effects for the guestworkers who were already in Germany. One concrete example of this is in how nurses could have their visas renewed for up to another two years. In contrast, miners were only given two-year visas that could not be renewed. One of the simplest ways to work around this limitation was to take advantage of the fact that nurses were allowed work visas that allowed them to have dependents. Therefore, many married to enable the Korean men, whose visas would not be renewed, to stay in the country.

Leaving for the US – sacrificing for their families

By the end of the recruitment stop in 1973, there was an estimated 2.6 million guestworkers in Germany. Residency of foreign workers seemed to have lengthened, and a survey by the *Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitsversicherung* (Federal Office for Labour Recruitment and Unemployment Insurance) showed that 26% of all male foreign workers and 13% of all female foreign workers had been residing in West Germany for at least seven years or longer (Spicka 2019). Moreover, the *Bundesanstalt* established integration policies in the early 1970s, which included things like language courses, and funding for relief organizations. A more comprehensive integration policy was put in place by Chancellor Willy Brandt; however, this did not lead to a change in naturalization policies for those wanting to settle in Germany (Spicka 2019; Chin 2007; Hunn 2005).

Echoing the survey results of the *Bundesanstalt* above, three out of the four women interviewed here also wanted to continue to stay in Germany, with three of the four women renewing their visas and staying longer than three years.

In my interviews with these women, they discussed how they enjoyed working, earning a good salary, and having a sense of purpose. Indeed, three out of the four women interviewed, Young Ae, Mirae, and Myung Hee, had opined that they thought they had had better lives had they settled in

Germany. However, because Germany was very reluctant to allow these guestworkers to continue to reside in Germany, they did not offer citizenship or residency permits to most guestworkers. Throughout these years, Germany had explicitly claimed that they were not 'a country of immigration' (Simon and Danielson 2004; Jurgens 2010), so while there were some policies put into place to facilitate the integration of foreign workers, it was considered to be very difficult to obtain citizenship. This meant having to make decisions about whether to stay or whether to try and migrate to a second country.

Here Mirae talked about the things she needed to consider when planning to settle in Germany or to move elsewhere:

> To this day, I think life in Germany was very good there and still think that our lives would have been best lived there. But my son, his he would have had such a hard time in military service [in Korea]. Back in those days, they would beat you up for that. Do you know about this? So, we left for America because at that time, they wouldn't give us citizenship in Germany . . . So, as a registered nurse, I applied to come to the US. And then they said please come, so that's what I did [in 1977].

For Mirae, Korean expectations of 'intensive mothering' dictate that mothers be fully in charge of the children's welfare, including and especially when it comes to their education. Korea still has a stringent national military conscription for all male citizens with very few exemptions. Issues of violence within the military and even deaths through violent hazing have occurred (Kwon et al. 2007).

In contrast to Germany (at the time), obtaining permanent resident status in the US became possible after 1965 due to the Hart-Cellar Act. This allowed for these Korean nurses to enter the US as the 'primary immigrants' and to bring their husbands and children in as dependents (Espiritu 1995). Equally important, this meant these nurses could bring over their spouses and children without any restrictions on work.

Myung Hee talked about the opportunities for work and settlement that were available to them in the US:

> H: So why did you come to the US?
>
> MH: Well, it was much easier to open a business and be entrepreneurial in the US and my husband wanted to open a business. Now I don't know, but at the time [in Germany], we couldn't get a permanent residency there. They didn't offer it then, although I know they do now. So, we had to come to the US. The US was very generous, and you could do whatever you wanted when you got here, there were no restrictions on work. So, for example, we moved here [to New York] in April, and we opened a business by June [1978].

Young Ae, who moved to the US in October 1978, said:

H: So why did you want to come to the US?

YA: Because of my husband. I was earning lots of money in Germany. If I had stayed in Germany, things would have been great. I would have been so happy. I'd gotten used to being in Germany a little because I'd been there for 8 years. I earned so much money because the pay was so high. But my husband didn't and couldn't do anything there. But coming to the US, to a new country, of course I found that to be stressful. But since my husband didn't have to do anything to do but sit around, I thought to myself, he must find work, he can't just do nothing forever! A man must work. How can we live like that?! So, I said to him, let's go to the US, where there are no limits to the possibilities of what you can do, where you can work as hard as you like. I still hoped back then that if we went to the US, my husband would work hard because he'd be free to do so.

Mirae, Myung Hee, and Young Ae's recollections about why they came to the US reflected the difficult choices they had to make when uprooting themselves yet again. Mirae and Myung Hee's memories of that time highlight how their professional skillset enabled them to further migrate with their families to the US, where they would be able to permanently settle and eventually gain citizenship. It also shows that the German state was intent on dissuading guestworkers from staying in Germany. At the same time, their stories express the ambivalence they felt in having to uproot themselves yet again and move to a third country. These stories reveal how the decision to migrate to the US, at least in the case of these three women, was out of necessity and a solution to the issue of establishing the right to remain in a Western country. It was not their ultimate or ideal destination.

Equally important, these decisions to move to the US show how these choices were shaped by the interplay of economics, gender, and patriarchy within the family. Myung Hee discussed how they perceived the US as offering more freedom to migrant entrepreneurs at the time than Germany. Yet, the desire to start a business was not necessarily her own, but instead, one that her husband wanted to pursue.

Like Myung Hee, Young Ae's decision to move was out of a concern for her husband's job prospects. Further, it was based on the hope that it would precipitate a change in her role within her family. She had to take on the burden of being the income earner, while at the same time, patriarchal norms dictated that she also be the full-time caretaker of their child. Thus, Young Ae's role as the main breadwinner in their relationship only seemed to make her life harder and increase her workload within the family structure. Being the main breadwinner AND maintaining the rigidly defined, patriarchal gender roles within their relationship all contributed to a significant strain on Young Ae's and Mirae's lives. So, while Young Ae's stated reasons for moving to the US, while on the surface, was about the search for greater economic opportunities and mobility, she also hoped for a more equitable relationship

dynamic that meant that she they could share the burden of work and raising a family.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the stories of the Korean nurses who had gone to Germany to work in the 1960s and 70s, leaving behind their families and loved ones to start a new adventure in a country of which little was known. At the time, Korea was still a developing country that was under a military dictatorship, and there were very few prospects for upward mobility for young, lower middle-class and middle-class women, even for those with professional qualifications. Korea experienced a significant 'brain drain' of nurses at the time, with many migrating to Germany, the US, and even the Philippines, to work.

As with so many young people, these women wanted to see the world, craved freedom, and sought financial independence and they used the resources that were available to them to migrate to Germany. This meant negotiating with parents for the money to arrange papers and plane tickets rather than a dowry for an arranged marriage, as was the case for Jung Sook. For Young Ae, it meant having to make all the arrangements all on her own beforehand without telling her parents and siblings.

Their time in Germany marked a significant rise in their circumstances, position and status, as they earned money and were protected by a visa system that allowed for them to continue to stay in Germany. Through their status, many went on to sponsor their husbands and children to join them in Germany. This ability to sponsor partners, along with being the primary wage earners helped to re-order and shift the existing power dynamics of traditional Korean marriages. This led to tensions and conflict within marriage. Restrictions on work placed on dependents significantly changed the power dynamics within the marriage as it meant that husbands were not allowed to work, and the wives became the sole earners. At the same time, men were often unwilling to give up their power in the relationships and women found that they had to be both primary earners and caregivers.

These women's accounts of their reasons for leaving Germany highlighted the complexity of their reasons for twice migrating to the US. Firstly, the interviews revealed how these women narrated their reasons for moving as being decisions where they made active choices to leave Germany, in search of better opportunities that they thought the US offered, as creative alternative solutions that they were able to implement, as a response to the limitations that were put into place to discourage guestworkers from bringing over their families and permanently settling in Germany.

At the same time, these women revealed how they did not want to leave Germany and in hindsight, they realized that their own individual lives would

have been better had they stayed there. This suggests that these decisions that were made to leave Germany for the US were also not entirely theirs, and they were limited by their roles, expectations, and sense of obligation within the family, such that they left more secure and comfortable positions in Germany to come to the US, where they sacrificed their occupational status and security for the sake of their husbands and families. Further, as highly skilled workers, they had more freedom to choose where to migrate, in that both Germany and the US were offering visa and visa extensions for work. Very often, this was an option because these women were skilled workers and were offered visas to come to the US. In sum, while having the option to come to the US was possible because these women had skills and qualifications that the US needed, it was also often the case that these decisions to leave Germany were not equally beneficial to both the women and men.

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