DEPENDENCY, MULTICULTURALISM AND AGENCY:

MARRIAGE MIGRATION IN SINGAPORE AND SOUTH KOREA

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ABSTRACT

An understudied dimension of recent cross-border movement in Asia pertains to marriage migration, defined as women from countries in East, Southeast and South Asia migrating to marry men in more economically prosperous places, such as South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore (Jones 2012). This study compares the marriage migration trends of Singapore and South Korea and specifically queries the impacts of state citizenship and visa legislations, employment policies and multicultural agendas on the lived experiences of marriage migrant women. I draw upon qualitative fieldwork conducted in the summer of 2013, where I addressed two populations of interest, 1) field experts (social workers, government officials and researchers) and 2) marriage migrant women. Throughout my investigation, I mobilize a scalar analytic to illustrate the dynamics between broad scale policies of the state and the lived experiences of marriage migrant women in South Korea and Singapore. I particularly argue that the state scale processes remain detached from the individual migrant women's realities and I demonstrate this point by looking at various state legislations and policies that influence the women's integration procedures in the two nations. In my conclusion, I suggest the role of local aid networks as a meso-scalar solution that can bridge the gap of these macro- and micro-scales, in other words, the state and individual scales. Hence, I unveil the vibrant processes of the state, community and individual scales within the multi-national and multi-thematic discourse and practices of marriage migration.

FORWARD

The path of research was a lonely one, forcing me to stand alone in foreign streets, amongst alien faces and strange dialects that I could only vaguely understand. My previous values and norms were shaken to the core, especially, my romanticized understanding of knowledge production as spending hours in the library referencing renowned scholars. In fact, the interviews I conducted in my own field research were constant reminders of the disparity between my conception of knowledge production and the lived realities of everyday life. Nevertheless, on April 24, 2014, a thesis was born.

My thesis project, in all its flaws and successes, is a compilation of my struggles, turmoil and most importantly, revelations. Now it is my turn to share with you the situated knowledges of each and every being that has contributed to this thesis in one way or another.

To my family and friends, for sharing my emotions and encouraging me on as I shouted, rejoiced, and teared up in frustration, exhilaration, and awe from this academic rollercoaster ride termed, a "thesis." I especially thank Karen Yang and Cian Kim for their love and faith in me.

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And finally, to each and every individual who participated in this research in any shape or form, while the world may not know who you are, I will remember each and every one of you in my heart.

With my all, I truly thank you,

My audience,

For allowing my words to enter your minds and souls.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> "Why does it matter that I am married or not? I am married, I eat well? I am not married, I don't eat well? That's not how life works." (Natasha, *Population 2 South Korea*. 20. See Appendix A)

From this succession of rhetorical questions, Natasha strongly conveys the message that her marital status is not the driving force behind her daily necessities of life. However, despite Natasha downplaying the workings of marriage in her own life, her identity as a marriage migrant has broader implications beyond the scope of her individual self. As evidence, the F-6 "marriage migrant" visa that grants her the right to remain in South Korea is based on her status as a marriage migrant woman. There is clearly a discrepancy between Natasha's self-perception of identity and the South Korean government's coding of Natasha as a marriage migrant woman. She sees herself as not wholly defined by her marital status while the state privileges her identity as a marriage migrant. As this quote reveals, there are various agents at play who uphold different perspectives about the prominent identities of marriage migrant women.

Attending to different perspectives on this topic is important because, as Lien suggests, marriage migration is a growing trend.

> "Not by the same marriage broker that I patronized, but all of my childhood friends left for Taiwan. A few of my high school friends, mostly through marriage brokers…one of them migrated to Kyungnam, South Korea. Oh, and a lot of my male counterparts also migrated as well." (Lien, *Population 2 South Korea*. 19)

Lien shares with Natasha and her friends the identity of marriage migrant woman, and discusses marriage as a medium to move beyond her childhood home. International marriage presented her with the means to cross national boundaries and participate in the experience of global mobility. She notes how her whole group of childhood friends, and in her longer narrative how her whole village back in Vietnam, is impacted by the processes of marriage migration. These cross-border relationships directly shaped and were shaped by the communities involved in marriage migration.

In short, Natasha and Lien are women bound together by the common identity of being marriage migrants. While their stories recount unique aspects of their individual life choices and experiences, these women partake in and provide substance for the complex and multi-dimensional discourse of marriage migration. As their reflections illustrate, the experiences of marriage migration involve various social institutions, such as family, community, and state government. These excerpts also show processes of global movement in action as women become links between Vietnam, Taiwan, and South Korea, among other places. As such, concepts of globalization, cross-border movement, identity, and immigration policy all complicate the understanding and the lived experience of marriage migration, which is the focus of this thesis.

In this introductory chapter, I first contextualize marriage migration scholarship, where I supplement the literature review with my own goals of academic contribution. I then explain the geographic concept of scale and the procedures of engaging a scalar analytic. In the process, I put forward my central argument about the importance of multi-scalar

analysis and action. I conclude this chapter by presenting an overall outline for my thesis where I provide a brief overview of the different themes that I address in each chapter.

I. Contextualizing Marriage Migration

Inquiring about migration in geography is about asking the question, "how are places connected through the movement of people?" When individuals migrate, they are the connecting agents, the physical links that bridge one place to another. Indeed, according to Skeldon (1997) and Black (1998), migration is related to both the development of places and the relationship between those places, making it a core concept of geography. Additionally, migration generates intertwined networks of people and places that create space for investigations into topics of multiculturalism, citizenship, integration, assimilation and globalization, among many others.

Amid multiple types of migration, marriage migration has been rising as a form of cross-border movement in Asia. Within the last few decades, there has been a surge of women primarily from China, the Philippines and Vietnam, but broadly encompassing countries in East, Southeast and South Asia (referred to as sending communities), migrating to marry men in other economically prosperous Asian contexts, such as South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Singapore (receiving communities) (Jones 2012, 1). As evidence of this trend, in Japan the rate of international marriages grew from 0.43 percent in 1965 and 0.93 percent in 1980 to 5.77 percent in 2005. By 2002, in Taiwan one out of every eight children was born into a family of marriage migration, while in South Korea the number of international marriages rose 9.2 times between 1990 and 2005 (Lu and Yang 2010, 15). Cross-border marriages between citizens and non-citizens account for over a third of

marriages registered in Singapore during recent years (Yeoh, Leng and Dung 2013, 139). As these statistics suggest, marriage migration is undeniably a phenomenon that is causing demographic shifts in these Asian countries.

Lu and Yang (2010, 15) note that cross-border marriages share two key characteristics, namely a gender imbalance – the majority of marriages are between men of wealthier countries and women from economically less developed countries – and a form of arrangement – the majority of couples are introduced, either by marriage brokers or via social networks, with a prior intention of marriage and involving either no or a comparatively short period of courtship. Jones (2012) also identifies some key features of international marriage patterns in the four countries of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore. These points include males marrying foreign brides, men being disproportionately older than their brides, and brides often having higher education qualifications than their husbands (although variations exist among the brides' nations of origin). Within the case of Japan and South Korea, he also recognizes the role of international marriages in modifying the norm of ethnic homogeneity (Jones 2012, 6-10). Additionally, marriage migrant couples often face the barriers of language, culture and the legal restrictions of state immigrant policies. Although there are variations to these characteristics of marriage migration, as suggested by the range of narratives from my interviewees, such patterns of marriage challenge normative assumptions of marriage as a union of love where partners of the same nationality, after a period of acquaintance and understanding one another, bear the fruit of their efforts by "settling down."

Despite the fascinating dimensions of marriage migration, it has received less attention in academic literature than other branches of migration, such as labor or economic

migration (Tseng 2010, 31). When studies were first conducted around the end of 1990s and early 2000s, scholars approached this topic through the lens of reproductive labor or carework. This refers to labor produced in daily living conditions making basic human health and well-being possible, such as home management, housekeeping and related domestic tasks (Zimmerman, Litt and Bose 2006, 3-4). In this framework, marriage migrant women are seen as the commodification of reproductive labor (Lu and Yang 2010, 16). This economic framing of women as commodities often leads to their portrayal as either victimized or opportunistic (Park 2010 and Chen 2013). However, within the last decade, the scholarship of marriage migration shifted away from its emphasis on the domestic labor of migrant women to include other dimensions of their agency and experiences. According to Tseng (2010, 38-44), many theories have sprung up to provide further context for: the channels of marriage migration; citizenship regimes shaping the lives of these migrant women; the role of gender, ethnicity and class; and how marriage migrant women perform the roles of womanhood. The diverse range of such research topics has advanced the scholarship of marriage migration by capturing "both individuals as agents, and social structure as delimiting and enabling factors" (Tseng 2010, 32). The scholarship continues to expand with new individuals joining in the migratory process while their predecessors carry on the struggles of integration into host societies. Although numerous scholars have brought in different perspectives to cover as much ground as possible, there are still many academic components that remain largely unexplored.

One such example is the lack of comparative studies where a theme of interest is investigated and analyzed across different national contexts. I aim to fill this knowledge gap by conducting a comparative case study on two prominent receiving countries of

marriage migrant women, Singapore and South Korea. As suggested from the statistics at the beginning (See Page 9), the population of marriage migrant women has seen a significant increase in both nations. My rationale behind choosing Singapore and South Korea stems from the contrasting background of multiculturalism in the two countries. While Singapore prides itself in offering a diverse integrated environment for its citizens (Singapore Tourism Board 2013), South Korea has always accentuated the importance of homogeneity where all of the "original Koreans" are assumed to have originated from one ethnic family that speaks one language (Korea Tourism Organization 2013). In this manner, Singapore and South Korea offer two varying environments for the marriage migrant women to settle down in, creating the base for an interesting comparative analysis.

Apart from the comparative approach, I address another gap in marriage migration literature by investigating the role of the local support network for marriage migrant women in the host countries and the nature of their interactions. Tseng (2010, 44) identifies that past research concentrates on studying woman migrants themselves, where "an exclusive interest in woman migrants as research subjects neglects their overall relations to others that play a significant role in motivating and facilitating their move and eventual adaptation." As I move away from the sole focus on marriage migrant women and incorporate various local agents within the support network into my research, I am able to grasp the larger context of perspectives that intersect and diverge.

Marriage migration cannot be limited by certain parameters as it is a complex topic that "defies a broad, all-encompassing theoretical explanation" (Jones 2012, 1). Instead, I join in the branch of qualitative scholarship that attends to the lived experiences of marriage

migration, engaging with themes, such as immigration, citizenship and stay related laws, and multiculturalism, through the geographic tool of scale.

II.   Scaling Marriage Migration

Scale, which is separated out into three distinct meanings of cartographic, methodological and geographical scale, is a core concept in the discipline of geography. According to the *Dictionary of Human Geography*, cartographic scale expresses the "mathematical relationship between the map and the Earth, usually denoted as a representative fraction" (Gregory et al. 2009, 664). The cartographic scale is largely associated with maps, providing the ratio of distance between two points on a map to the real distance between these two corresponding points. The second, methodological scale, refers to "the choice of scale made by a researcher in the attempt to gather information aimed at answering a research problem" (Johnston et al. 2000, 724-725). In the practical sense, this methodological approach sees scale as a way of accessing and collecting data, where a researcher would choose the most appropriate scale to answer research questions. As an example, in an effort to study experiences of homelessness in the streets, the ideal scale to interrogate research questions would be at the street scale. In this case, gathering data at other scales, such as the national scale, would not be as pertinent in addressing the lived experiences of the homeless. As such, patterns and processes at one level of scale may not be generalized to be held true at another level (Gregory as quoted by Harris 2006, 41). The third deployment of scale is geographical scale, which signifies using scale as a concept for analysis, accomplishing a different function than cartographic and methodological scales. Put differently, geographic scale is a tool for analysis, which is how I use it in this

thesis. Since understandings of the local and the global, for instance, are neither universal

nor static, the concept of geographic scale has flexibility. Scholars articulate how they

intellectually bound scales for the purposes of analysis while simultaneously

acknowledging that processes at different scales overlap, diverge, and contradict. Given the

dynamic nature of marriage migration, I use geographical scale as a crucial part of my

examination because it helps illuminate complexity.

In particular, in my thesis, I address marriage migration as a production of the struggles

and interactions (Wills 1999, 242) between the three scales of state, community and

individual. Here, I acknowledge that there is nothing inevitable about these scales, but

rather, they are flexible constructions to help organize my analysis (Herod 2010, xv). Thus,

I define my individual scale to refer primarily to the lived experiences of marriage migrant

women; my community scale to delineate the local support networks of Singapore and

South Korea; and my state scale to encompass the processes of legislations, policies and

agendas of the government that have nationwide influence. In this manner, a scalar analytic

enables me to more fully visualize the complexities that make up the topic of marriage

migration. In particular, it effectively addresses the reason behind escalating social

tensions of marriage migration related to the failure of multi-scalar interactions.

Moreover, Thongchai Winichakul explains the power of storytelling: "What is important

is to tell a good story… What is a good story to me is convincing, rebellious, hard to deny.

But this is what I learned as a writer: the beautiful thing is to write about a very focused,

small subject that reveals everything" (Sianturi 2012). I emphasize the knowledge gained

through close examination of a focused topic that illuminates broader trends in this thesis.

Put differently, I use the geographic concept of scale, where I separate out narratives

specific to individual, community and state scales, to reveal insights about marriage migration.

I query the current practices of how scalar processes intersect or rather, how they fail to intersect. My rationale was to understand why my interviewees constantly voiced concerns over policies falling short and expressed frustrations of being left out of the very policies designed to support them. While government policies are invariably tied to marriage migrant women whose daily lives are impacted by such policies, in reality, the state and individual scale processes are rarely discussed in the same context. According to my analysis, oftentimes lived experiences remain as individual narratives within the community of marriage migrant women, and state policies are drafted and enacted in a top-down manner, which rarely incorporates the root concerns of these women. This also reflects the power relations at play where the state is the primary agent who defines the terms of integration for migrant women through implementing policies and legislations, silencing the range of the women's diverse experiences.

To further unpack the current dominance of the state in characterizing marriage migration, I draw upon Sassen (2003) who contends that processes constructed in national terms or within national boundaries are part of globalization. She writes, "A particular challenge in the work of identifying these types of processes and actors as part of globalization is that they often continue to be experienced and codified as national. This calls for the need to decode at least some of what we call the national" (Sassen 2003, 2). In consideration of this quote, I observe that frequently the themes of marriage migration in relation to Singapore and South Korea's immigration policies, citizenship and stay related legislations, and multicultural agendas are solely discussed within the national scale.

However, I argue that this exclusive focus on the national obscures the multi-scalar intersections of not only the global, but also, the individual and community scales that constitute the broader marriage migration discourse and practices. Furthermore, the current appraisal of marriage migration produces discrepancies and contradictions because of a lack of multi-scalar dialogues. Therefore, I highlight assorted patterns of marriage migration at different scales to show these contradictions and to call for more multi-scalar engagement.

Within the scope of my thesis, I identify how state citizenship and stay related legislations, employment policies, and multicultural agendas prompt institutional disconnections from the lived experiences of marriage migrant women. Accordingly, I address the following research questions:

- How do state policies and legislations create a framework of dependency that renders marriage migrant women vulnerable?

- How does the climate of multiculturalism in Singapore and South Korea influence the integration process of marriage migrant women?

- What is the significance of local support networks in relation to the state and marriage migrant women?

While my analysis foregrounds processes unfolding at the macro and micro scales, I conclude this thesis with a concerted focus on networks of aid, which constitute a meso-scale, as an intermediary between the individual and state scales.

III.   Thesis Outline

My thesis unfolds as follows. In Chapter Two, I discuss my research design and the theoretical framework that drove my methods. I conducted qualitative field research where I acquired primary data through the methods of participant observation and semi-structured interviews. While my data from participant observation provide context to my analysis, I principally engage with my interview data to understand how lived experiences were influenced by national scale processes. Throughout the process, I adhere to the guiding rules of feminist methodologies that advocate self-reflexivity and an awareness of positionality, and emphasize situated knowledge (Raghuram, Madge and Skelton 1998, 38-44). As my own research largely draws from a collection of individual perspectives from marriage migrant women, I rely on the concept of situated knowledge to validate knowledge as embodied and partial. As Haraway (1988, 590) confirms, "the only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular."

Chapter Three undertakes the first research question and addresses the state conceptualizations of citizenship regimes and employment policies that craft a framework of dependency for marriage migrant women. This state-produced dependency renders marriage migrant women vulnerable, furthering the gap between state legislation and policies from migrant women's experiences. As the legitimacy of status to reside in a nation is determined by the state government, marriage migrant women are subject to the terms of stay related laws of Singapore and South Korea. Both nations require local sponsorship for stay visas, in which case marriage migrant women become dependent on a local counterpart, in the majority of cases, their husbands. Thus, their identities are defined in

terms of their local family connections, which not only creates dependency, but also produces insecurity as their individual autonomy is challenged.

Chapter Four centers upon the climate of multiculturalism in Singapore and South Korea that provides the platform for marriage migrant women's integration into the two nations. While both countries outwardly proclaim a celebratory tone embracing multiculturalism, I demonstrate that this state rhetoric does not fully meet the criteria of active multiculturalism that truly includes key agents of multiculturalism, namely marriage migrant women who embody cultural diversity. Instead of fostering the integration process for these migrant women, the current namesake celebration of multiculturalism is in fact separating out locals from foreigners. Thus, by leaving out foreigners, or the marriage migrant women, who are multicultural residents of Singapore and South Korea, both nations fall short of achieving active multiculturalism. I particularly discuss how the hollow label of multicultural celebration often renders complex social processes invisible, disregarding tensions that may be building behind the celebratory façade.

While my body chapters serve to identify the realities and consequences of a lack of multi-scalar interactions, the Conclusions chapter is my attempt to offer "a commitment to social transformation" (Gregory et al. 2009, 246). In analyzing the gap between the state and marriage migrant women, I identify the community scale, or the local support network, as the bridge of communication between these two scales. In addition to offering a physical space where such interactions unfold, the community scale also offers networks of aid that communicate with both individuals and state actors. In other words, they play the role of intermediaries when necessary. Thus, I conclude this thesis by offering examples of how

support networks function in each country and what some of the potential uses are in

bringing together the state and marriage migrant women.

CHAPTER 2: CLAIMING THE TERRAIN OF RESEARCH

Research is a combined product of decision-making in response to questions, such as: what are the research questions; who are the researched subjects; what answers are deemed relevant to the research; and how are these results presented? The answers to these questions are inevitably determined by the researcher, an individual who holds particular positions, roles, and identities that influence the knowledge production process. According to Gibson-Graham, "knowledge and its production [is] *always already* [a] political process" (Gibson-Graham as quoted by Nairn 2002, 147), and in academia, it is researchers who are in control of this power to govern what knowledge stands for and what counts as knowledge.

Nairn (2002) speaks on the process of knowledge production through an anecdote, illustrating normative power structures in play that challenged the "legitimacy" of her research. When she presented her research proposal on engaging with other geographers, geography students, and geography teachers/lecturers as her subject/object of research, Nairn was confronted with a series of rhetorical questions by a fellow researcher: "Is it geography? Why geography? Why not education?...certainly not the sort of research usually done in geography" (Nairn 2002, 147). The inquisitor holds a hypothesis that there exists "a sort of research usually done in geography," which alludes to the political process of knowledge production. Frequently, normative assumptions dictate what research is or

what research should be, validating and legitimizing certain types of research while undermining that of others.

With this thesis, I am also partaking in knowledge production, understanding my position as someone who is influenced by, but can also influence, others by making decisions about the various processes that constitute my research. In that, I recognize my own research of marriage migration is subjective in nature, determined by my unique positionality, where characteristics of my identity influenced and crafted this research. Some of these include, my status as an undergraduate student, as a Korean national who has lived abroad for more than half her life, as an unmarried female in her twenties, as a first-time researcher, as a foreigner, and as a local, among numerous others. As I list the different aspects of my identity, I am reflecting on the definition of positionality where I am fully aware of "who I am" and how I recognize the role of my identity in shaping my interactions with others throughout research (Valentine 2005, 113). This also addresses my engagement with reflexivity where I am critically introspecting and analyzing my role as a researcher (England as quoted by Valentine 2005, 113). Hence, awareness of positionality and self-reflexivity are some of the ways I adhere to the guiding practices of feminist methodologies throughout my research process (Raghuram, Madge and Skelton 1998, 38-44).

In practice, I, therefore, created a qualitative multi-method research design comprised of semi-structured interviews and participant observation. This chapter discusses the various components of my 16-weeks of field research and explains the rationale behind the progression of my methods and how I executed and analyzed them. Accordingly, I will first

introduce situated knowledge of feminist geography as a central theoretical framework that I relied on to validate my research. Then I will introduce my research methods describing the individual methods that I chose and how it altered from my initial proposed research design while in the field. Lastly, I will present on my two populations of interest along with my research analysis process.

I.   Situated Knowledge and Feminist Geography

As a challenge to the objective or neutral perspective that has been guiding the geography discipline and its research, feminist geographies advocate situated knowledge, which acknowledges knowledge as context-bound and partial, rather than detached and universal (Gregory et al. 2009, 245). This framework of feminist geography develops sensitivity around relationships of power and ethics and then translates these ideas into context-specific, situation-sensitive research (Cope 2002, 48). My own work queries the power structures of marriage migration and its practices by looking at how national scale processes influence lived experiences. In order to do so, I engage primarily with individual narratives, wherein the concept of situated knowledge validates these micro-scale experiences, as embodied and partial knowledge.

The nature of my research that focuses on lived experiences of marriage migrant women cannot possibly create a "universal knowledge." Indeed, to generalize the multi-thematic, multi-scalar processes of marriage migration, cutting out the dynamics of the discourse into one framework of objective knowledge, would not do my research justice. Referring back to the politics of knowledge production, "who one is and where one is

make[s] a difference to how power plays out and ethics unfold in a particular research

project" (Dyck 2002, 235), I also am aware of the limited scope of an individual body that

cannot possibly produce knowledge that addresses universality. Instead, my unique

positionality and reflexivity allows me to offer a distinct interpretation, which would add to

the pool of subjective knowledges (Raghuram, Madge and Skelton 1998, 39) of the

marriage migration discourse.

As such, identifying positionality and self-reflexivity are crucial to producing situated

knowledge. In light of my desire to create an end-product that could identify the context of

my research, I had to first understand how my role and personal background, culture and

experiences shape my interpretations (Creswell 2013, 186). In other words, I needed to be

reflexive. As listed above, one of my identities that set the tone for my interviews was that

of a student. To many marriage migrant women, my status of an unmarried, female student

allowed them to feel more at ease with their own expertise as wives and mothers. The

dialogues were often filled with tips and advice on: how to conduct a marital life; what

were some of the smarter decisions that they themselves made; and what not to repeat if

they could go through the whole process again. My position as an amateur field researcher

also made way into the conversations, where I encountered an unexpected surprise in the

course of my research.

> Me: So, did you meet your husband here?
>
> Keonwoo: What?? I met my wife..
>
> Me: Oh oh, I am sorry, I am sorry! [Pause] How did you meet [Pause],
>   your wife?
> (Keonwoo, *Population 2 Singapore.* 11)

I was introduced to Keonwoo through an acquaintance of mine and had only been in conversation with him through the phone. Thus, this interaction took me off guard when I found out that my interviewee was not a woman, but a man. The element of surprise settled in to the reality of my interview, where I had to quickly accept the situation and adapt my interview format accordingly. However, the mental impact of this revelation was decisive in setting a particular tone from my side as an interviewer. In result, I stumbled through a few questions:

> Me: Oh, so when you first married, uh…Excuse me [Laugh].
>
> Keonwoo: Take your time.
>
> Me: Oh yes [Pause]. Do you have children?
> (Keonwoo, *Population 2 Singapore*. 11)

In the process of regaining composure to continue on the interview, I observed dynamic shifts in positions. Keonwoo started to take on a new form of agency where he not only remained as a passive responder, but led on the conversation as a teacher or a father figure. This situation ultimately acted as an icebreaker, which guided the interviewer and interviewee to feel more at ease and delve into the deeper themes of marriage migration. While Keonwoo's narrative may not directly be in concern with my research that looks at marriage migrant women, his interview provided me with a broader perspective that granted me an outsider stance to critically reflect on marriage migration discourse and practices. I also consider this interaction to be a successful engagement with the ideal of action research that "seeks to eliminate the dichotomy between researcher and researched by involving research subjects as intellectual collaborators in the entire process of knowledge production" (Johnston et al. 2009, 4).

As the anecdote with Keonwoo suggests, the process of self-reflection is long and difficult, yet insightful and vital to research. Reflexivity especially allows the researcher to construct research analysis in a manner that "gives consideration to the voices of those who may have participated in the research" (Mansvelt and Berg 2005, 257). In comparison to Keonwoo's teacher or father figure approach that underlay the tone of my interview, another interviewee actively influenced my process of research. When asked if she had any last words to say at the end of her interview, Kyungwon (*Population 1 South Korea*. 15) responded:

> "In conducting your research, and how you approach your interviews, please don't assume and objectify the process or your interviewees. When you discuss how the realities of marriage migrant women are so and so, you should maybe look at the people who are in contact with them regularly...the local Koreans who support them have it difficult as well!...Why do these local Koreans end up in the support positions that they end up. I would like you to interrogate that as you continue on your research process." (Kyungwon, *Population 1 South Korea*. 15)

In this manner, Kyungwon is not only providing data for analysis, but she is also participating as an intellectual collaborator, giving me feedback to reconstruct how I view my research questions and methods. As this interaction shows, my interviewees played a huge role in my self-reflection process. Through direct correspondence with my respondents in and out of interview settings, and reviving these moments of interactions through my transcription process, I developed the capacity to analyze my positionality reflexively and its potential influences at the time of my fieldwork.

Upholding the practices of feminist geographies, I strive to draw out a social activist agenda in my thesis, as "feminist knowledge production is typically aligned with a political commitment to social transformation" (Derek et al. 2009, 246). Moreover, I incorporate the

ideal of responsibility from care geographies into my research setting, which pushes me to "take up social responsibility in professional practices" (Lawson 2007, 8). By "building a sense of attachment rather than disconnection [as well as]…long-term, enduring relationships with people and places," (Ibid.) I embody the core ideals of action research, geographies of care and feminist geographies in the context of situated knowledges to validate, as well as invigorate, my research.

II.   Participant Observation and Semi-Structured Interviews

My research methods were representative of the ideals of situated knowledge within feminist geographies. I engaged with two methods of qualitative research, participant observation and semi-structured interviews, that aided my understanding of how lived experiences were influenced by state agendas. In that respect, I employed participant observation to contextualize my research, and drew from semi-structured interviews as my primary data source. In order to ensure a fair, participatory and ethical research process, I started out by applying for approval from the Mount Holyoke College's Institutional Review Board. In the field, I made sure to achieve a transparent research process by approaching my interviewees with an introductory letter fully explaining my research and intentions. I gave them an option to refuse to participate, making sure that when they did participate, they were doing it of their voluntary will. I handed out consent forms and made sure to obtain informed consent before conducting my research, giving my interviewees the option to decline the usage of a recording device if it made them uncomfortable. Throughout the research I tried to focus on questions people were more willing to answer and gave people the option to refuse to answer questions that they wanted to avoid. In this manner, I

created space for power relations to be actively negotiated during the research, ensuring a positive experience for all those involved in the process (Raghuram, Madge and Skelton 1998, 40).

From another angle, the space for flexibility provided the key in addressing one of my biggest obstacles during field research. While my initial research design was to conduct focus groups and semi-structured interviews, when I went out into the field to face the realities of research, my proposed snowball sampling method was not adequate enough to draw out enough participants for a focus group. In my proposal, I had set out to approach various support organizations, attending their events and networking with various individuals who could potentially guide me toward my population of interest, the marriage migrant women. Even though this represented my main method of reaching out to my interviewees, I was confronted with barriers of language, cultural and social norms and especially, inaccessibility to domestic spheres where most women predominantly resided in. As the research progressed and I conversed with more and more interviewees, I realized that a large majority of marriage migrant women remain within the boundaries of their homes, occasionally leaving to take care of chores such as grocery shopping or for some, learning the language of their host countries. Thus, I had to revise my initial research design, and instead of conducting focus groups, I adopted participant observation.

My first method of research, participant observation, offered a unique method of data collection, as it involves the researcher "deliberately immersing [oneself] into [a community's] everyday rhythms and routines" (Cook 2005, 167). There, the researcher develops relationships and records the accounts and observations, offering a different lens

into the research material. Cook defines participant observation to be a legitimate method of research which "involves living and/or working within particular communities in order to understand how they work "from the inside"" (Ibid.).

To situate my interviews, I needed to grasp an understanding of the "where." I wanted to understand the environment that my interviewees were a part of, and how this atmosphere influenced some of the decisions that they came to bear. To do so, I visited various places, such as Singapore's Filipino ethnic enclave, Lucky Plaza, legislative offices, including the Immigration Checkpoint Authority (ICA) or Registry of (Muslim) Marriages (ROM/ROMM), where I networked with shopkeepers and employees of the building to reach out to my population of interest. Other places that I visited in South Korea include another ethnic enclave, Mongolia Town, and various multicultural support centers.

In order to truly reveal the lived experiences of the marriage migrant women, I needed to choose a primary data collection method that could capture the fine-tuned nuances of individual experiences. To answer research questions that provided inquiry into the micro-scale, I decided on the tool of semi-structured interviews. Firstly, the verbal quality of an interview, where there is an exchange of information in a spoken format, is dependent on a set of interactions between two human beings (Dunn 2005, 79). Unlike the questionnaire method that limits the pool of answers with a predetermined set of questions, interviews create space for dialogue, where both the researcher and the researched are free to ask for clarifications or offer further questions on the spot. This two-way exchange sets up a unique environment that fits the circumstantial needs and demands of each individual interview. In this manner, interviews create an optimal setting to interrogate lived realities

that delve into the complexities and contradictions of experiences, while describing the mundane details of everyday lives (Bryman as quoted by Valentine 2005, 111).

I also used the method of interviews to change up the hierarchical norm of a researcher and the researched. By opening up the research questions and themes to my interviewees, I created room for them to become the experts of the marriage migration discourse by determining what themes mattered to them. By allowing the respondents "to express the details and meanings of their experiences in their own terms and their own pace" (Johnston et al. 2000, 393), interviews provided a good medium to exercise feminist research aims to be "relevant," "participatory" and "action-oriented" (Raghuram, Madge and Skelton 1998, 38). This also legitimizes the status of the respondent as an expert of their own experiences and the marriage migration discourse. If a good interview environment is guaranteed, interviews offer an empowering space for interviewees to speak of their experiences as experts of subjective knowledges that assume "people know a great deal about their own lives and that their interpretations are valid, as too are the meanings they establish for themselves" (Raghuram, Madge and Skelton 1998, 40).

To maintain a structure for people to achieve depth of their topic, but allow enough freedom to personalize narratives, I utilized semi-structured interviews. There is some predetermined order in semi-structured interviews, but enough flexibility for a researcher to position and time questions accordingly (Hay 2005, 294). It allows the researcher to honor the differences of the respondents and tailor the interview to each interviewee.

III.   Population of Study and Research Analysis Process

Field research in marriage migration has drawn out narratives of marriage migration women in various ways. As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, the individual case examples have provided further insight into the "channels of marriage migration, citizenship regimes shaping the lives of these migrant women…[and] how marriage migrant women perform the roles of womanhood" (Tseng 2010, 38-44). One component that is often missing in the retelling of these narratives is the chain of networks that inform the interactions of these migrant women with their host societies. Thus, to adopt a broader viewpoint in my research and highlight the importance of the relationships that migrant women have with their network of "aid", I decided to address two populations: 1) field experts (social workers, government officials, researchers, etc.); and 2) marriage migrant women themselves. I refer to each population as Population 1 and Population 2 throughout my thesis (See Appendix A).

As my research was conducted in the two distinct nations of Singapore and South Korea, I use this categorical division to discuss my population statistics. My primary source of qualitative data came from my interviews, summarized in the table below (See Figure 1):

Figure 1. Interviews

	Population 1	Population 2	Total
Singapore	5	7	12
South Korea	6	4	10
Total	11	11	22

My research participants ranged in age from mid 20s to 50s and consisted of three male and 19 female interviewees. With my working language skills of English and Korean, I conducted interviews in both languages where seven were in English and 15 were in Korean. My first population of field experts was mainly comprised of locals (excluding one foreign individual) of Singapore and South Korea who work in organizations, government offices, and research institutes among other places that provide support to marriage migrant women. Among interviewees from Singapore, there was a range of expertise, including five social workers and field experts from support organizations, such as NGOs or government support centers. In Korea, this demographic was also joined by a legal counselor and a researcher. Together, the length of their expertise ranged from 3-15 years.

My marriage migrant interviewees from Population 2 were defined as women who were married to local citizens of either Singapore or South Korea, in the respective host nations. I did not include other types of marriage migrant women, for example, those who might have emigrated with their spouses of the same nationality, to live within the boundaries of these nations. My Population 2 varies in nationality, which includes South Korea, Vietnam, China, Uzbekistan and Japan. As such, there was a wide range of geographic variation regarding migrant women's nationalities. While one of them had been married for more than 25 years, the average marriage migrant woman had been married for five to seven years, with two who have been married in the last two to three years.

In order to recruit my interviewees, I used the technique of snowball sampling, which Valentine describes as, "using one contact to help you recruit another contact, who in turn can put you in touch with someone else" (Valentine 2005, 117). I initially reached out to

organizations and interviewees in Population 1, to ask for referrals for Population 2. In the case of South Korea, I additionally used my previous experience working for a non-profit organization that provided support for marriage migrant women to access my network of research subjects. After the recruitment, my interviews were carried out in person and over the phone. In all, I conducted 15 interviews in person and seven over the phone where six out of the seven phone interviews were from my Population 2 in Singapore. As for interviews conducted in person, I either met up with my interviewees in their respective work places and homes or in public spaces such as cafés.

My research analysis process includes transcriptions and translations. I transcribed 20 of my interviews, excluding two from my total of 22, which I analyzed in audio format due to time constraints. In an effort to recreate the atmosphere of the interview that attuned to cadences in speech, I produced full and literal transcriptions that did not edit out any sections. Thus, in excerpts from narratives, I mention body languages or verbal speech patterns such as "pause" or "laugh" to show a fuller context of my interviews. This better highlights the moment of my interviewees' reflections that surround sensitive and complex issues of marriage migration, revealing its broader reality. Again, due to time restraints, I left the transcriptions in its original language that the interviews were conducted in and only translated the text that I drew upon throughout my thesis. In order to convey the feelings and emotions that took into account cultural nuances of both English and Korean, the quotes that I use are not direct or literal translations, but rather a production of a "cultural translation" where I "write a version of one culture that will make it comprehensible to readers living in another" (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995, 15). Thus, in my translations, I attempt to transfer the cultural experience across languages by being

sensitive to the various linguistic characteristics of Korean and English such as the difference in grammatical structure, intonation, idioms and other cultural connotations.

So far, I have demonstrated how my research unfolded, from describing my data collection process to discussing my rationale for taking such approaches. In the next chapter, I shift my attention to my analysis. In particular, I delve into state conceptualizations of citizenship and visa legislations and employment policies that impact the lived experiences of marriage migrant women.

CHAPTER 3: DEPENDENCY AND THE STATE

Among many social issues that are commonly discussed in the rhetoric of marriage migration scholarship (See Jones 2012; Yang and Lu 2010), a prominent concern that is often voiced refers to the social isolation of marriage migrant women. Choi, Cheung and Cheung (2012, 445) list some factors that isolate these women and render them vulnerable and dependent, such as a lack of support network in the host countries, language barriers, a lack of knowledge of the local welfare and transportation systems, and intentional control by husbands, among others. In this chapter, I look at how the root of these social issues stems from the lack of multi-scalar interaction between the state and marriage migrant women. I principally argue that the state structures are not fully taking into account the voices and concerns of marriage migrant women whose statuses are bound by the legislations and policies that the host nation creates. I demonstrate my argument by determining two structures of state legislations and policies namely 1) citizenship and visa laws and 2) employment policies that reveal processes of administrative ordering and therefore, reinforce vulnerability and dependency among marriage migrant women.

To illustrate these points, I will first provide a contextual understanding of how a state's administrative ordering crafts the climate of vulnerability and dependency by drawing

upon my interview data. I will then separate out the cases of Singapore and South Korea to

understand state specific renderings of dependency. In my process of comparison, I will

continue to engage with my core theme of looking at a lack of scalar interaction between

the state and the individual scale, which separates out state legislations and policies from

lived experiences of marriage migrant women, thereby extending the ideas of dependency

and vulnerability.

I.   Administrative Ordering

The concept of administrative ordering (Scott 1998) is the critical framework that I

employ to capture and analyze state legislations and policies. Administrative ordering is

where the state takes "exceptionally complex, illegible and local social practices such as bad

tenure customs or naming customs, and create[s] a standard grid whereby it could be

centrally recorded and monitored" (Scott 1998, 2). As an example, Scott refers to the

creation of permanent last names or the establishment of cadastral surveys and population

registers, as two of many processes that the state has simplified in order to create a

standard grid. In creating permanent surnames, a state can group together units of families

to enforce their legislations, which is more effective than trying to reach out to separate

individuals. This also holds true for the establishment of cadastral surveys or population

registers, which provides a visible target for a state to administer their boundaries, hence

the term "legibility" of a society (Ibid.). In this regard, states are continuously ordering

administrative details to simplify many dimensions of society that otherwise would be too

complex to bring together in union. Through the legal framework and policies that they

produce, states transform the categories and identities of their population, which is why

Scott also refers to administrative ordering as transformative state simplifications. He writes,

> The social simplifications thus introduced not only permitted a more finely tuned system of taxation and conscription but also greatly enhanced state capacity. They made possible quite discriminating interventions of every kind, such as public-health measures, political surveillance and relief for the poor...They undergird the concept of citizenship and the provision of social welfare just as they might undergird a policy of rounding up undesirable minorities (Ibid. 3-4).

I understand the two structures of 1) citizenship and visa laws and 2) employment policies in this regard, where the states of Singapore and South Korea are simplifying and increasing legibility of the marriage migration process, or immigration process in general.

Another important component of state administrative ordering refers to the state's omnipresence. Put differently, through its social simplifications the state can intervene in everyday lives of its citizens and, essentially, anyone who resides within its national borders. This wide range of state legislations provide legibility for the state regarding *who* the policies are targeting as well as *how* the target audience is being influenced. Thus, Scott explains that "the legibility of a society provides the capacity for large-scale social engineering" (Ibid. 5). One of the biggest dimensions of social engineering lies in how the state defines the *who* and *what* that constitutes a state. In this manner, citizenship and visa laws are concrete realizations of how the state manages its identity.

In the next section, I look into the separate cases of Singapore and South Korea, where I demonstrate how each nation manages its citizenship regime to create the framework of dependency, especially in the language of the family-unit that is enforced on the marriage migrant women. Both states follow a similar framework of granting citizenships and stay

visas which require the sponsorship of a local citizen. In the case of marriage migrant

women, their husbands or sometimes, their children become the human medium that

guarantees the legitimacy for the women to remain with the nations. This creates a sense of

dependency, initially upon the spouse, but more broadly, on the state that creates the

framework of dependency on family. Furthermore, using the perspectives provided by my

interviewees, I disclose how state-scale ideas manifest in the everyday experiences of

individuals, yet it does not fully account for their anxieties of insecurity. I also explore the

idea of employment that allows migrant women a different status and outlook as

participants of the state and the challenges that surround these terms.

II.   Singapore

Although the process of obtaining stay visas for Singapore differs from individual to

individual, most women who enter the country with the purpose of marriage enter through

a similar legal framework. Without employment, the women are not eligible for stay under

the work visa criteria, so most of them follow the standard of being sponsored by a

Singaporean citizen for their stay visas, which in the case of marriage migration, is the

husband. According to Leah (*Population 1 Singapore.* 2), foreign spouses generally follow

the process of entering Singapore with a social visit pass, where they maintain tourist

status for up to three months. The tourist pass can then be exchanged for a Long Term Visit

Pass (LTVP), granting the visa holder six months to a year of stay eligibility, after which

they need to renew the visa. On April 1, 2012, the government introduced a new scheme of

visa termed the Long Term Visit Pass+ (LTVP+) "to help Singaporean families with foreign

spouses" (Immigration and Checkpoints Authority of Singapore 2012) and as a response to

the growing number of marriage migrants[1]. The LTVP+ grants three to five years of

residency for the foreign spouses and furthers additional benefits, such as health care and

employment. The eligibility criterion of the LTVP+ is stated as below:

> Couples who have at least one Singaporean child from their marriage will be eligible
> to apply for the LTVP+. For those without a Singapore Citizen child, ICA will look at
> other factors such as the duration of marriage, and will in general consider more
> favourably those who have been married for at least three years. (Ibid.)

In adopting the LTVP+ scheme, the state is recognizing marriage migrants as part of

Singapore's current demographic make-up. However, on the flip side, the state controls the

conditions of the migrant women's residency based on the ideas of a family matrix. This can

be gleaned from the very language used to describe the eligibility criteria of the visa. In

order for the migrant woman to apply for the LTVP+, the woman must apply with her

spouse, as the eligibility criteria states that "couples…will be eligible to apply." The second

factor that also speaks to the centrality of the family ideal is the existence of a child.

According to the same statement, a couple with one or more children is guaranteed a

stronger case in the application process for the stay visa.

The children of these international marriage couples are also crucial in defining the

migrant women's stay conditions. According to Tan (*Population 1 Singapore*. 5), a counselor

and field expert in Singapore, children are often the means to provide support to marriage

migrant women that need help. Most of the time, the marriage migrant women that come to

Tan for help are not eligible for support as it targets Singaporean citizens or permanent

residents. Thus, one of the ways that Tan and his colleagues offer aid, especially financial

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[1] The Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) of Singapore website (Refer to ICA 2012) states that the number of marriages between Singapore citizens and foreigners has been on the increase: "In 2010, among the 20,273 marriages involving at least one Singapore citizen, 30 per cent were between a Singapore citizen and a foreigner (excluding Permanent residents). This is an increase from 23 per cent in 2000."

aid, is through registering the Singaporean children of these women in various aid

programs. In this sense, the children are equally as important to the stay terms of the

marriage migrant women in Singapore as the spouses. Either way, both cases reveal that

the role of wives or mothers become the basis of marriage migrant women's stay eligibility,

thus making them dependent on their respective husbands or children to validate their

legitimacy in Singapore's society. In this manner, Singapore's state agenda regarding

marriage migrants is largely defined in terms of a "family unit." Yeoh, Leng and Dung (2013)

discuss the idea that:

> Immigrant wives are inserted into the geobody of the nation-state as dependents of their husbands and can only be legitimately incorporated into the nation-state via their roles and identities within the "family" (as wives, mothers and daughters-in-law). (Ibid. 149)

With the identities of marriage migrant women defined in relation to their roles as "family

members" from the very beginning of their stay in Singapore, the state enforces

dependency of the women on the terms of family, taking away their autonomy to assume

social roles other than those presented by the family unit.

The concept of dependency remains present even when the women acquire permanent

residence (PR), a status that grants them up to 10 years of stay rights as well as access to

social rights, such as health care. Although the status of permanent residence (PR) ensures

a longer period of stay, Leah (*Population 1 Singapore.* 2) explains that obtaining the PR

status is no guarantee of independence in legal status. She separates out the two types of

PR, one that is under the capacity of an individual, and the other that is dependent, in the

case of marriage migrants, on their husbands. "Dependent PR" is a commonly shared status

of my interviewees, and they voice their first-hand experiences throughout their narratives.

Seojin (*Population 2 Singapore.* 8) is a marriage migrant who initially entered Singapore with a work visa. She met her husband at her work place, and they have been married for around 15 years. She received a permanent residence status right after the marriage. Since her marriage, she had intermittently continued her work and was unemployed at the time of our interview. When asked whether her husband had to continue being a sponsor for her to retain her permanent residence status, Seojin recounted her recent encounter with the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) where she visited to renew her status:

Seojin: I thought my residential status was guaranteed by the fact that I am married [to a Singaporean citizen], but the last time I went to renew my permanent residence, the immigration lady broke this piece of news to me. I asked her if she could give me 10 years, and you know what? She told me to bring my husband's social security card! So I asked her why that was necessary, because in the past, I had been doing this by myself, every time! ...This is what she asked me. Isn't your husband your sponsor? So I responded. Ah, is that how it works? That's when I realized; this process makes my husband my sponsor. It [PR] is not guaranteed by the fact that I am married! [Pause] But, the process didn't go like that the other time! That's not how it seemed to work the last time..? [Pause] Maybe to me...maybe the lady didn't know the process?

Me: Did you go alone the last time you received your PR?

Seojin: I did go alone, and they never mentioned anything about this...Was this woman a new employee?...My own child is already in middle school and to think about how many years I've been living in this country! That's definitely not the way to handle this situation. So I got mad and I tried to get citizenship! [Laughter] For a small while I did.

Me: But you didn't end up getting citizenship?

Seojin: I never thought of it like that. I just live in Singapore.
(Seojin, *Population 2 Singapore.* 8)

In this short interaction, the immigrant official makes it clear that Seojin's permanent residence status is dependent on the sponsorship of the husband. Although Seojin had been

residing in Singapore for a considerable amount of time, she was still required to have sponsorship to remain in the nation's boundaries. As Seojin pauses to reflect on her experience to contemplate whether or not it was her individual misunderstanding of the visa extension procedures, she grapples with various emotions ranging from confusion to frustration and anger. I understand these emotions to be an expression of her individual agency, as this interview triggers her reflective process and Seojin starts to grasp that the label of marriage alone does not guarantee a right to reside in Singapore. The state defines the terms of acquiring permanent residence, and in this case, Seojin had to prove to the immigrant officer that her husband fully takes responsibility of her residency status by presenting his social security card. In that sense, Seojin's story firstly illuminates dependency of marriage migrant women on their husbands, and secondly, it exposes the role of the state in enforcing this family unit dependency as part of its administrative ordering practices. While Seojin's marriage to her Singaporean husband is the main rationale for her permanent residence, the key to her residency in Singapore remains with the Singaporean state.

The second category of permanent residence is self-sponsored and grants more autonomy to the individual. Self-sponsored permanent residence is authorized to individuals who are able to support themselves financially, which largely requires the individuals to be employed. Ada (P*opulation 1 Singapore*. 3), a field expert from India, is currently a permanent resident in Singapore. A conversation with Ada demonstrates a contrasting experience from that of Seojin. In the quote below, Ada first comments on the concept of dependent permanent residence in the perspective of her expertise helping marriage migrant women. She then goes on to describe her own experience obtaining her

permanent residence status, as another type of a marriage migrant, having followed her

Indian husband who is currently a permanent resident in Singapore[2].

> "In fact, even if she's on PR [permanent residence] there's still this feeling of
> vulnerability you know I've heard from women who say that, okay now it's time is
> getting expired. The last time I called, we were married and now it's getting expired.
> Do you think it will get renewed now that I am divorced? Will it matter? I get
> questions like these. And I get questions such as, okay now I am going to, I've
> decided to go for divorce, do you think he can cancel my PR? A lot of the women feel
> that. Yeah. And that's like...because I've got this question so often..? That I am on
> dependent PR..? They would use the word dependent PR! I know! And that really
> confused me! What is a dependent PR?! So then when I went to ICA for my own PR
> recently, I got it this year. So I was sitting there with my husband, very interesting,
> and I am talking to this...admin officer who just gave us our PR pass and I said! Is my
> PR dependent on my husband in any way? If you know, things don't work out, can
> he cancel my PR? And she said no actually! No! This is your PR and he has
> no...impact on it!" (Ada, *Population 1 Singapore*. 3)

In the words of the ICA website, the eligibility criteria defines Ada as part of "(c)

Employment Pass/ S Pass holders" in comparison to category "(a) Spouse and unmarried

children (below 21 years old) of a Singapore Citizen (SC)/Singapore Permanent Resident

(SPR)" (Immigration and Checkpoints Authority of Singapore 2014). As such, Ada's

permanent residence stems from her own capacity of being employed in Singapore. The

formal structures that define Ada's status are tied to employment, which grants more

freedom of self-legitimacy in Singapore than that of Seojin's dependent permanent

residence. This administrative distinction between self-sponsored PR and dependent PR

represents a particular agenda of the Singaporean state that prioritizes an economic

understanding of citizenship and stay related laws. Yeoh (2013, 102) refers to this agenda

in conjunction with Singapore's cosmopolitan visions that discuss migration as a variable

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[2] While recognizing that her experience of following her husband to Singapore can be considered a type of
marriage migration, I don't consider her case to be a part of the marriage migration framework I develop in
this thesis because she is not married to a Singaporean citizen.

that would "continually calibrate the city-state's economy and its relationship with transnational capital."

It is through this cosmopolitan agenda of achieving a globalized knowledge-based economy (Ibid.) that the state conditions citizenship and stay related laws, which provides the grounds for understanding the significance of employment for marriage migrants in Singapore. Yeoh discusses the positioning of these women:

> Foreign immigrant women who marry Singapore citizens are positioned within the nation-state's immigration-citizenship regime not as potential labour but as dependents — i.e. non-working wives — of Singaporean men who rely on the legitimacy of the marriage relationship as well as the whims of their husbands in negotiating their rights to residency, work, and children vis-à-vis the Singapore state (Yeoh 2013, 110).

As this quote exemplifies, the state agenda regarding migration separates out marriage migration from the economic framework of employment. It emphasizes the family role of a "non-working wife" to define the migrant women's identities, and in the purview of the nation-state, the women are "outsiders" with no rights to take part in the labor force. Yeoh (Ibid.) proposes that the separation of foreign brides from the foreign labor force could be due to the perception of marriage "as a privatized affair and marriage migration seen quite separately from labor immigration policies and hence not subject to similar economic imperatives." With the state identifying employment as secondary to marriage for marriage migrant women, it reinforces the structure of dependency leaving the marriage migrant women in a catch-22; although one of the only ways to retain an independent status is to secure employment, the state does not recognize this need, seeing marriage migrant women primarily as dependents of Singaporean families, so the women are left with little or no device to secure employment.

Thus, marriage migrant women continue to struggle within a vicious cycle of dependency, which in turn, perpetuates a sense of insecurity and gives rise to emotions such as frustration and confusion that were initially expressed by Seojin (*Population 2 Singapore.* 8) earlier on in this chapter. The state perpetuates this dependency even further with the current employment regime that places levies and quotas to regulate the employment of foreigners (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Service Sector Levies and Quotas

			Levy rate ($)	
Sector	Dependency Ceiling Segmentation	Worker category	Monthly	*Daily
Services	Basic Tier / Tier 1: Up to 10% of the total workforce	Skilled	300	9.87
		Unskilled	400	13.16
	Tier 2: Above 10% to 25% of the total workforce	Skilled	400	13.16
		Unskilled	500	16.44
	Tier 3: Above 25% to 40% of the total workforce	Skilled	600	19.73
		Unskilled		
Note to employers in service sector: Employers in this sector are entitled to skilled levy rates for their foreign workers, up to 25% of the total workforce.				
* Daily levy rate only applies to Work Permit holders who did not work for a full calendar month. From 1 January 2011, the daily levy rate is computed based on the following: (Monthly levy rate x 12) / 365 = rounding up to the nearest cent.				

Source: Ministry of Manpower of Singapore 2013a

Operating under the assumption that marriage migrant women are "non-working dependents" of Singaporean families, these levies and quotas are mainly geared towards labor migrants. However, as an increasing number of marriage migrant women also seek employment, these women are folded under the label of foreign workers once they move

away from the family unit that defines their identity as marriage migrant women. In this

manner, the marriage migrant women's challenges become interlaced with that of other

foreign labor migrants in the search for jobs. Although levies and quotas vary among

different sectors, in the service sector, as the most available employment sector for women

that do not hold transferable professional degrees, the levy rates per person range from

300 SGD to 600 SGD.

 Anh (*Population 2 Singapore*. 6), another marriage migrant woman who has been living

in Singapore for around three years expresses her share of frustration concerning the

state's legislative barriers to employment:

> Anh: Of course! I want! [Pause] Truthfully, I keep applying for jobs! Yeah, but you
>   know what the policies for the foreigners? The company must pay, must pay
>   the levies tax, the levies tax for foreigners? I think the levies tax pay is
>   expensive which is why it's difficult for foreigners like me.
>
> Me: How much?
>
> Anh: I don't know, but some companies they say that they don't have enough quota
>   for foreigners anymore. In every company, they have…you pay for foreigner?
>   The foreigner spot. And when they reach the quota, they have no more, they
>   have no more for this [Refers to herself and laughs]. I don't know how much
>   they pay, but quite expensive.
>
> (Anh, *Population 2 Singapore*. 6)

Anh's interview excerpt starts off on a heightened tone, which illustrates an urgency to

address the employment regime of levies and quotas for migrant women in similar statuses.

However, as the current Singaporean state upholds this regime without considering its

impact on the insecure statuses of marriage migrant women, these feelings of frustration

are not being spoken to, but rather, are left alone to accumulate as more and more women

remain isolated without jobs. In her quote, Anh makes another point that,

"companies…don't have enough quota for foreigners anymore," which alludes to one of the biggest obstacles that hinders foreigners seeking employment – the current political climate of immigrant backlash.

In recent years, Singapore has been going through a large anti-immigration sentiment that, on top of levies and quotas, adds on another layer of complication for marriage migrant women to secure jobs. According to a report by a prominent organization that aids foreign migrants, this climate has manifested in the tightening of state measures regarding immigration. The Annual Report 2012 published by the Archdiocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ACMI) claims that "Although there were several new key laws and initiatives introduced by the government that served to protect the rights of migrants in Singapore, 2012 also marked a year of strong anti-foreigner sentiments especially against foreign workers who are perceived as taking jobs away from locals" (ACMI 2012, 6). The backlash has resulted in mass rallies (Bueno 2013), a rarity in Singapore, which ultimately led the government of Singapore to tighten restrictions on immigration (BBC News 2013). These sentiments have not passed by unnoticed in the observations of my interviewees. April (*Population 1 Singapore.* 1), comments on how she sees these ideas unfolding in various locales throughout Singapore:

"In the last ten years things have started changing a lot. Public transport, for example, there's a lot of immigrants [Pause]. In general, just anywhere you go you hear a lot more, even retail shops! You really see a lot of them. Retail shops, retail shop assistants, now a lot of them are Fili..pinos, yeah [Pause]…You can see them, a lot of immigrants coming in…I think there's a backlash because I think Singaporeans [Pause] yeah, I think certain jobs are taken away from them, especially lower income jobs. Like last time, you used to see at the hawker centers, you used to see aunties, old aunties clearing plates, and the old aunties would complain that all these PRCs [Stands for People's Republic of China and refers to people from mainland China] are coming in and they are younger, more energetic and they are

getting lower pay. Then obviously, they are more attracting to employers, more than
them [locals]." (April, *Population 1 Singapore.* 1)

As seen in both cases of the ACMI report and April's description, greater employment
opportunities for foreigners are strongly intertwined with local Singaporeans losing their
own jobs. While the marriage migrant women are not necessarily at the forefront of this
immigrant backlash, the moment they step away from the family matrix into the realm of
employment, their identities overlap with foreign workers, and they become visible targets
for anti-immigrant sentiments. Again, this goes back to the state reinforcement of the
family unit as a core identifier of marriage migrant women's identity, binding them in the
framework of dependency. Without the state putting in an active effort to create a system
that recognizes migrant women's demands to move away from their dependent statuses, it
is subtly sending a subliminal message to the migrant women to stay true to their duties as
wives, daughters-in-laws and as mothers – to stay within the "safer" climate of the family.

This brings back the idea of a lack of multi-scalar engagement, where supply and
demand of policies and legislations from the individual scale of marriage migrant women
are not effectively being met. With Singapore's citizenship and visa laws, along with its
employment policies, not effectively addressing the stability of marriage migrant women's
statuses, the women's legitimacy to remain within Singapore would always be challenged.
It is crucial to address this current lack of attention from the state scale as the
repercussions of state-produced dependency dig even deeper into mental and
psychological dimensions of individual marriage migrant women.

April (*Population 1 Singapore.* 1), for example, is a counselor who specializes in calls
from Mandarin speakers in Singapore. She offers not only psychological counseling, but

also provides legal resources upon request. In her interview, she refers to the story of a naturalized Chinese marriage migrant, *T*, to Singapore who has been living in the country for more than 10 years. *T* could only communicate in Mandarin, which meant that she was dependent on her husband for the majority of the information that was of English medium. April continues to recount a deeper psychological dependency, where a further conversation with the marriage migrant woman led to the confession that *T* felt it was her duty to give her husband sex, not understanding the dimensions of abuse which defined their marital relationship. Regardless of *T*'s citizenship status and the time frame that the migrant woman had to adjust to Singapore, she still felt the barriers of dependency which led to her vulnerable state when she reached out to April for counseling.

The psychological realm of vulnerability has the potential to escalate beyond the individual sphere once a marriage migrant woman enters into the legal processes of divorce or requesting of child custody. In this case, vulnerability becomes systematic, a byproduct of the legislations and policies of the state. When asked about some of the challenges that migrant women face, April draws attention to the difficulties of navigating the legal system that raises questions of the women's statuses in the host countries:

April: In Singapore, we don't have what we call custody; we call it joint custody, so both parents have impact on the major decisions of the child. But one parent would have care control, which is, the one parent would stay with the child and then the other spouse would have visitation rights on the weekend. So, in Singapore, it always goes to women, most of the time, when the child is below seven. The women's charter works that way. So most of the time, women gets cust-, *can* control the child. But, you see when the foreign wives come in, there's no, no longer [Pause].

Me: They can't apply this?

April: You can't because, let's say your dependency, there's no, [Pause]. Yeah! There's no legitimate standard, then how can they have [custody]! Of course, the judge would then think, why should I give you care control of the child when your status is uncertain, right? So, immediately they will ask all about custody.

(April, *Population 1 Singapore.* 1)

While April's first anecdote discusses dependency within a spousal relationship, this quote illuminates a bigger scope of dependency that perpetuates between marriage migrant women and the state. The source of marriage migrant women's legitimacy to reside in their host countries lies within the citizenship and stay related laws that are created and managed by the state. The state-crafted legal structure that emphasizes the ties of the women to their husbands and children ultimately highlights the idea of a family-unit, which views the primary role of these women as family members – as wives, mothers, daughter-in-laws, etc. As shown throughout this section, when these women are folded into the family matrix, their identities beyond their domestic roles are dismissed. This can accompany serious ramifications when women decide to move away from the safety net of the family-unit through legal suits, such as divorce, because opposing their spouses means challenging the very people that sponsor the women's visas.

Singapore's legislative story tells a tale of dependency, where marriage migrant women are brought into existence within the nation by the identities of someone else – the family, or more broadly, the state. This takes away the migrant women's autonomy of self-identity, and self-validation of negotiating their identities as legitimate participants within the state of Singapore. Thus, in order to move forward with dialogues of marriage migration, acknowledging that the migrant women and their families constitute a good proportion of

Singapore's civil society, it is crucial to address the state administrative orderings that perpetuate the cycle of dependency for marriage migrant women.

III.   South Korea

South Korea's administrative ordering measures converge and diverge from that of Singapore in distinct ways. Just as the Singaporean state crafts dependency through its legislations and policies, the South Korean state employs a similar foundational approach, positioning marriage migrant women as dependents of their family and the state. While both nations base their administrative ordering practices on the idea of a family matrix, which reinforces the dependency, South Korea presents a different political climate than Singapore.

In comparison to that of Singapore, the South Korean state hones in to details, creating categories for terms and conditions of social agendas that go beyond the existing structures of Singapore. According to the concept of administrative ordering, this spelling out of categorical specifics builds on the legibility of a state, wherein the state of South Korea can more clearly visualize the conditions that marriage migrant women live by. This visibility is a demarcation of the state's capacity to exercise power. Thus, by crafting more and more categories for each detail that arise in legislations and policies surrounding marriage migration practices, the South Korean state can effectively manage the statuses of marriage migrant women. It also creates a foundation for the South Korean state's image as all-knowing and all-understanding, which emphasizes the paternalistic role of the state. This not only renders marriage migrant women dependent on the state, but it also takes away

their agency, challenging their individual autonomy to self-define their identities. In this manner, the South Korean state also neglects to fully incorporate the voices of the individual scale of marriage migrant women, which demonstrates the lack of multi-scalar interaction. I explore these realities by first describing the process of obtaining a visa for these migrant women.

From the moment marriage migrant women arrive in South Korea, they are exposed to the state's administrative ordering practices as they pursue the legal process of obtaining a stay visa. Although all foreigners are subject to the legalities of citizenship and stay related legislations in order to remain legally within South Korea, the process differs for marriage migrant women as, much like Singapore, their stay visas need to be sponsored by a Korean citizen, namely their spouses. Entering under a visiting pass to the nation allows marriage migrant women 90 days of stay, during which they need to apply for Alien Registration, to further their period of stay. The next step is to acquire the F-6 visa status for marriage migrants, which is equivalent to the LTVP+ of Singapore (See Ministry of Gender Equality and Family 2014). The South Korean state, like the case of Singapore's implementation of LTVP+, adopted the F-6 scheme to address the rising number of marriage migrant women. This grants the women a differential status, in comparison to the preceding F-2 residential visa status for general foreigners (Hi Korea: e-Government for Foreigners 2011). The eligibility criteria for attaining the F-6 marriage migrant visa status are as follows:

- Spouse of a Korean citizen
- Parent of a minor (under 19) who was born in the legal framework of the first criteria and wishes to raise the child in South Korea

- While residing under the first criteria, the Korean spouse passes away or is declared death *in absentia*. Also includes those who cannot maintain a normal marital relationship and is not responsible or at fault for the separation. (Ibid.; See Ministry of Justice 2013)

As shown, the first two criteria are identical to that of Singapore, enforcing the idea of how marriage migrant women belong to the family matrix in South Korea. With the family unit as a dominant factor determining the stay legitimacy of marriage migrant women, the women often express anxieties around the vulnerability and insecurity that they are exposed to. As such, Kim (2013, 456) highlights migrant women's role as mothers when she applies the term, "ethnicized maternal citizenship," where "migrant women's biological and emotional ties to their children were presupposed as the rationale for their change in legal citizenship." Whether the marriage migrant women strive to obtain stay visas or citizenships, Kim (2013, 464) alludes to the intentionality of the state in crafting the borders of the citizenship and visa regime to further a state project, which emphasizes the women's reproductive and maternal roles. Thus, the state's agenda enforces the family matrix, framing the migrant women's terms of stay in regards to their roles as wives and mothers of Korean citizens, which renders them dependent.

Lien (*Population 2 South Korea*. 19) conveys her frustrations regarding the existing system of dependency, drawing from her own experience as a marriage migrant women and a social activist:

"The way husbands see it – my husband yes, but also including my friends' husbands – they think, we don't need to rush the process [of obtaining a more secure visa status]! It can be done in a slow and steady manner, is what they say! I know they are not intentionally trying to hinder us in any way, but when my friends or I, as marriage migrants, face this, we are so frustrated. We want to be secure in status as soon as possible, but they come from a different mindset and it is not as pressuring

to them when this process becomes delayed...I've been working in this organization for more than five years, but because of the permanent residence problem, I didn't qualify for state-sponsored pension. In that sense I was really disappointed. [Laughs] Either way, the women would feel much more secure once they acquire citizenship, and while the husbands are not purposefully delaying the process, their attitudes of not acknowledging how much this means to us....it's really frustrating." (Lien, *Population 2 South Korea*. 19)

Lien's quote demonstrates the gap of understanding between husbands and their migrant spouses. While the women feel a pressing need to secure their statuses in Korea, the husbands often do not understand the depth of emotions that their state of insecurity evokes. Regardless of the husbands' intentions or their willingness to cooperate, the dependency framework of South Korea's citizenship and visa legislations creates the basis for such tension between the spouses. Lien also brings up how she couldn't qualify for state-sponsored pension despite working for a local organization for more than five years. This exhibits real life consequences for delaying the process of obtaining permanent residence, which goes beyond the level of emotions. The women will continuously be disadvantaged the longer this process takes, because they will not belong to the category that the state defines as beneficiaries of the state welfare system. As such, the repercussions of not having the "right" legal status as delineated by the government alludes to the power of the state to control and define the terms and conditions that directly influence the lives of marriage migrant women. This furthers the vulnerability and insecurity that arise due to the women's statuses that are wholly dependent on the purview of the state. It is clear from this example that the concerns of migrant women regarding their statuses are not being fully addressed in the state legislations and policies, thus illustrating the lack of communication between the state and individual marriage migrant women.

However, in addition to the two categories emphasizing the role of a wife and a mother, the South Korean state goes further than its Singaporean counterpart and adds on a third criterion of eligibility to attain the F-6 visa. It acknowledges that there may be cases where the marriage migrant women cannot remain within the family structure, where "the Korean spouse passes away or is declared death in absentia," or when they "cannot maintain a normal marital relationship and is not responsible or at fault for the separation" (Hi Korea: e-Government for Foreigners 2011). Here, the South Korean state partially addresses the insecurities that marriage migrant women have, offering them more flexibility to negotiate their stay legitimacy apart from the family unit in extreme circumstances when the first two criteria of being a spouse or a mother fall through. However, this supplementary clause is only a partial acknowledgement of migrant women's identity away from the family matrix. As long as they are within the F-6 visa category, the marriage migrant category, the women's identities stem from their family connections to their husbands or children. While at first glance, the state seemingly addresses a niche in the legal system and thus, the concerns of the migrant women, it does not fully speak to the root of insecurity that derives from the persistence of the family-matrix. Rather, this furthers the idea that the South Korean state is maintaining its paternalistic image, whereby detailing out the categories of citizenship and visa legislations gives them more legibility to control the conditions of marriage migrant women's existence within national boundaries.

Sunmin (*Population 1 South Korea*. 13), a field expert from South Korea, reflects on the characteristics of the South Korean state's paternalistic approach and alludes to its dangers:

"For example, there is a difference when laws are created on the basis of need, when marriage migrant women come to Korea and start to demand for these laws due to necessity. [In contrast to policies responding to necessity] Policies are carried out in the attitude that, 'I don't know if you guys need this or not, but wouldn't you need this?' So, the government builds a multicultural family support center. Then now, no one knows whether this was made to fulfill the needs of marriage migrant women, or if it was just to meet the demands of the Korean locals. In order for these policies to truly become beneficial to society, there needs to be a maturing period, but multiculturalism in Korea? It hasn't even been ten years. If you think about all the policies that came around 2006 or 2007? The Support for Multicultural Families Act only came out in 2008, so that means in 5-6 years, the government has created systems to address these issues." (Sunmin, *Population 1 South Korea*. 13)

As Sunmin explains, the South Korean state has been creating laws and policies that, in her opinion, have not been responding to the necessity of marriage migrant women. Instead she mentions the paternalistic attitude of the state when she quotes, "I don't know if you guys need this or not, but wouldn't you need this?" Initially, it might look as more support could possibly mean more benefit to the marriage migrant women. However, this type of support, as shown in many examples of my interviewees expressing emotions of frustrations, does not fully address the core of the women's demands. While this approach is not without benefit, marriage migrant women are streamlined into an abundance of support systems and legal aid endorsed by the state, of which its very omnipresence takes away the independence of these women to define their individual identities and to craft their own terms of integration. This shows that there is visibly a lack of communication between the state, as the agent creating policies, and the marriage migrant women, who are beneficiaries of the same policies.

Thus, the idea of dependency that creates vulnerability and insecurity for marriage migrant women remains unresolved, which leads to the complexities where migrant women find ways to negotiate around the state systems to remain within South Korea:

> "We had a case [of a legal counseling session] where in actuality, a father is taking care of his child, but the child's mother needed to remain in South Korea [Pause], because the child needs to see the mother. So the couple talked and came to an agreement in the time of their divorce, the father would raise the child but for sake of the paperwork, they listed the mother's name down [not officially through legal manners, but between the couple]. This complicates the issue in real life because the mother has custody of the child, but in fact, it is the father who is raising the child. [In this case the mother] gets sent back, because the mother's visa is an F-6 visa, a marriage migrant visa. Because the basis of this visa is their marital relationship, and since the relationship is over, she has to leave the country…For a marriage migrant woman to remain within the country out of a marital relationship, the couple needs to go through a divorce where the court rules that the husband is at fault. When a couple divorces out of mutual agreement, the court wouldn't be able to determine that the fault is with the husband [which goes against the third criterion of F-6 visa eligibility]. So in order for the women to remain in South Korea, they need to take their divorce cases to court and go through all of these legal procedures…in order to remain, you need to go to court. Without the evidence that the husband is at fault, which is the case when you divorce out of mutual agreement, you won't be able to remain in the country." (Hyunjong, *Population 1 South Korea*. 16)

As Hyunjong illustrates, the couple in this anecdote finds a way to work around the system in order for the migrant woman to remain within the country even as they go through their divorce procedures. While the couple's mutual understanding is that their child would need to see both parents in the growing process, the state shows a static understanding regarding the marriage migrant woman's role of a mother. By limiting the stay visa renewal for women who take custody of their children, the state is taking on a patriarchal viewpoint that does not accept the various types of mothers. It maintains the perspective that it is primarily the mother's role to bring up the children, disregarding the cases where fathers

may do the same. Therefore, the state pushes for a very specific family agenda, where its message is conveyed through the enforcement of current citizenship and visa legislations.

Leaving this family matrix brings along the threat of deportation that looms over the status of marriage migrant women, even if the South Korean state supposedly is allowing more flexibility through its third criterion of F-6 visa eligibility, which is the basis for the legal proceedings in the anecdote above. Also, by delineating the terms of divorce, where the husband needs to be found guilty in order for the divorce to become a basis for migrant women's stay eligibility, the state is in control of the women's statuses, which brings back the idea of the paternalistic state. The F-6 visa eligibility category describes the tight administration of the South Korean state, which takes away space for the women to interpret their own sense of belonging to the society. Although the third eligibility category provides an illusion that the state offers more flexibility for the marriage migrant women to identify beyond their family roles of wives or mothers, it does not truly offer women the option to self-identify as long as they remain within national boundaries. As Hyunjong demonstrates, there are serious repercussions, such as deportation, that follow a migrant woman's attempt to break out of the family matrix, serving as constant reminders of these women's vulnerability and insecurity.

As compared to Singapore, one benefit of the extra acknowledgment in the F-6 eligibility criteria that grants leeway to migrant women who may not be able to "maintain a normal marital relationship," is that the women are not as pressured to seek employment to secure their statuses. While employment is closely tied to the track of moving away from a dependent pass into a self-sponsored one for marriage migrant women in Singapore, this

urgency to obtain legal status through occupational means is not as visible. However,

employment offers these women a financial stability, which grants them more negotiation

power and independence nonetheless, where they are not solely dependent on their

spouses.

In the case of employment for marriage migrant women in South Korea, the state

provides a variety of options which fall under a larger support system titled, "Support for

Multicultural Families Act." The term of a multicultural family envelops marriage migrant

women and their families, which is specified in Article 2 of this act:

> **Article 2 (Definitions)**
> The definitions of terms used in this Act shall be as follows:
> 1. The term "multi-cultural family" means a family falling under any of the following items:
> (a) A family comprised of a married immigrant under subparagraph 3 of Article 2 of the Framework Act on Treatment of Foreigners Residing in the Republic of Korea and a person who acquired the nationality of the Republic of Korea by birth pursuant to Article 2 of the Nationality Act;
> (b) A family comprised of a person who obtained permission for naturalization under Article 4 of the Nationality Act and a person who acquired the nationality of the Republic of Korea by birth pursuant to Article 2 of the aforesaid Act;
> 2. The term "married immigrant or naturalized citizen, etc." means any of the following persons:
> (a) A married immigrant defined in subparagraph 3 of Article 2 of the Framework Act on Treatment of Foreigners Residing in the Republic of Korea;
> (b) A person who obtained permission for naturalization under Article 4 of the Nationality Act.
> (Ministry of Government Legislation 2011)

As defined by Article 2, the Support for Multicultural Families Act is targeted towards

"multicultural families" and "married immigrant or naturalized citizens." Thus, this act

folds the identities of the marriage migrant women into a larger umbrella term of

multicultural families, establishing their individual identities as part of the family unit. In

Article 1, the purpose of this act "is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of multi-cultural family members and the unity of society by helping multi-cultural family members enjoy stable family living" (Ibid.). While the state directs support towards multicultural families, the marriage migrant women are one of the biggest benefactors of the support structures. In fact, the state specifies many policies directed specifically toward marriage migrant women, which leads Han et al. (2012: 319) to comment, "[South Korea retains the] only case in the world to separate out marriage migrant settlement support policies from a broader framework of social integration policy for immigrants." This highlights South Korea's particular investment in the agenda of marriage migration, its discourse and practices in the nation. This manifests in the details of administrative ordering that South Korea continues to create regarding policies and legislations involving marriage migrant women.

For instance, there is a portal website created particularly for multicultural families called "Danuri," which offers a list of eligible employment support. The list goes as follows:

- Internship for female marriage immigrants
- Job education and training for female marriage immigrants
- Women's New Work Center's Internship for female marriage immigrants
- Women's New Work Center's Job Education and Training
- Project to train double-language instructors
- Project to help marriage immigrants' employment
- Next-Learning Card Policy (account policy for occupational ability development)
- Successful Employment Package
- Education to train female married immigrant instructors
- IT Education Visit for Multicultural families
- Project to train foreign healthcare providers and medical coordinators in Korea (Danuri 2014)

Employing the term of "female marriage immigrants," the website actively promotes

employment support for marriage migrant women in particular. The list illustrates the

range of support that the state provides for these women including various internships, job

education and training in different fields. The dedication of the South Korean state to "help

[migrant women]…settle down and adapt to life in Korea" (Danuri 2014), is clearly

noticeable in the number of different employment support available. Like the eligibility

criteria of the F-6 visa, the state's attempt to provide detailed support to marriage migrant

women seems very beneficial and worthy of praise at first glance. However, once taking

into account the types of employment opportunities that are specified on this list, the

reality becomes more complex. A quick look shows that prominent job options for migrant

women focus on drawing out their "foreign specialties," as language instructors or

coordinating the link between foreign healthcare providers and medical coordinators in

Korea. While on the one hand, it is important to recognize that the state has been putting in

effort to create a support system to further marriage migrant women's employment

opportunities; on the other, the state crafts a particular agenda when it pre-determines the

categories on the type of support. Here, the underlying assumption of the state is that

marriage migrant women are a specialized foreign labor force that facilitates the link

between the locals and foreigners. While that specialty might be applicable to some women,

it pushes aside the idea that the marriage migrant women may have other aspirations and

specialties.

> "I don't think everyone needs to work in an NGO like I am. That is dependent on
> personal preference. Just as I mentioned before, there was a friend who used to
> attend Korean classes in this organization with me. She wanted to specialize in
> cooking, which is why she is currently a chef in a local restaurant. That is why you
> have to follow your personal preference. You don't need to work on Korean as much

as I did to become a translator…Other than cooking, there's sewing, I mean if you are really good at that, you can make 200 articles of clothing." (Lien, *Population 2 South Korea*. 19)

Lien brings up the idea of personal preference as a way of performing agency, and stepping out of the emphasis that the government puts on being foreign specialists. This is just one example of how the agenda of the state can differ from marriage migrant women's employment goals, which brings the discussion back to the central thread of how the state scale and individual scales are not in sync with each other due to lack of multi-scalar interaction.

This last quote from a South Korean social activist, Sunmin, emphasizes the need to draw out ideas of vulnerability and dependency created by the state administrative ordering of citizenship and visa laws as well as employment policies:

"I purposely try to utilize neutral terms [to refer to situations regarding marriage migration]. I don't even think marriage migration is the right phrase to be using, which is why I use marital relocation. Migration means you are settling down. But we don't give marriage migrant women a visa to settle down. They have to extend their terms of stay every year, how would you call that migration? If you get a divorce you are sent back to your own country, then how is that migration? If you have migrated somewhere, you are supposed to be settling down there!" (Sunmin, *Population 1 South Korea*. 13)

Here, Sunmin not only accentuates the need to identify the realities of dependency, but she also counters the dominant state narrative which renders the migrant women vulnerable, by redefining the vocabulary of marriage migration to marital relocation. This performance of agency brings out her social activist agenda, and allows for further interrogation into the assumed norms of marriage migration within contemporary scholarship.

IV.   Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I identified the administrative ordering practices of Singapore and South Korea that craft an undercurrent of dependency for marriage migrant women who reside in these nations. In particular, I looked at the citizenship and visa legislations and employment policies that perpetuated ideas of vulnerability and insecurity among the women by emphasizing the framework of a family unit. Currently the state, in defining the terms and conditions for marriage migrant women to remain within the host nations, reinforces the idea of dependency by creating a top-down structure that leaves out the perspectives of these women. Without thoroughly inquiring and interrogating the impacts of state practices and processes in the lived experiences of marriage migrant women, frustrations will continue to build among individuals that lead to serious repercussions for the integration process of these women. The state policies will continue to fall short in addressing the realities of marriage migrant women, which will in turn create byproducts of social issues as marriage migrant women try to work around the system and find their own agency. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that the top-down approach of the state will not fully address the root of inefficiency of the marriage migrant women's integration into Singapore and South Korea. With migrant women and their families constituting a good portion of civil society in Singapore and South Korea, it is important to eliminate the issue of dependency and facilitate dialogues between the state and individual migrant women to come to a solution.

In the next chapter, I look at the climate of multiculturalism in Singapore and South Korea that provides the platform for marriage migrant women's integration into the two nations. Again, I look at the lack of scalar interaction between the state and individual

migrant women, focusing on how the state rhetoric separates out locals from foreigners,

hindering marriage migrant women from fully integrating into society.

CHAPTER 4: MULTICULTURALISM AND INTEGRATION

The nation-states of Singapore and South Korea both embrace and endorse multiculturalism in varying degrees. As a nation of immigrants, Singapore has always wrestled with the concept of multiculturalism. In contrast, South Korea's acceptance of multiculturalism is relatively recent with the increase of immigrants into its national borders. Despite the different backgrounds, the contemporary state and civil society of both countries feed off each other to craft a "multicultural" platform which assumes a social environment that would facilitate the integration process for marriage migrant women in the host countries. In these instances, multiculturalism is meant to signify "the philosophy and policies related to a particular mode of immigrant incorporation as well as to the rights of minority groups in society to state recognition and protection" (Mitchell 2004, 642). Within the multiculturalism discourse of the two nations, the emphasis is on generating a climate of celebration, particularly evoking the idea of a "forward nation" on a global platform. In other words, both countries position themselves as nations that embrace globalization and, therefore, multiculturalism as part of its national identity. While the influence of a multicultural atmosphere affects each and every entity within national boundaries, the power to define the national multicultural agenda, or the terms of how such agenda is enforced, belongs largely to the state and thus constrains the effectiveness of multiculturalism as policy and daily practice.

In Singapore, the official tourism website *Your Singapore* uses the phrase "A Multicultural Kaleidoscope," which suggests an official acceptance of diversity that ranges from multiracialism to multilingualism and multi-religiosity (Chua 1991, 349-350). In South Korea, the "press, civil society, and the government are speaking on the subject of multiculturalism, celebrating it as the future of Korean society…[such that] discourse on multiculturalism has become politically correct" (Han 2007, 35). In both cases, the sentiment of acceptance and positivity outlines how the state vocalizes its multicultural agenda. While the states seemingly embrace ideas of diversity and harmony, their agendas are often met with the criticism that multiculturalism has merely become a hollow label and does not achieve "active multiculturalism," which should "intentionally incorporate the perspectives and cultures of minority groups, thereby transforming important social institutions" (Kim and Oh 2011, 1574). As Mitchell (2004, 642) explains, multiculturalism is effective for everyone, equating the civil competence of "society's core groups" to that of "out-group" members where "diverse ways of being in the world are recognized as legitimate, and the qualities of "out-group" members are not stigmatized or relegated to the private sphere, but rather reconstitute the notion of civil competence *within* the public sphere." This is the goal, but does not translate into actual practices within Singapore and South Korea.

The current climate of multiculturalism, as driven by the state, does not fully incorporate the range of marriage migrant women's lived experiences, limiting the attainment of multiculturalism in its full capacity. As Singapore and South Korea understand multiculturalism to be a combination of monocultures, both nations do not see diversity of culture as a spectrum, but as individual categories of distinct cultures. This

theoretical separation of cultures carries over to their multicultural practices where, rather than equating the locals (i.e. society's core groups) to the marriage migrant women (i.e. out-group members) as participants of the civil society, the marriage migrant women are seen on a separate horizon and their difference is emphasized to distinguish them from the locals. The significance of understanding the impacts of this division goes further than just recognizing a difference between locals and foreigners; for migrants who are trying to fully integrate into civil society, this separation of locals vs. foreigners rooted in the language of policies and media, would never allow them to be on equal footing with the locals. Thus, the state rhetoric of multiculturalism fails to capture the essence of diversity when it leaves out its multicultural residents, namely marriage migrant women, as equal contributors of the state's multicultural celebration.

With the rising number of marriage migrant women, their families and especially children who are born into these families in both Singapore and South Korea, the realities of multiculturalism that do not achieve active diversity cannot be dismissed lightly. Without the framework of active multiculturalism, space for plurality will not be guaranteed for these multicultural agents, which leads to exclusion and isolation of these individuals from the core of society. Marginalizing, invisibilizing and othering a particular group of people who are actively trying to integrate bring about serious repercussions that burden a society with the byproducts of social issues. It especially harbors negative consequences for marriage migrant women who try hard to integrate, but cannot fit into a monocultural or bicultural interpretations of multiculturalism. As the essence of multiculturalism gets lost in translation between the state scale and the individual scale of

marriage migrant women, it ultimately influences the lived experiences of these women in personal relationships with their surrounding local network.

In order to demonstrate these points, I will first lay down the foundations by describing the current status of multiculturalism in Singapore and South Korea. With their diverging histories, Singapore and South Korea express two different approaches in how they carry out their policies and advocate a multicultural atmosphere that ultimately sets the stage for all the residents within the national borders, including marriage migrant women. I note that in comparing their national agendas, their celebration of multiculturalism does not fully draw upon active multiculturalism. Hence, I discuss the importance of listening to the voices and encouraging participation of the marriage migrant women to complete and complicate the one-sided picture of multiculturalism that is being put forth by both states. With both agents – state and marriage migrant individuals – actively substantiating the multicultural environment of the nations, Singapore and South Korea will be able to move away from the namesake multiculturalism that plagues their current state agenda, and engage with active multiculturalism through cultivating diversity and inclusive spaces for the integration of marriage migrant women.

I.   Multicultural Singapore

In the city-state of Singapore, multiculturalism is central to the state's governance. Yeoh et al. (2013, 142) refer to Singapore's founding philosophy as the logic of 4Ms + M (Multiracialism, Multiculturalism, Multilingualism, Multireligiosity plus Meritocracy). These 4Ms are tightly interlinked to co-constitute the Singaporean's state rhetoric of racial

harmony and acceptance of diversity. Hence, to understand the idea of how multiculturalism takes form in Singapore, it is necessary to understand the racial categories of "Chinese, Malay, Indian and Other (CMIO)" that make up Singapore's multicultural society.

Singapore's multiculturalism is often equated to the celebration of the CMIO, which is why scholars employ the term of CMIO-multiracialism. With the current Singaporean population consisting of 74.2% ethnic Chinese, 13.3% of Malays, 9.2% of Indians and 3.3% of other (Singapore Tourism Board 2012), the nation had to come up with a strategy to unify its citizens when it became an independent republic in 1965. Thus, Singapore builds its national identity around economic development, which emphasizes the last M meritocracy, and multiculturalism, which celebrates racial harmony as illustrated in various national policies. I interrogate some of these policies to demonstrate how extensively the Singaporean state invests in creating an accepting environment for its citizens. I particularly query how Singapore endorses CMIO multiculturalism, a strategy that divides out multiculturalism along the racial lines of Singapore's major ethnic groups. CMIO multiculturalism, I argue, fails to acknowledge diversity as a spectrum, largely leaving out Singapore's foreigner residents in the celebration of diversity, especially as foreigners are seen as others in juxtaposition to local Singaporeans. According to some of my interviews, national policies that treat citizens differently from non-citizens build a divide that resurfaces the idea of a lack of multi-scalar interaction where the state claims a multiracial/multicultural framework, but in reality, individual immigrant wives, as multicultural residents residing within Singapore's boundaries, are not able to partake in this national celebration.

One way to investigate the centrality of the multicultural celebration in Singapore is to look into the state's official designation of public holidays. Singapore's Ministry of Manpower, in carrying out the Employment Act, lists the conditions for national holidays and their observation (Ministry of Manpower of Singapore 2013b). The employees in Singapore are granted 11 paid public holidays a year and these national holidays range from neutral non-religious holidays, such as New Year's Day, Labor Day and National Day, to religious or ethnically-affiliated ones including Vesak Day (Buddhist holiday), Good Friday and Christmas Day (Christian holidays), Deepavali (Hindu holiday), Hari Raya Puasa and Haji (Muslim festivals), and Chinese New Year (multi-religious holiday). Here the celebratory nature endorses multi-religiosity, which in Singapore, are often divided along the CMIO lines. The Hindu holiday, Deepavali, majorly targets the Indian community, which can also be argued for the Malay community with the Muslim festivals and lastly, the Chinese, with Chinese New Year. The other religious holidays can be folded under the other category. From this perspective, the state is clearly denominating the idea of equal representation for each of the CMIO groups, which in its celebratory reality, could possibly be reinforcing the division among the CMIO more so than bringing people together. Furthermore, it is important to observe the absence of public recognition for other religious minorities or ethnicities that do not fall under the CMIO scheme. When foreigners who are not part of the CMI arrive in Singapore, they are often folded under the O, where their ideas of celebration are more or less silenced within the pre-existing categories of public holidays. Thus, in separating out the O, the CMIO multiculturalism builds the language of division that hinders the full inclusivity that active multiculturalism strives for.

In another example of state-driven multiculturalism, as one of many strategies to ensure multiracial politics the government implemented the Group Representation Constituency, also known as the GRC Scheme. This scheme guarantees minority representation within the electoral system of the Singaporean parliament.

> With the Chinese constituting an overwhelming 76% of the population, Chinese candidates will inevitably end up winning the majority, if voting were along racial lines. Consequently the quota system of race mixing may shut out all minority candidates…Under the GRC scheme, three constituencies are grouped together into a greater constituency, within which three respective candidates of each political party are fielded as a team…One of the motivations for this electoral innovation is to ensure minority representation because one of the three candidates in any team must be from minority groups (Chan, 1989).With this GRC scheme, racial politics at the community level is avoided while representation at the national level is ensured. (Chua 1991, 351)

The main component of the GRC scheme is to acknowledge equal representation for minorities, which as Chua mentions, dissipates racial tensions at the community level while guaranteeing the input of minority voices at the national level. While the exterior of the GRC scheme advances racial harmony and collaboration, Chua (1991, 351) argues that, "the institutionalization of the GRC scheme is illustrative of the prevalent administrative mechanism of the ruling government." In the viewpoint of the GRC scheme as an intentional mechanism of state's administration that controls the agenda of multiracialism/ multiculturalism, Chua further claims that, "the advantage of this arrangement to the government is the ease with which national representation can be controlled through, first, the three person team and second in parliament" (Ibid.). While multiculturalism should seek to actively mediate the various concerns of diverse demographics, Chua expresses concerns that in reality, the GRC scheme will "invariably act to dilute the tendency of politicians of the minority groups to champion exclusive causes of their respective races"

(Ibid.). To claim a multicultural agenda, it is not enough to acknowledge minorities through the GRC scheme. Instead, active encouragement of intergroup conversations must take place on equal footing, where the "exclusive causes" of minority groups can come together to further a state-scale inclusive plan that endorses diverse ideas of the demographic as a whole. This is a factor that is missing from the current political climate of Singapore.

Moreover, while this GRC structure guarantees voices of the CMI, the role of the O (Others) is not overtly addressed. While minority representation ensures various voices to be heard, citizens of the "other" category or residents integrated into society as permanent residents and long-term visitors, especially marriage migrant women whose identities are invariably tied to the Singaporean families, are often left out of the political dialogues that produce policies directed towards them. The ruling government wields the power to define the terms of such policies, and, as Chua contends, the state possesses the authority to "act decisively to pre-empt any potential problem that may be, arguably, in the distant horizon and then enact further measures to correct untoward consequences that the earlier preemptive measures had itself put in place" (Ibid.). From the outset, the problems that certain policies address may not be representative of those who are the target audience of such policies, which oftentimes lead to an empty political agenda that does not effectively address the issues at hand. As the rhetoric of Singapore's multiculturalism is mostly determined by the state, with its emphasis on CMIO multiculturalism, the multicultural framework largely leaves the marriage migrant women out of the picture. Thus, it is not a surprise when Yeoh, Leng and Dung (2013, 147) conclude, "the existence of a multiracial/multicultural framework in Singapore has not made it any easier for immigrant

wives to advantageously position themselves to make claims on cultural rights such as language support for themselves and their children."

Singapore's absence of true active multiculturalism carries over to the lived experiences of marriage migrant women, where they face obstacles in trying to fit into a system designed for locals. Indeed, my marriage migrant interviewees vocalize institutional discrimination that they face as they become residents of Singapore and proceed to settle down. Haeun (*Population 2, Singapore*. 9) is one of those women, who first entered Singapore to work and has become a permanent resident since then in the nine years that she has been in the nation. In her interview, she refers to two instances where legislation separates out the foreigners from the locals.

Her first point pertains to Singapore's housing program, which was first initiated in 1960 to provide its citizens with adequate housing. To provide context, the Housing Development Board (HDB) was chosen as the public authority and by 1991, the introduction of the "home ownership" scheme in 1965 brought "more than 85% of the 2.7 million population [to] live in public housing, of which more than 80% [were] owner-occupied" (Chua 1991, 344). Since the government is the monopoly provider of affordable housing in Singapore, the majority of Singaporeans are not only a part of the public housing program, but also they are subject to the regulation of HDB's policies. In terms of enforcing a multicultural framework, the HDB scheme "requires that each [residential] building be no more than 87 percent Chinese, 25 percent Malay, or 13 percent Indian and Other. If a group exceeds this percentage, the building is deemed a racial enclave and housing unit sales to the over represented group are restricted" (Moore 2000, 352). This is referred to as the

Ethnic Integration Policy (EIP) and its goal is to promote racial integration and harmony.

The policy intentionally aims to "prevent the formation of racial enclaves by ensuring a

balanced ethnic mix among the various ethnic communities living in public housing estates"

(Housing and Development Board 2013a).

For marriage migrant women like Haeun, who are non-citizens of Singapore, there are

additional restrictions and quotas that differentiate their process of obtaining a HDB flat

from other Singaporean couples. While there are a few eligibility schemes for couples

where one of the spouses is not a Singaporean citizen (See Housing and Development

Board 2013b), Haeun speaks about the restrictions in place that she observed through the

HDB application process. Thus, this shows that while the state allows mixed families to

participate in the HDB scheme, it also imposes sanctions to separate out the locals from the

foreigners. Again, this speaks to the limitations of Singapore's multicultural framework.

Haeun narrates her experiences,

> Haeun: In the case of acquiring an HDB, the conditions are really tough. Since the
> process of obtaining an HDB is supported by the government, the priority
> belongs to Singaporeans….
>
> Me: So does that mean you are not qualified for a HDB if you and your spouse
> are permanent residents?
>
> Haeun: Well [Pause] you can purchase it, but it has to be with your own money.
> The government gives you a loan that is much cheaper than that of an
> average bank. There's state-sponsored interest, low interest loan that
> most people depend on for the housing, but with a PR couple, you can't
> get that. You can definitely buy it though…Compared to other types of
> housing, [HDB] flats are cheaper. It is a state-operated, public
> corporation…Since the objective of the state is to fill the gap of the
> housing market, providing affordable housing for the Singaporean
> citizens, the priority goes to the locals and for foreigners, it's really hard

> to even take out a loan for a flat. Or was it, you are not even eligible for a loan? Even if you are a permanent resident, trying to purchase a HDB with your Singaporean husband, the interest rate for the loan is higher compared to that of local Singaporean couples? Or permanent residents...you are allowed to purchase, but there's no help offered in terms of a bank loan.

(Haeun, *Population 2, Singapore.* 9)

While the motif of multicultural inclusion can be seen through the details of the HDB policy, the quota and restrictions on obtaining HDB flats enforces divisions within the range of demographics who seek to reside in these state-sponsored housing. Firstly, the Ethnic Integration Policy (EIP) clearly divides out the CMIO categories among the locals. As for mixed couples, such as Haeun's family that is constituted of a marriage migrant woman, they are separated out from Singaporean citizens with further restrictions on top of the EIP, which prioritizes Singaporean citizens. Ironically, the policy which aims to "integrate" communities continues to maintain the artificial boundaries of the CMIO among the citizens, and another deeper divide between locals and foreigners.

Apart from the HDB policy, the second point that Haeun discusses which differentiates the marriage migrant women from locals is tied to the education system that their children have to grow up in. She also observes changes in policies restricting the general acceptance of a multicultural atmosphere with the recent political climate of anti-immigrant sentiment:

> "There wasn't really much difference between Singaporean citizens and permanent residents before 5 years ago. Now, since the numbers of permanent residents are slowly rising, the Singaporean citizens are complaining to the government that there are too many immigrants who are taking away their jobs, inflating real estate prices or prices in general. They are really voicing their discontent. Citizenship, the state does give out citizenship, but nowadays it is trying to limit that. So, it is harder to obtain citizenship compared to before. Oh and recently, they are trying to separate out citizens from permanent residents, especially in the school system. Well, there

was already discrimination in place even beforehand for children of permanent residents [Pause]. Yeah, if both the parents are permanent residents…Obviously there is discrimination, because for Singaporeans, they have first dibs to the schools where their parents have graduated from. In Singapore there are schools, not necessarily following a specific hierarchy, but elite schools…even within local schools, there are quality schools that factor in things like who the alumni are and how successful they are, etc. According to these categories, they separate out schools, and after taking into account all of these factors, an annual ranking is published every year. As a parent, you want to send your child to a good school, right? In Singapore, even if you are a bit closer distance-wise to such institutions it would be easier for you to attend such schools. It is really competitive to get accepted, even from elementary school years. So, from when your children are in kindergarten, you have to move to the vicinity and change your home address to try for a chance. But even if you are living within a close distance to the school, the priority goes to the students whose parents are alums of the school. So, if the parents are Singaporean and have attended good schools, their children are given the opportunity to attend the school…but I am a PR and I don't get that opportunity. Let's not even get into the scenario if both parents are PR status. I mean, you can definitely register, but you are going to be put off the priority list, whatever school that may be….I mean, to get into secondary school [middle school], the procedure becomes standardized, but for elementary schools the priority regarding location and the legacy status, and there is a third process which is through the lottery. If there are too many people at one school, that is how they accept students. For most good schools, the competition is so intense that you are guaranteed to go through the lottery. If you don't get it, you don't get it. Well, for non-citizen PRs like us, our chances of winning the lottery is really…you just have to send your kid somewhere else!

Other than that, there is also a difference in tuition fee. Well, it's not that much more costly, which is not something that bothers me, but discrimination is discrimination…The hardest thing for us raising children is the fact that they have to learn a second language in school? They have to do this by themselves, for example, they have to learn Chinese without much help…" (Haeun, *Population 2, Singapore.* 9)

As discussed in my last chapter, a big part of the marriage migrant's role in the host country relates to the family. In that sense, being a mother to their children, and the process of raising a child, is essential to the identity of the women. As Haeun expresses in her interview, the school system that discriminates children of mixed families is a big

concern for her as a mother. The persisting legacy structure that advantages local Singaporean families over the mixed families reveals the divide between locals and foreigners and the negation of true multicultural opportunity for all.

The last point that Haeun makes refers to the Mother Tongue Language (MTL) policy, which "requires all students who are Singaporeans or Singapore Permanent Residents to study their respective official MTL: Chinese, Malay and Tamil. A non-Tamil Indian may choose to offer as his/her MTL: (a) Tamil, or (b) a non-Tamil Indian Language such as Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi or Urdu" (Ministry of Education 2014). While this policy indeed recognizes the multicultural nature of Singapore's national agenda, it creates obstacles for marriage migrant women who do not fit into the CMI categories (Chinese, Malay, Tamil) that the MTL policy emphasizes. While other children with local Singaporean parents are more likely to be exposed to an environment that fosters the usage of these languages, many marriage migrant women cannot provide that for their children. Such language difficulties are shared by marriage migrant in diverse ways.

Seojin (*Population 2 Singapore. 8*), a Korean marriage migrant, also comments on the Mother Tongue Language policy and some challenges that it poses as she struggles to provide a multicultural education for her children that incorporates her own cultural background:

Seojin: It was kind of hard to provide help for my children. Especially English, Chinese…since my child was considered a Chinese-Singaporean, he needed to learn Chinese.

Me: Do your children use Chinese at home?

Seojin: At home [Pause] no they don't. It is almost always in English…when they were young, they used to use Korean, but after they started attending school, they stopped using Korean.

Me: But do they understand..?

Seojin: Hm, well, I guess [Pause], but after my son entered secondary [middle] school, he seems to have forgotten almost everything. He keeps on saying me, "Mom tell me in English, Mom, tell me in English." He keeps on asking me that and when I try to speak in Korean, he would go, "Mom, can you say that again in English?" Like that, I mean it's partially my fault, because when they were young, I had high expectations for them which was why I initially taught them Korean…and now that they don't understand, and I rush them to speak faster, they just resort to English.

(Seojin, *Population 2 Singapore. 8*)

These individual narratives expose the limitations of Singapore's multicultural policies. Singapore's multiculturalism falls short of active and equal inclusion because it does not effectively capture or represent the diversity of all its residents; from Haeun and Seojin's interviews, the policies visibly limit the expression of cultural identities of many marriage migrant women who belong to the "other" category. In the case of Seojin's dilemma, she had to give up teaching her children a part of her cultural identity because the structures of multiculturalism strongly pushed Seojin and her children to abide by the existing policies rather than offering a space that encouraged other cultural practices.

As such, the terms of racial and cultural "diversity" are restricted to the boundaries of the prevailing state parameters, which in the case of Singapore, is contained within the framework of CMIO multiculturalism. The current structures of CMIO multiculturalism combine monocultures of distinct ethnic groups, which celebrate the divide of these groups rather than actively strive for cultural pluralism and diversity. This produces further separations between the locals and foreigners, where marriage migrant women are

disadvantaged in the multicultural systems that center its policies and legislations for the convenience of locals. Thus, the lack of multi-scalar engagement between the state and individual marriage migrant women hinders the achievement of active multiculturalism. If marriage migrant women were given the opportunity to craft their identities beyond a monocultural or bicultural framework, multiculturalism would become more inclusive and diverse.

II.   Multicultural South Korea

"*If you live abroad, you are a foreigner and if you live in Korea, you are a Korean*. Korea is no longer a place where we live by ourselves. Although their languages or skin tones might be slightly different, the foreigners who live in our land are also Korean citizens. A society where various cultures coexist beyond ethnicity and race! That is the joyful route towards a bigger Korea." (See Figure 3)

Figure 3. Public Advertisement
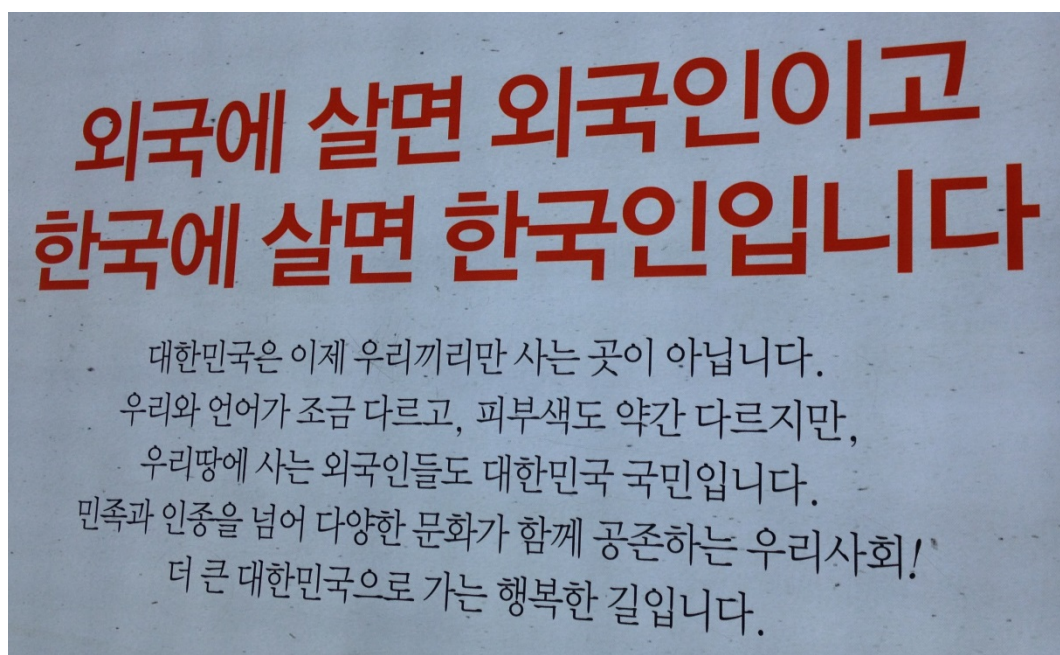
This is a public billboard advertisement found in the streets of Sinchon, Seoul Korea (Photo taken on August 13, 2013 from field observations). It is distributed by Korea Broadcasting Advertising Corporation (KOBACO), which is the government-funded public media rep leading the advertising industry in Korea. According to KOBACO's website, they represent "every terrestrial broadcasting company of Korea for broadcast advertising sales" (KOBACO 2014). This public announcement is representative of the ongoing multicultural campaign that the state is trying to enforce through various policies, which was partially demonstrated in the last chapter. It is also one of many manifestations of how multiculturalism in Korea is celebrated by the press, civil society and the government and works as a dominant discourse in Korea.

At first glance, the public slogan seemingly embraces the future of a multicultural nation as its language portrays an intellectual focus on inclusion and coexistence. However, hidden amidst this celebratory nature is an underlying element that hinders the achievement of such multiculturalism, namely the employment of language that distinguishes "us" from "them." The subject in this statement is "we," where "we" need to incorporate the beneficiaries of the multicultural support, "them," into "our" nation. This assumption not only creates a divide between the locals and the foreigners, but also renders the foreigners passive whereas locals are active agents. With foreigners only seen as being on the receiving end of policy, the state and its multicultural agenda closes off – at least discursively – space for foreigners to become active members of Korean society. This is especially important for marriage migrant women who are already entrenched in the heart of local society as mothers or wives of local citizens. Indeed, the state policies and media that continuously reinforces this divisive approach to multiculturalism manifest in

the daily interactions between marriage migrant women and their family members,

constructing an invisible wall between these personal relations. To illuminate this process,

I will first provide some examples of how the South Korean state crafts its multicultural

ideas. I will then proceed to explain how my own interviewees struggle in this incomplete

pursuit of active multiculturalism.

As I outlined in the previous chapter, from the very outset, South Korea separates out

multiculturalism by defining who and what constitutes a multicultural family in the

Support for Multicultural Families Act. Defined as families comprised of a married

immigrant or a naturalized citizen, multicultural families are separated out from local

families. Hyunjong (*Population 1 South Korea*. 16) comments on the formation and

development of "multicultural families" as a concept within the context of South Korea's

ethnically homogenous past:

> "Since we had always been broadcasting the idea of an ethnically homogenous
> nation, it makes sense to understand the concept of a multicultural family as having
> been created under that existing framework…The concept of multicultural families
> is that one of the spouses has chosen to migrate due to marriage. Although the
> government or state is not required to support such families, the accumulated
> experiences dealing with these families in the past few years have proven that a
> support system is necessary to retain a social harmony. Also, recognizing that a lot
> of these marriages take place without any preparation, such as language or cultural
> understanding, the spouses are bound to encounter conflict in daily interactions,
> because how can you develop love or build a family without common language skills?
> Lack of communication leads to miscommunication, and so [with these
> compounding factors in place] the state decided to develop a legal support act for
> these families…And in the process of creating law, any law, in our country, legal
> terms and definitions must be clarified from the beginning. So, in the second article
> of the Support for Multicultural Families Act, it explains what a multicultural family
> is comprised of or what marriage migrants are. The concept of multiculturalism is
> currently in the beginning stages, but as it starts to solidify, there will be changes.
> Even now, we can visibly see an improvement in people's perspectives. Compared to

some foreign countries where multiculturalism and mixing of ethnicities are a societal norm…we have always emphasized unity, "pure blood" [not being mixed with other ethnicities] and homogeneity of ethnicity which is now shattering away, but until then, it would probably be rough for a while." (Hyunjong, *Population 1 South Korea*. 16)

As Hyunjong illustrates, South Korea's understanding of multicultural families, and thus, multiculturalism, stems from the previous framework of ethnic homogeneity that until recently defined national identity. The influx of foreigners started to change the homogenous demographics of South Korea. Thus, the state could no longer promote national identity based on homogenous ethnic pride. Instead, with the implementation of Support for Multicultural Families Act in 2008 (Ministry of Government Legislation 2011), social institutions ranging from the state to public and private organizations have all pitched in to achieve the goal of a multicultural environment, an environment that fosters support for multicultural families, which includes marriage migrant women.

However, there is widespread criticism regarding the multicultural atmosphere that Korean society celebrates, where one immigration scholar, Han (2007, 59) points out that "the current multicultural discourse in Korea is dominated by mere declarations of general principles and empty political rhetoric." While the realities of multiculturalism may in fact be more complex than what Han gives credit for, the sense of multiculturalism as a hollow label is an idea shared by many others. Kyungwon (*Population 1 South Korea*, 15), an ex-social worker, comments on this hollow "trend" of multiculturalism:

"There is a big supply of multicultural programs…in Korea, these programs are just overflowing. Overflowing is not a big enough word to express the increase of such programs since the rise of marriage migration from 2005. Either way [Pause] I don't know [Pause], maybe it has to do with a global consciousness of multiculturalism..? Korean people love the idea that multiculturalism evokes. Recently, corporations

have set their topical focus on multiculturalism. The trend of social contributions is also zooming in on multiculturalism, and whether it is based on an idea of global awareness, in general, the social contributions are always to do with multiculturalism. Look around at corporations like LG, our country's Incheon International Airport, everyone is doing it. The standard of most corporations are to varying degrees following the multicultural trend…welfare centers and I mean, in every district there is a multicultural family support center." (Kyungwon, *Population 1 South Korea*, 15)

Kyungwon exclaims that there is an overflow of multicultural programs that crowd the public sphere and contemporary rhetoric surrounding multiculturalism. She draws attention to the ubiquity of physical manifestations of multiculturalism such as family support centers and social campaigns ranging from the state to private corporations to non-governmental organizations. In other words, the climate of support is so abundant that Kyungwon uses the term "multicultural shopping" to refer to how there is a growing number of migrant women who now take support programs for granted and "shop" around for the "best deal" among support programs. There are bound to be overlaps with the sheer amount of support systems and programs in society, such that the fundamental objective of providing support and aid are becoming obscure or lost in the process. Indeed, this inefficiency of regulating support has created a backlash primarily towards the state and organizations that produce these programs, but since then, has spread sentiments of animosity towards the migrant women as the beneficiaries.

"The label of multiculturalism itself is a guarantee of support. Some support programs [Pause], there's just a lot of backlash resulting from that. A Korean person, let's say you were poor. Since you are not a [state-defined] multicultural individual, you cannot benefit from the support system. However, this other person can receive that support just because he/she is a multicultural individual. Of course you'd feel bitter towards that person, which would make you oppose the whole idea even more…already, marriage migrant women are used to receiving such support. So,

what I experienced in the field was, these women wouldn't show up unless they received something. If you didn't have a present prepared, they wouldn't come." (Kyungwon, *Population 1 South Korea*, 15)

While the multicultural trend and celebration of South Korea has spurred on the creation of support programs for marriage migrant women, the lack of understanding on the state scale to recognize the true demands of these women has created a surplus of programs that remain ineffective. Thus, the inefficiency of the namesake multicultural policies of the state harbors further backlash, pitting the locals against the marriage migrant women, rather than fostering the integration that it strives toward.

One of the biggest reasons that the support systems continue to overlap is due to the current structure of the government in addressing immigration and multicultural policies. In 2012, the Korea Immigration Service, Ministry of Justice released a report titled "Organizational Frameworks for Immigration Policies: A Comparative Study," which analyzes and criticizes the current political framework.

> Currently in our nation, the immigration policies are established and carried out by a loosely tied executive framework between Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, Ministry of Employment and Labor, (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology), (Ministry of Culture and Tourism), (Ministry of Public Administration & Security), (Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries), Ministry of Health and Welfare[3]. If the political climate shifts, demanding more immigration policies, the lack of a cooperative [centralized] executive framework could lead to disputes between ministries regarding each of their involvement in the larger immigration agenda, leading to policy distortion. This could also potentially create a political climate where policies do not accurately represent the changing realities of its target audience, inevitably leading to an increase of unnecessary social costs. (Han et al. 2012, 1)

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[3] The ministries in parentheses have undergone name changes since then to become respectively, Ministry of Education; Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning; Ministry of Culture Sports and Tourism; Ministry of Security & Public Administration; and Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

As Han et al. (2012) point out, there is no centralized institution overseeing immigration policies, so various ministries end up sharing and often overlapping in support structures that address responsibilities of immigration and support structures for multicultural families. For more clarification, each ministry uses different terms to separate out the detailed responsibilities: "Foreigner policy" (Ministry of Justice), "Foreigner residents policy" (Ministry of Public Administration & Security), "Foreigner Human Resource Policy" (Ministry of Employment and Labor), "Multicultural Family Policy" (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family), "Multicultural Education Policy" (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology) and "Multicultural National Service Policy" (Ministry of National Defense), etc. (Han et al. 2012, 319).

This legislative detailing of the South Korean state suggests that multiculturalism and building its support structures is a key agenda of the government. However, despite such efforts, the lived experiences of multiculturalism speak to the limitations of the current multicultural agenda of the state. As one example of these limitations, Kyungwon (*Population 1 South Korea*, 15) comments on the geographic trend of support systems:

> "But at another glance, there are local limitations. If you go out into the countryside, there's not much support which is actually a characteristic of Korean society. Everything is concentrated in Seoul and then you start heading out to the countryside, there's nothing." (Kyungwon, *Population 1 South Korea*, 15)

The regional difference, where multiculturalism and its celebration is mainly centered around metropolitan areas, alludes to the idea that the state understanding of multiculturalism is largely intertwined with globalization or cosmopolitanism (See Yeoh 2013). This convergence of support systems around metropolitan areas demonstrates how

the South Korean state is using the label of multiculturalism to further a particular agenda, in this case, globalization or cosmopolitanism.

However, this hollow state rhetoric of multiculturalism is often rendered invisible alongside the "bitter" sentiment that locals share in Kyungwon's quote towards the idea of multicultural shopping and inefficiency of state polices, but more importantly to my argument, towards the marriage migrant women. Indeed, the state agenda overlooks the emotional challenges that manifest in the individual scale as locals are starting to come in to daily contact with foreigners as their neighbors in residential neighborhoods or as colleagues in workplaces. With such a visible change, the quotidian struggles of the locals challenge them to break out of the mindset of ethnic and cultural homogeneity that were taught until a decade ago, and into the idea of accepting difference. Yet, the state broadcasted multiculturalism does not always come with systematic instructions in how to do that. While policies of diversity include public education and awareness campaigns on multiculturalism, mass media programs, and legislation that prohibits ethnic and racial hatred in the workplace (Kim and Oh, 1574), my interviewees articulate how the multicultural agenda ironically highlights the idea of difference and "otherness," rather than the inclusion that it is publicly striving for. Especially as the state separates out individuals from multicultural families from locals, the divide continues to manifest in daily experiences.

One of the ways that migrant women experience their "foreignness" comes from the questions and inquisitive glances that they receive from locals when they carry out their chores in various public spaces. Lien (*Population 2 South Korea*. 19), a marriage migrant

woman, discusses her "foreigner" identity that is continuously emphasized through the interaction with her local community:

"Once I start talking, or if I am at a hospital and my name is called, I get a lot of glances especially from children. If I am at a marketplace and when I try to buy something, they ask me, where I am from. Recently, I've been attending an online university and visited the institution once. I was asking the guardian at the door for directions and he was asking me what ethnicity I was…I don't like that. Before, well, I answered freely, but nowadays when I am asked those questions, I instantly become repulsed. [Is it because too many people ask the same questions?] Yeah, too many questions. Also, I don't like revealing that I am a foreigner, because the moment that happens, discrimination, the glances and the tone of speech [in how they address me] changes instantaneously…I think I did well to adopt a Korean name. Wherever I go, it's much less exhausting." (Lien, *Population 2 South Korea*. 19)

Another marriage migrant woman, Natasha (*Population 2 South Korea*. 20), also shares a similar experience to Lien. While the tone of her incident is more lighthearted in comparison to Lien's, it still illustrates how migrant women are cast as "foreigners" and not part of the local group.

"One day, there was this case. Our next door neighbor or maybe on the 8th floor, there is an elderly couple. Last year, I think, we were in an elevator together. They asked, where are you from [in Korean]? I stood still. Just like that. I was really amused. They were talking among themselves, "She doesn't speak Korean." "No, I think she's Filipina, no?" They kept on talking because I wasn't answering. They thought I didn't understand. So they concluded that I was a Filipina! They continued saying, she doesn't speak Korean, and how they should stop talking. As they were saying that, the elevator stopped on the 5th floor and I got out! The moment I entered home, I asked my mother-in-law, "Do I look like a Filipina?" She answered, "What does that mean? You are white, why would you be a Filipina?" So I recounted the story and she asked me why I didn't answer their question. So I said, I didn't want to. I was taking my time, and before I could even answer, they just assumed that I couldn't speak Korean. My husband thought it was hilarious!...In the beginning I was really happy [about all the attention]! After a while, I stopped liking it. When I get on a bus…a foreigner! A foreigner! At first it was okay, but if you continue doing that [Pause]. Oh, and there's this too. The mothers, when they get on the elevator with their kids, they always say, "Hurry, say hello! Say hello!" Why do you force

them to say hello to me? I'm not their grandma or aunt, why?" (Natasha, *Population 2 South Korea*. 19)

In both occurrences, Natasha is singled out as someone that does not fit the descriptions of a local resident. Like Lien, she expresses how she was continuously approached by locals who were curious of her foreign exterior. Both women feel discomfort with the attention that they receive, and Lien delves in further to express the discrimination that she feels in the process. Just as Natasha reacts to this unwanted attention by choosing to remain silent, Lien also actively finds ways to resist the pressures of local expectations. When asked what she would answer to the question of her origins by locals, now that she has received a Korean nationality, Lien responds:

"I say Vietnam. But in some cases, I just say I am Korean and I live abroad. [Me: What are some of the responses to that?] People don't know or they think it's a lie...I just need to stop interacting with them, you know? If I say I am Vietnamese, they just ask me another question...Recently, last year maybe? The questions kept on coming...but then I don't like lying, that's not who I am. If I do, my face pulls, and I think it shows. I mean it must be just me noticing, because the other party wouldn't know, but I don't like it. Either way, I say I am Vietnamese, but to people that I don't know, I just don't respond...Using my name, sometimes I use my Vietnamese name and sometimes I use my Korean one. Well of course, for official documents...I use my Korean name. Sometimes I get calls at work for different reasons, and depending on the context, I use the name that I feel fit...For example, if the other party doesn't understand me, I try to be considerate and use my Korean name, because foreign names are harder to understand...I think of myself as that kind of a Vietnamese. A Vietnamese with a Korean passport." (Lien, *Population 2 South Korea*. 19)

As Lien suggests, there is more to being a foreigner than "where are you from," which is often the biggest factor that divides out foreigners from locals. In the various ways shown from the anecdotes, Natasha and Lien perform their complex identities that go beyond the foreigner label. By doing that, they are confronting the presumptions of foreignness laden

in the glances and questions that try to bind them in the alien category. This tactic guarantees a separation of the foreigner entities from the local population, highlighting the difference that goes back to the idea of "us" vs. "them" which was the central idea of the public campaign by Kobaco. Invariably, color and race are also big determinants of the degree of "foreignness" that each migrant woman experience in their daily spheres. Even though the skin tone and racial coding of Lien is Southeast Asian and Natasha is white, they are still approached by different groups of locals who take interest in their foreignness. This is representative of the current multicultural climate of South Korea. Just as the exterior of the marriage migrant women, as foreigners, becomes the sole reason for locals' attentions, the label of "cultural difference" has become a target of justification for any conflict regarding difference.

In order to illustrate how "culture" becomes a sweeping generalization for difference, I draw on Sunmin (*Population 1 South Korea*. 13) who dissects this idea of cultural difference and queries whether the current understanding of "culture" draws out the complexities of other social processes that make up this term:

> Sunmin: I think it's the difference in how we experience speed in the development of capitalism. For example, Korea had to accept capitalism in a very limited time frame with all the economic development that we went through…I heard this somewhere, but apparently there is a difference in how speed is experienced between countries that have gone through economic development and countries that have not. In that sense, the speed in Korea, the constant push to be faster and faster is a big characteristic of our society. So currently, there are quite a lot of women from underdeveloped countries in Asia coming in without much professional social experience. A lot of women who are here only have high school or middle school qualifications, and come from looking after their own household. In that sense, they haven't been exposed to the capitalist life style. You know when Korea, I mean when the world underwent the development of capitalism with Fordism, Taylorism

standardizing manufacturing lines and such, one of the biggest systems that rooted capitalism was training workers to strictly adhere to work hours. Currently in Korea, getting to the workplace by 9 AM is an established norm, which is why you get all the traffic during the commuting hours. [Some of the] Marriage migrant women do not come from the same lifestyle as us. That's why they can't get the time right. But for Korean people who see the marriage migrant women always being late or lagging behind the pace of society, they label these women as taking life too slow and easy. In that sense, can we simply say that this is cultural difference? I don't think this is just a problem of cultural difference.

Me: But in order to adjust to Korean society, shouldn't the women need to follow these structures?

Sunmin: That's exactly the majority opinion of the Korean people. You should do that if you want to integrate. Do you know how hard it is for marriage migrant women to get used to the work schedule of 9 am to 6 pm? For many Koreans, our bodies have been trained to do that, so that's the basic standard. They impose the same idea on the women saying, if you can't [follow the work hours], how would you even function in society?...For majority Koreans who have never had first-hand experience [of having to integrate in a foreign society and to understand cultural difference] like that of marriage migrant women, their reaction is to urge the women to suppress their fatigue. How tired can you get? Just suppress it! That is the primary reason behind domestic conflicts. For people to get to work by 9 AM, in places like Seoul, you need to leave home by 7 AM considering all the traffic. But before the husband leaves, the wife is expected to serve breakfast. And when she can't get up, she is framed as lazy, and then she would say, no I am not lazy! Why do you have to eat breakfast every morning! Why do I need to serve you breakfast, when it is yourself that is heading off to work! This is a compilation of cultural differences alongside the difference in the development of capitalism, personal differences and so much more.

(Sunmin, *Population 1 South Korea*. 13)

Marriage migrant women, as shown in the interaction above, are often faced with systems of patriarchy that are intertwined with cultural traditions, such that integrating and getting recognition from their own family members is a big challenge, which involves much emotional and psychological turmoil. In the case when tensions or complications arise between the migrant women and their family members, the blame is often put on "cultural

difference," which disregards the full context or the fundamental rationale that accompany the actions or words that create these tensions. While many scapegoat "cultural difference" as an easy way out to avoid confronting the complexities that arise in daily practices and discourse of marriage migration, this does not fundamentally solve the divide between locals and foreigners or the state and the migrant women.

Sunmin's further interrogation into cultural difference reveals that this concept is nuanced by ideas of capitalism, the systems of education and other personal factors that complicate the interactions between locals and their foreign counterparts. In this manner, Sunmin's excerpt illustrates how individuals employ the term culture, but are not necessarily sensitive to the intricacies that culture embodies. In order to further explore the idea of culture, I employ the perspective of seeing multiculturalism as a spectrum, where culture is not grouped or categorized together, but rather represents a continuum of diversity. According to this spectral lens, "culture" as expressed in Sunmin's excerpt takes on a static, monocultural viewpoint. This lack of interrogation into culture has larger implications for achieving active multiculturalism. With "majority opinion of the Korean people" regarding multiculturalism as a combination of monocultures, the current climate of multiculturalism cannot acknowledge the full spectrum of diversity. This limited definition of culture leaves out space for other multicultural agents to participate who do not fit into the boundaries of monocultures, as locals may have done so previously. With marriage migrant women who have acquired citizenship and are trying to negotiate their identities in between their country of origin and South Korea, they continue to hover over the local and foreigner divide, as the system cannot fully incorporate their multicultural identity in either category. In essence, with the majority of locals who take for granted the

Korean cultural system as a universal norm, it is very difficult for them to move out of a monocultural perspective to empathize with foreigners trying to integrate into society with very different understandings of culture.

III.   Concluding Remarks

As demonstrated throughout various narratives of my interviewees, the current climate of multiculturalism is not conducive to establishing an inclusionary multiculturalism that the state tries to propose, as it does not fully capture the range of cultural difference that can only be had if the individual narratives of locals and foreigners are equally represented. I especially pinpoint the lack of multi-scalar communication between the state and individual scales that continue to leave out space for voices to come together and work towards re-envisioning the multicultural agenda that can be inclusive for everyone. As seen in the many instances of my interviews with marriage migrant women and the local population, tensions start to escalate, which I identify as caused by limiting the array of diversity with a namesake multiculturalism and by dividing out local vs. foreigner in the multicultural agenda of the state. Thus, the misrepresentation or underrepresentation of marriage migrant women's voices continuously paints an incomplete picture of multiculturalism that focuses on the idea of celebrating and embracing others, without actually offering a groundwork of how to do such work in the daily lives of individuals.

In order to address a way forward, my Conclusion Chapter looks at ideas of connection. As seen in Chapter Three, the macro-level state cannot fully capture the individual experiences with their policies no matter how detailed the policies. It is not possible to

make policies and legal procedures for every case of the marriage migrant women that seems to arise. Yet, an omnipresent state that tries to step into every situation not only takes away the women's rights to self-identify but also re-enforces the idea of control. The state has limitations on how far they can influence the daily interactions of locals and marriage migrant women, which is why a medium is necessary to bridge the gap between the state and the individual scale, with expertise in connecting locals to residents of foreign origins. I identify that this responsibility belongs to the local network of support organizations that have experience with both populations of locals and foreigners, and have the power to bring them together. They are crafting physical and emotional spaces for discussions to happen that can further the ideals of an active multiculturalism where everyone feels included.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

My engagement with the geographic concept of scale was central to identifying the failure of multi-scalar interactions. Throughout my thesis, I drew out the lack of inclusive dialogue between the state and individual scales where legal systems, policies and political climates of Singapore and South Korea do not fully engage with the lived realities of marriage migrant women. Embracing the definition of geographical scale that captures the sociospatial dialectic, "the idea that social processes and space – hence scales – mutually intersect, constitute, and rebound upon one another in an inseparable chain of determinants" (Gregory et al. 2009, 665), I interrogated the connections, or more importantly, the lack of connections, that produce disparities of understanding in Singapore and South Korea's marriage migration discourse and practices.

As discussed in my methods chapter, in my research I employed participant observation to contextualize my findings, but I mainly engaged with interviews as my primary data. These aided my understanding of how lived experiences were influenced by state agendas at the national scale. Interviews, as a method that validates the "meanings people attribute to their lives and the processes which operate in particular social contexts" (Valentine 2005, 111), opened up dimensions of marriage migrant women's agency and performativity within my broader theoretical themes of interest. In-depth conversations

drew out deeply rooted reflections and emotions from my interviewees and revealed

complexities related to the namesake multicultural celebration or the label of legal systems

that defined the terms of marriage migrant women's daily experiences. By endorsing

individual experiences as a crucial part of my research, I have applied the concept of

situated knowledge from feminist geographies and challenged the notion of universal and

impartial knowledge that constitutes a masculinist practice (Staeheli and Kofman 2004, 5).

Again, my approach of a scalar analytic reveals that the interactions between various scales,

namely state, civil society, local community, and the individual marriage migrant women,

are dynamic. Critically engaging a multi-scalar framework in my investigation of marriage

migration, I challenge "structures and practices that create marginality and oppression"

(Ibid. 12) and build a connection between theory, research and practice.

My third chapter looked at the lack of multi-scalar interactions from the angle of state

policies and legislations; in particular, I addressed citizenship and stay related laws along

with employment policies for marriage migrant women. I employed Scott's (1998) theory

of state administrative ordering to decode the lived processes of marriage migration,

inquiring into the relationship between the state and individual scales. Scott describes the

formation and enforcement of state policies and legislations as part of a social

simplification process that enhances the legibility of a society and "provid[es] the capacity

for large-scale social engineering" (Scott 1998, 5). Hence, in laying out the systems of stay

related laws or employment policies, the states of Singapore and South Korea are building

on the power to intervene and define the terms of how marriage migration is lived in their

national boundaries (Scott 1998, 2). While South Korea takes on a more detailed route of

administrative ordering than Singapore, they both base their legislations and policies on

the idea of a family matrix, emphasizing the role of marriage migrant women as wives, mothers, and daughters-in-law. This creates the idea of dependency for marriage migrant women whose identities within the host nations are defined in terms of their local family connections. The lack of a multi-scalar dialogue manifests such that the state policies are not taking into account the voices of marriage migrant women who express emotions ranging from frustration to confusion that stem from their dependent statuses. This fosters a sense of insecurity, which then leads to physical, psychological, and mental dimensions of vulnerability for the women that perpetuates as long as the states continue to reinforce dependency.

My fourth chapter focuses on Singapore and South Korea's climate of multiculturalism that provides the platform for marriage migrant women's integration into these two nations. At first glance, both countries put forth a climate of multicultural celebration that seems to affirm Mitchell's definition of active multiculturalism: it is effective for everyone; it equates civil competence of "society's core groups" to that of "out-group" members; it recognizes diverse ways of being in the world; and it values the qualities of "out-group" members to reconstitute the notion of civil competence *within* the public sphere (Mitchell 2004, 642). However, multi-scalar interaction largely remains absent as the state rhetoric of multiculturalism does not fully capture the essence of diversity of its multicultural residents, namely, the marriage migrant women. Singapore's idea of multiculturalism is defined in terms of the local CMIO (Chinese, Malay, Indian, Other) multiculturalism that fails to acknowledge diversity as a spectrum, but rather as categories of the CMIO. Singapore's multiculturalism first divides out locals from foreigners as the CMIO categories are built upon the demographics of Singaporean citizens, but it also creates divisions

between locals that belong to different ethnic categories. Both of these divisions start becoming problematic when locals carry out interethnic marriages and in the case of marriage migration, when locals marry foreigners who add more complexities to the "other" category. In comparison, the creation of South Korea's multiculturalism stems from the large influx of foreigners coming to reside in Korea, driving away the previous framework of ethnic homogeneity that defined national identity. While the state and civil society continue to broadcast a national acceptance of multiculturalism, the distinction between local vs. foreigner still exists in the language of multicultural promotion. In both cases, I identify examples where the hollow climate of multiculturalism leads to the simplification of social processes that constitute the complexities of true multiculturalism. With both Singaporean and South Korean states enforcing an inclusive climate through a celebratory multiculturalism agenda, they are not providing the grounds for inquiries to question the idea of division that currently separates out locals from foreigners. It renders "cultural difference" as the rationale for tensions that manifest between marriage migrant women and their surrounding community and the state, but doesn't allow space to interrogate other social reasons that could be behind the lack of multi-scalar interaction. This shows that there can be realistic repercussions that follow a namesake celebration of multiculturalism, which emphasizes the necessity to move towards an inclusive multicultural framework.

Indeed, throughout my thesis, I particularly focused on the disconnect between state and individual scales, where I identify how state citizenship and stay related legislations, employment policies and multicultural agendas directly influence marriage migrant women, but paradoxically remain detached from the lived experiences of marriage migrant

women. While my aim thus far has been to demonstrate this scalar separation of processes,

I switch gears here in my final chapter and explore a medium to narrow the gap of such

divided realities.

I propose that the key towards resolving the interactive gap is to acknowledge and

strategically encourage the role of a meso-scale, a space between the macro-scale of the

state and the micro-scale of individual marriage migrant women. I define this meso-scale as

the local support networks, groups who carry out a larger social responsibility to facilitate

interactions between the state and the migrant women. Support networks are

knowledgeable of processes within both micro and macro scales, as they are constantly in

communication with marriage migrant women who approach them for help, and they are

well-informed of the national framework of state policies and agenda that delineate the

terms of the support services that they provide. In this manner, support networks qualify

as effective intermediaries between the state and marriage migrant women. Drawing from

my own interviewees who belong to these networks of aid, I offer various perspectives into

the current role of support networks, their limitations, and how they are evolving to suit

contemporary trends.

Here, by no means am I suggesting that the "networks of aid" approach is the only

solution to facilitate collaborative conversations between the state and marriage migrant

women, but it is one effective measure to start addressing the scalar gap of interaction. In

that, I am actively partaking in feminist knowledge production that undertakes political

commitment to social transformation (Derek et al. 2009, 246) as "feminist research aims

not only to record or interpret external realities but also explicitly aims to promote social

transformations" (Raghuram, Madge and Skelton 1998, 38). I am also drawing upon critical

knowledges that are "embedded in critiques of existing social structures and involve an

ideology of change, a political project which forms an inherent part of knowing" (Ibid.).

With these ideals in mind, my suggestion aims to generate more fruitful discussions

that would bring about social transformation, especially regarding the responsibilities and

growth of Singapore and South Korea's networks of aid. Thus, in my next section, I discuss

the role of local aid networks as a meso-scalar solution. Unlike my body chapters, I take a

synthetic approach of combining Singapore and South Korea in this chapter to represent

the full range of possibilities that the nature of aid offers, and to recognize the continuum of

networks of aid that surpasses spatial boundaries.

I.   **"More Support, More Empowerment"[4]**

The phrase, "more support, more empowerment," is one that Celine (*Population 1*

Singapore. 4) puts forth to highlight the significance of support networks in host countries.

Celine particularly speaks to the social isolation and vulnerability of marriage migrant

women, in discussing the role of support to empower these women:

> "Let's say you stay here long enough, then you probably build your own networks,
> but for those that...[have] not [been here] many years? You just know a few people
> only, you know? You don't really know a lot of people...Let's say that there's more
> support here, of course you are more empowered. But if there's less
> support...there's no support, then who can you turn to? So [they are] more
> vulnerable." (Celine, *Population 1 Singapore*. 4)

Along with this lack of support network, other factors such as language barriers or a

lack of knowledge of social systems, ranging from health care to transportation systems,

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[4] Celine, *Population 1 Singapore*. 4

render many marriage migrant women vulnerable. Thus, as Minji clarifies, "It's not

necessarily discrimination. It's true that they, the migrant women, need more care and aid"

(Minji, *Population 1 South Korea*. 14).

As Minji reflects, there is, indeed, a need for a local support network that can provide

care and aid. Celine reflects on the role of a support organization in the following quote:

> "We give them more informations, yeah we give them more informations. And also
> we want to…we help them to see what options they have. Then, of course we try to
> see whether, what are their support system here, because eventually you need to tie
> them back to their support system." (Celine, *Population 1 Singapore*. 4)

Celine refers to the role of support organizations in disseminating information to aid the

integration process for marriage migrant women. She also brings up the importance of

having a community throughout this course of integrating, when she establishes the need

to identify a support system to fall back on.

Additionally, Sunmin brings up another role of support networks, which is to facilitate

interaction between marriage migrant women and the locals:

> "Our Korean classes are all taught by locals. We are always having conferences
> among the NGOs in Korea to talk about these issues…we accept anybody who ask to
> visit – college students, researchers, etc. When we have time, we don't refuse them.
> When they conduct their interviews like this or work with us in this manner, people
> can change [their perspectives on marriage migrant women]. So, even though we
> may be busy…we still accept people who come to visit." (Sunmin, *Population 1 South
> Korea*. 13)

This quote illustrates how the organization connects the local community to the marriage

migrant women, helping foster an inclusive climate of discussion between both entities to

challenge pre-conceived notions of marriage migration processes. This connection,

provided by local support organizations, ultimately helps build a personalized support

network for marriage migrant women within their host societies, aiding them to move away from structures of dependency and vulnerability that many women often face.

While there are many routes of support that both nations of Singapore and South Korea offer to marriage migrant women, I differentiate out the support provided strictly by the state because as demonstrated in the previous chapters, state policies and legislations can convey a top-down agenda that leaves out voices of the individual scale. Sunmin (*Population 1 South Korea*. 13) provides a reflection that scrutinizes the role of the state as differing from that of the local support network:

> "So, a lot of the spontaneity or organic formation of programs and ideas has lost ground. A lot of NGOs have disappeared since then. Because if the government steps into building systems through policies, there is no capacity left for others to partake in the process. Beforehand, the government did not even blink an eye at the foreign laborers, but for the agenda of marriage migration, there is just too much overflowing support that is taking away the spontaneity of marriage migrant women. I think there are definitely obstacles and dangers that follow." (Sunmin, *Population 1 South Korea*. 13)

As Sunmin points out, states further particular agendas through their support systems, which dismisses the potential for participation of other support networks. As in the example of the quote, the government favored the agenda of marriage migration over that of foreign laborers, directing support to the former. In this sense, the states are using support systems as another branch of their administrative ordering practices (See Chapter 3) to craft their nations' political climates. Thus, in this chapter, I mainly focus on the perspectives of local organizations, such as NGOs, legal counseling centers and social enterprises, as support networks to address the disparity of processes within the scales of the state and individual marriage migrant women.

Also in the quote, Sunmin addresses how a centrally managed support agenda of the South Korean state has driven out the diversity of other support structures like the NGOs, leaving out the voices of marriage migrant women who may or may not effectively benefit from these top-down support policies as the support was not created out of necessity. If support networks are to act as bridges between the state and marriage migrant women, it is important that they capture the diverse range of migrant women's voices whose interests and needs may diverge. Thus, there needs to be varied types of organizations with differing agendas to incorporate the individual concerns regarding processes of marriage migration.

For example, activism, especially regarding women's rights, is the key agenda for Lien's organization (*Population 2 South Korea*. 19) where she herself is a marriage migrant woman and a social activist:

> "We tell the government all the time, that it is really important to educate husbands and local families on the topic of human rights for marriage migrant women. These migrant women have rights too – they are not only here to be wives or daughters-in-law that husbands and families often label them as. And in order to secure the women's human rights, the states primarily need to secure these women's residential statuses. If the visa statuses are dependent on the husband or family, no matter how much effort the women put into grounding themselves in society…it is just too difficult!" (Lien, *Population 2 South Korea*. 19)

Lien's organization pressures the government to push for policy changes, striving toward broader structural change that would affect the statuses of marriage migrant women. In another case, Leah (*Population 1 Singapore.* 2) mentions that her organization's main priority is to focus on the family. As Leah's organization emphasizes the importance of building a healthy family environment, keeping families together becomes the motivation underlying its support programs, such as providing marital counseling between husbands

and wives. In contrast, April's organization (*Population 1 Singapore.* 1) emphasizes 'pro-choice':

> "We don't have a set, like pro-family…We are pro-choice, very pro-choice. You decide what you want. We work with, we listen to what is it that you need, and we tell you what we can do to help. Always coming from the perspective of the caller or the client…So *even* if they are in a destructive relationship and if they choose to stay in a destructive relationship, this is their choice. We would of course tell you the impact of staying in a destructive relationship, but in the end we take the stand that maybe at this point of time, you are not ready to do anything. So we let you decide, when you want to do it and what you want to do. We let you know what are the choices available. This is our stand." (April, *Population 1 Singapore.* 1)

As the quote suggests, April and her colleagues chiefly respect the migrant women's choices when giving out advice, which can be seen as a process towards empowerment, building the independent capacity of these women to make decisions for themselves.

All of the examples from Leah, April and Lien demonstrate that different support networks have varying expertise with the range of marriage migrant women's needs in society. Indeed, the day to day interactions with the marriage migrant women community provide support networks with grounded expertise. In my own interactions with organizations through my participant observation, I have come across publications that document such expertise including: Q&A brochures that discuss how to navigate the legal system of citizenship and visa; language textbooks geared towards facilitating marriage migrant women's integration into society; and detailed reports that reflect on the success and failures of trial "multicultural" programs. The know-how of support networks in the field of marriage migration is a prime contributing factor in bridging the state policies together with migrant women's lived experiences. If the states start to recognize the value of this expertise, this will lead to broader policy implications as local support networks can

provide grounds to test out policies and agendas before they are implemented on a

nationwide scale, guaranteeing a cost-efficient process with a higher level of success.

Currently, this expertise is already endorsed among the local support networks as they

refer to each other based on the specific needs of the marriage migrant women who reach

out to organizations for help:

> "We do get quite a few referrals. In fact, especially for a particular program,
> B^5...from family service centers...We do get calls, but in organizations *X* and *Y*, you
> may be aware, they are...specialized in working with foreign workers' issues. And
> therefore, I'm sure they must get much more calls, many more calls than we do.
> There are special hotlines, there's special services." (Ada, *Population 1 Singapore.* 3)

As such, the local support network acknowledges and validates the specialized expertise of

each organization, which encourages an atmosphere of diversity among aid offered.

There are different forms of aid that have arisen to address the large demographic shift

that Singapore and South Korea have gone through due to marriage migration practices. In

order to accommodate the diverse processes of marriage migration, local support networks

have been expanding to incorporate various agendas of different interest groups. For

instance, Kyungwon (*Population 1 South Korea.* 15) references a social movement among

some marriage migrant women in South Korea where they aim to give back to society

because of the support that they initially received when they first arrived in South Korea.

Another example of marriage migrant women's participation in building support

networks comes from Celine (*Population 1 Singapore.* 4):

> "I am not sure whether is it a church group. I am not sure, but it seems that you
> know, like ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, they would gather themselves around the
> coffee shop area to have their breakfast, to...you know? This group is all from China.
> I almost see them once, once a week. I, of course, I don't know them. I am just at

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[5] B is a particular program where migrant women are accompanied by trained locals who would provide mental and physical support through legal court processes.

another corner taking my breakfast [Laughs], but I saw, I thought that it was a very good community, kind of interactions, so they know, they know one another, and they take care of one another's kids. They also bring their kids down. So I am not sure how they formed this group, because easily I saw….seven of them. Seven to eight of them. It's not like two three, seven or eight of them….[With] this kind of community…of course they feel empowered right? Speaking the same language, same accent [Laughs]. I don't know how can this be organized, and I don't know how they organize, but I thought is a good thing for them." (Celine, *Population 1 Singapore*. 4)

While this gathering may not take on a formal support structure, the solidarity of sharing similar backgrounds and experiences is enough to bring the marriage migrant women together. They provide each other with physical, mental and moral support that other local-based support organizations may not be able to reproduce, despite their own programs of grounded expertise. As an alternative, this organic community building process is one of the ways local support networks are evolving and are engaging with the rapidly changing dynamics of marriage migration processes.

II.   Contributions

My thesis aims to contribute to both academic scholarship and general knowledge. To this end, I have intellectually identified the shortcomings of current state legislations, policies, and agendas in Singapore and South Korea in that they do not fully incorporate the voices of marriage migrant women. In order to address this lack of interaction between the state and the individual, I put forth a practical suggestion by emphasizing the important intermediary role assumed by networks of aid. Identifying the possibilities of networks of aid as multi-scalar agents within marriage migration policies and practices speaks to my engagement with feminist knowledge production because I endeavored to have my

research exhibit a social activist dimension. Indeed, my hope is that by highlighting the possibilities evident within networks of aid, future policies and practices can become more attuned to the realities of marriage migrant women and more effective as a result.

My next contribution within marriage migration scholarship was through my methodological approach. I add to a growing literature on a qualitative, empirical analysis. In order to address multi-thematic and multi-scalar processes of marriage migration without generalizing, I applied situated knowledge to validate individual perspectives as my primary source of data as well as to challenge the concept of universal and objective knowledge. This approach made visible voices and stories that are often overlooked, and granted legitimacy and authority to women who are often rendered vulnerable and silent by state practices.

It is important to move away from viewing knowledge as static and objective, because the social world does not fit within a "one size fits all" model. As my research shows, the complexities within marriage migration processes defy easy categorization. As an extension of this point, I identified that Singapore and South Korea's multiculturalism operates largely in a namesake manner. In my work, I challenged the simplification of multiculturalism as a commemorative label in both nations, thus advocating for analyses that take into account the production of active multiculturalism. In other words, I signal the significance of inquiries that address the complexities of race, ethnicity, religion and language within conceptualizations of and enactments of multiculturalism. Especially complicating the expression of multiculturalism is the physical embodiment of multiculturalism by children from mixed families. By existence, multicultural children and their individual bodies symbolize multiculturalism as a state of being rather than a

particular policy. Noting this translation of multiculturalism to the individual scale and wondering about its implications challenges many of the current policies that view multiculturalism from the angle of public performance. Also, current policies are largely shaped by monocultural entities who are defining the terms of multiculturalism as consisting of a group of monocultural individuals. The children of marriage migrant women and their husbands trouble such assertions. While my thesis identified a portion of the complexities surrounding multicultural scholarship, more research needs to be conducted to bring to light how multiculturalism works as a practice and lived experience across spatial scales. Noting the ways in which multiculturalism as a policy falls short due to its implementation and fundamental assumptions about monoculturalism marks another contribution of my thesis.

Lastly, in my research I emphasize the importance of a comparative analysis. This kind of approach is largely absent in current marriage migration scholarship. A comparative framework not only offers insight into the differences and unique attributes related to a particular place, but it also offers reflections on general trends that can translate over to other contexts. By undertaking a comparative case study of Singapore and South Korea, the scope of my research opened up to include a wider range of perspectives, which in turn granted visibility to overlooked populations and allowed for their stories to emerge. As shown throughout my chapters, the framework of a comparative analysis that juxtaposed the different yet overlapping regimes of Singapore and South Korea revealed the range of realities that would not have been visible if I had focused on one national case study. The unique cultural and social contexts of the two nations enriched my analysis, offering a dynamic scope of marriage migration stories.

While my contributions thus far provide one more piece to the jigsaw puzzle of marriage migration scholarship, continuous efforts need to be made, fueling the dialogue to move forward. Thus, I offer my conclusion by sharing the voice of Sunmin (*Population 1 South Korea*. 13), whose words provide guidance to continue on the much needed dialogue:

> "We frame our work as a reverberation, an echo, to the Korean society. We don't stop anyone from coming to us, and we understand that this is the way to continue our conversations." (Sunmin, *Population 1 South Korea*. 13)

Like the efforts of Sunmin and her colleagues to provide a reverberation to the Korean society, my thesis pursues a similar objective. I strive to bring to light a deeper understanding of the scalar processes that constitute marriage migration in both Singapore and South Korea. While my comparative work between Singapore and South Korea reveals the similarities – the echoes if you will – unfolding at the state and individual scales, I claim that other echoes need to arise so as to effectively continue conversations about processes unfolding within other scales, such as the region or community. Such dynamic dialogues can offer resonance and dissonance in the constant reverberations coursing through the multi-faceted discourse and practice of marriage migration.

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Appendix A: List of Interviewees

Singapore		South Korea	
Population 1	Population 2	Population 1	Population 2
1 April	6 Anh	13 Sunmin	19 Lien
2 Leah	7 Youngok	14 Minji	20 Natasha
3 Ada	8 Seojin	15 Kyungwon	21 Su Ling
4 Celine	9 Haeun	16 Hyunjong	22 Yuki
5 Tan	10 Eunmi	17 Minsoo	
	11 Keonwoo	18 Wooyoung	
	12 Phuong		