



“Fake” or “Real” Marriage? Gender, Age, “Race” and Class in the Construction of Un/desirability of Marriage Migrants in South Korea

JYOUNG LEE-AN
Carleton University, Canada

ABSTRACT *This paper examines the link between the regulation of marriage migration and national boundary-making processes in South Korea through the analysis of “fraudulent marriage” discourses. Corresponding to the goals of the Korean government based on the gendered and racialized construction of the Korean nation, populations of marriage migrants are hierarchized according to various intersecting axes of gender, age, class, and “race.” Based on a critical race and intersectional feminist framework and critical security studies, I examine multiple intersections of the social relations, which hierarchize marriage migrants. While certain marriage migrants are constructed as desirable because they embody particular sets of characteristics (namely childbearing female marriage migrants from developing countries), other marriage migrants outside these parameters are actively constructed as undesirable and suspected of fraudulent marriage. The discriminatory distinctions drawn among differentially racialized and gendered marriage migrants raise significant social justice concerns. The article concludes with a brief discussion of strategies pursued by marriage migrants and their Korean spouses to undermine discourses of fraudulent marriages.*

KEYWORDS marriage migration; nation-building; Korean ethnic nationalism; racialization; gender; nation; intersectionality; securitization; fraudulent marriage

Introduction

The South Korean government began to turn its attention to the issue of migration when the number of foreigners, in particular, female marriage migrants, rapidly increased after the mid-1990s (H.-K. Lee, 2008). Until the 2000s, the Korean government did not have comprehensive im/migration

Correspondence Address: Jiyoun Lee-An, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, K1S 5B6; Email: jiyoung.an@carleton.ca

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laws and policies apart from fragmented temporary labour migration policies to control migrant workers based on the rotation principle, which permits migrant workers into the country only if they pledge to return to their home countries after a certain period of time (K.-S. Han & K.-S. Han, 2007). In response to the rapid increase of female marriage migrants, Roh Moo-hyun's government (2003-2008) announced the transition to a multicultural society as a pressing task of the government in 2006 and presented initial governmental plans to develop comprehensive im/migration laws and policies (H.-J. Kim, 2007). Following this announcement, the government put in place new policies and laws that disproportionately focus on marriage migrants and their families. In 2006, the *Grand Plans to Support Social Integration of Female Marriage Immigrant Families* was devised to address issues faced by female marriage migrants (Ministry of Public Health & Welfare, 2006). In the following year, the *Framework Act on Treatment of Foreigners Residing in the Republic of Korea* (2007) was legislated to provide legal grounds to construct comprehensive im/migration policies that extended to include all immigrants, migrants, and refugees living in Korea (Framework Act on Treatment of Foreigners Residing in the Republic of Korea, 2007). However, as Myeong-duk Kang, director in the Ministry of Justice that drafted *The Act* clearly mentioned, *The Act* was devised "substantially for marriage migrants" (Legislation & Judiciary Committee, 2007, p. 5). Soon after, the *Multicultural Families Support Act* was legislated separately in 2008 and singled out marriage immigrants and their families as beneficiaries of *The Act* (Multicultural Families Support Act, 2008). The *2008 Act* officially referred to marriage immigrants and their families as "multicultural families," instead of "female marriage immigrant families" as referred to in the first *2006 Plan*. In the same year, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs announced a plan titled *Supporting Multicultural Families Based on Family Life Cycle Policy* (Ministry of Health, Welfare & Family Affairs, 2008). In 2009, *Comprehensive Plans for Improving Supports for Multicultural Families* was announced (Prime Minister's Secretariat, 2009). Since 2010, the *1st Basic Plan for Multicultural Families Support Policies (2010-2012)* and the *2nd Basic Plan for Multicultural Families Support Policies (2013-2017)* subsequently followed as a requirement of the *Multicultural Families Support Act* (Ministry of Gender Equality & Family, 2016a).¹

As suggested by the series of laws and policies targeting female marriage migrants mentioned above, the Korean government – which faces a care deficit resulting from a low-fertility rate and an aging population – encourages marriage migrants to enter Korea to fulfil the care and reproductive labour required to maintain Korean families and reproduce the Korean nation (H.-J. Kim, 2007). This is in contrast to the government's attitude towards temporary low-skilled migrants (who are structurally

¹ See An (2019) for a detailed content analysis of how these laws and policies are specifically developed to fulfil the Korean government's demographic and nationalistic goals.

restricted from immigrating to Korea through the rotation principle) and refugee populations,² who are discouraged from becoming permanent immigrants. As a result, marriage migration has become the main source of permanent immigration in Korea. Between 2007 and 2015, marriage migrants comprised 56-72% of the total number of naturalized immigrants (Danuri, 2016). However, not all marriage migrants have been constructed as desirable sources of permanent immigration. Corresponding to the Korean government's demographic imperative to solve the low-birth rate problem by reproducing the patrilineal Korean nation, the desirability or undesirability of marriage migrants is determined according to their positioning in varying intersections among age, gender, class, and "race." While certain marriage migrants are constructed as desirable because they embody particular sets of characteristics (namely young female marriage migrants from developing countries), other marriage migrants outside these parameters are actively constructed as undesirable and subject to suspicion of being agents of fraudulent marriage. This paper examines the development of "fraudulent marriage" discourses targeting certain marriage migrants and analyzes the roles of these discourses in regulating marriage migration. I focus on how marriage migrants' intersecting social relations shape the experiences of marriage migrants and their Korean spouses in the process of acquiring spousal visas and subsequently citizenship in Korea.

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Race and Intersectional Feminist Framework: Theorizing Intersections of the Nation, Gender and Race

The question of who belongs and who does not belong to the nation is integral to understanding the process of nation-state building. The boundary of the nation has historically been contested by various marginalized groups' political and social struggles, seeking to be included in the nation. In "malestream" literature on the nation and nationalism, the nation is understood as a socially constructed abstract notion of an "imagined community." Benedict Anderson (2006) illustrates this construction through the development of print capitalism. Alternatively, Anthony Smith sees nations as based upon pre-existing ethnic origins built on geographical or cultural foundations (Smith, 1986). However, in these two popular bodies of scholarship on the nation, women are hidden in the theorizations of the nation and nationalism, even though gender and gender relations function as an integral element in the ways in which the nation is imagined and reproduced

² The Korean government adopted the 1951 Refugee Convention in 1992 and legislated the *Refugee Act* in 2012. However, the acceptance rate of refugees has been remarkably low. In 2018, only 3.7% of refugee claimants were accepted (Ministry of Justice, 2019).

(Kim & Choi, 1998; McClintock, 1997; Yuval-Davis, 1997). Feminist scholars emphasize the crucial roles played by women as biological, cultural and political reproducers of national identities in shaping the boundary of the nation. Emphasizing the gendered aspects of the construction of the nation is integral to examining how female and male marriage migrants are understood differently in Korea with respect to reproducing the nation both biologically and culturally.

In addition to addressing the gendered aspects of the construction of the nation, critical race scholars emphasize racialized processes of nation-building. They examine how the inclusion and exclusion of certain racialized groups both inside the nation and at the nation-state border play a constitutive role in formulating an ideal of the nation (e.g., “white” in western countries) (Balibar, 1991; Dhamoon & Abu-Laban, 2009; Thobani, 2007). The nation-building project is premised on discourses of race and the accompanying exclusion of racialized Others; such discourses are an intrinsic feature of nationalism. In particular, the control and regulation of migration plays a key role in the modern state’s nation-building process and contributes to the social, cultural, and symbolic boundary-making of the nation (Chung & Kim, 2012; Li, 2003). Determining who is allowed or not allowed to enter destination countries is the question that defines the population along the un/desirability divide.

Paying attention to the un/desirability divide based on diverse intersections of social relations, this paper uses an intersectionality lens both as a theoretical approach and a method of analysis to examine structural inequalities that marriage migrants face in Korea (Choo & Ferree, 2010). An intersectional lens is utilized to analyze both the “system-level complexity” of social inequalities and microlevel experiences of marriage migrants, in order to examine “the connections among power relations, institutional contexts and lived experience” (Choo & Ferree, 2010, p. 136). Adopting an intersectionality framework by no means suggests that the axes of race, gender, class and other types of power relations are weighted equally for all social groups and social issues. Instead of examining the different axes of social relations separately or simply treating them as additive or cumulative categories, I focus on their relationality and simultaneity in order to unravel the complex configuration of those relations (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Crenshaw, 1989; Stasiulis, 1999; Yuval-Davis, 2006). I see such relations as being socially constructed and continuously shaped by different social forces, practices, contexts, and histories.

Critical Security Studies: Racialized and Gendered Construction of Security Threats to the Nation

In order to understand how discourses of fraudulent marriage operate as a discursive tool to regulate marriage migration, I draw upon critical security

studies, which focus on the political and social processes whereby migrants are constructed as threats to destination countries (Bigo, 2002; Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). I adopt security not as a noun that describes certain conditions of imminent threats, but a verb (“securitization”) that captures the processes of transforming other issues into ones of security (Nyers, 2009, p. 3). Securitization is conducted through the double movement of security: while acts of security aim to provide protection from danger, acts of security themselves also “encourage fear, foster apprehension, and feed off of nervousness in the population” (Nyers, 2009, p. 3). The nexus of migration and security has intensified since 9/11: in particular, the racialized discourse on Arabs and Muslims creates a climate of suspicion, intimidation and fear in immigration destination countries (Arat-Koc, 2006, p. 220). Discourses representing migrants as threats to the host society have become an important source for mobilizing security rhetoric and institutions. As Dhamoon (2010, p. 257) argues, security is not a primary threat, but “a discourse of meaning-making” with respect to the nation and belonging.

Criminalization is an essential part of securitization discourses. The criminalization of migrants transforms unwanted migrants into “deviants” who must be controlled and regulated (Vezovnik, 2018). Rather than being treated as individuals, undesirable migrants are grouped as potential criminals and security threats who need to be managed collectively (Bosworth & Guild, 2008). Criminalization works to “vindicate the restriction of transnational mobility” (Bosworth & Guild, 2008, p. 707-8). By constructing migrants as potential criminals and security threats, punitive measures are easily implemented. It was not a coincidence that fraudulent marriage came to be the object of the securitization of migration in many destination countries (Bhuyan, Korteweg, & Baqi, 2018; D’Aoust, 2014; Gaucher, 2014): fraudulent marriage is stipulated as a venue for “unqualified” immigrants to enter destination countries. Certain gendered and racialized marriage migrants are grouped and portrayed as potential criminals, rather than individual marriage fraudsters.

In the South Korean context, given the history of military tensions with North Korea since the Korean War (1950-1953), traditional geopolitical and military issues have been at the forefront of security concerns (S.-W. Lee, 2017). Only with the increase in migrant populations since the 1990s has the securitization discourse relative to migration become widespread. Securitization discourses centre mainly on temporary migrant workers, who are portrayed as potential threats to the economic, public and national security of Korean society or as potential criminals who threaten the safety of Koreans and create social unease (S.-K. Kim 2015; S.-W. Lee 2017). In addition, migrant workers’ different religions and cultures, in particular, Muslim migrant workers, are considered a source of cultural and religious conflicts, which threatens the cultural security of Korean society (S.-W. Lee, 2017). The remark of Conservative Congress member Yong-Kyun Kim demonstrates

how the increase of migrant workers is discursively translated as a security threat in Korea. He stated,

If migrants exercise their collective right, endanger public security, or disturb social order, social turmoil would take place ... If the number of migrant workers exceeds the number of Korean soldiers and if they exercise their collective power, ... it would be more chaotic than we imagine. (Legislation & Judiciary Committee, 2003, p. 5, my translation)

By unfavourably comparing migrant workers to Korean soldiers, he interprets the increasing numbers of migrant workers as a security threat to Korea. The securitization of male migrant workers is expanded to those who marry Korean women and settle down in Korea. Compared to female marriage migrants, male marriage migrants, in particular, those from Muslim countries (who come to Korea as temporary migrant workers and marry Korean women), have been the main target of securitization discourses. The securitization of marriage migration entails strong governmental intervention in border controls including the scrutiny of marriage migrants' intimate relations with their Korean spouses.

Methodology

This research is based on a qualitative methodological research design devised as part of my PhD research including critical discourse analysis and in-depth semi-structured interviews (An, 2019). Critical discourse analysis is an analytical methodology to investigate language in relation to social relations of dominance and power (Wodak, 2001). Critical discourse analysis in public policy is particularly important because discourse is used by political actors "as a vehicle to harness power and assert their ideology over others while at the same time jousting with other competing discourses" (Bhuyan, Korteweg, & Baqi, 2018, p. 351). I reviewed a variety of government-published texts, which address the issue of fraudulent marriage, and collected government policy documents that had mentioned fraudulent marriage from relevant ministries' websites. In addition, I reviewed newspaper articles that mentioned policy changes related to marriage migration. I primarily used the comprehensive newspaper database of Korea, KINDS (<http://www.kinds.or.kr/>) with the keyword fraudulent marriage between 1990 and 2015.

In order to grasp the grounded experiences of marriage migrants and their spouses and partners, who are often suspected of fraudulent marriage, as well as to hear the perspectives of state and non-state actors including visa officers, marriage brokers, migrant rights advocates, and anti-fraudulent marriage campaigners, I conducted 22 in-depth semi-structured, open-ended qualitative interviews in Korea and Vietnam from July to October 2014 and from May to August 2015. Interviews were conducted in the Korean language with the

exception of one interview with a Chinese immigrant to Korea who required an interpreter. I took on the responsibility of translating Korean transcripts into English. In order to protect the confidentiality of interview participants, I use pseudonyms throughout.

An Overview of Marriage Migration in Korea

The current form of marriage migration in Korea began as an initiative of local governments in rural areas in the early 1990s. Confronting the social problems related to the dearth of eligible wives for aging bachelors and depopulation in rural areas, local governments and related agricultural associations assisted in arranging international marriages between elderly Korean bachelors and Chinese women of Korean-descent by providing funding (H.-K. Lee, 2008). Most notably, as the marriage broker business became liberalized in 1998, commercial marriage brokers (who already anticipated profits in the international marriage market through arranging marriages between Korean men and Chinese women of Korean-descent) rapidly jumped in and expanded the business. In particular, they arranged international marriages between Korean men and women from neighbouring countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Mongolia (Goh, Kim, Soh, Kim, & Kim, 2005). The total number of marriage migrants was 3,992 between 1990 and 1994, however, this number has rapidly increased since the mid-1990s (Ministry of Health, Welfare & Family Affairs, 2010). As of 2016, the total accumulative number of marriage migrants was 317,118 (Korean Statistical Information Service, 2017).

The phenomenon of marriage migration is strongly gendered. Between 2007 and 2016, female marriage migrants comprised about 85%-87% of marriage migrants (Danuri, 2016). Among female marriage migrants, including those who attained Korean citizenship, Korean-Chinese female marriage migrants comprise the largest number, representing 31% of the total, with Vietnamese and Chinese female marriage migrants following at 25% and 21% respectively (Korean Statistical Information Service, 2017). Other groups of marriage migrants include Filipino (7%), Japanese (4%), and Cambodian women (3%) (Korean Statistical Information Service, 2017). In the case of male marriage migrants, Korean-Chinese male marriage migrants comprise the largest number of marriage migrants, representing 50% of the total, with Chinese men, American men and Taiwanese men following at 20%, 7% and 4 % respectively of the total male marriage migrants (Korean Statistical Information Service, 2017). Among the population of male marriage migrants, Pakistanis have received a considerable amount of negative attention from the Korean government and public as suspected of fraudulent marriage, even though their marriages represented less than three percent of the total population of male marriage migrants as of 2016 (Korean Statistical Information Center, 2017).

Unpacking Fraudulent Marriage Discourses

“Run-away” Joseonjok³ Women Versus “Never Run-away” Vietnamese Female Migrants

The fraudulent marriage discourse first came to the attention of the Korean public in the mid-1990s, in relation to Joseonjok women who began to marry older Korean bachelors in rural parts of the country (H.-K. Lee, 2008). Joseonjok women were the first choice of local governments in rural areas. Under the strong myth of ethnic homogeneity and Korean bloodline, these women were initially considered to be part of the same ethnic group as Korean nationals rather than foreign marriage migrants. Local governments used a rhetoric of “reunifying nations” to encourage international marriages between Korean bachelors and Joseonjok women (Freeman, 2011, p. 44). This marital union was considered to strengthen the long-standing myth of ethnic homogeneity of the Korean nation (H.-K. Lee, 2005). Joseonjok were initially celebrated in mass media as innocent, sacrificing, young women who left China to escape poverty and support their family (Freeman, 2011). They were described as women who would willingly marry rural Korean farmers and form a family, in contrast to Korean women who “betrayed their ancestral roots and deserted their male counterparts” to go to urban cities (Freeman, 2011, p. 41). Behind these comparisons, there were essentializing virtues, “particularly traditional feminine virtues of chastity, purity, and obedience” imposed on these women (42). However, the positive image of innocent, sacrificing Joseonjok women did not last long. As different cases of fraudulent marriage began to be reported in the media, these women were soon nicknamed “runaway brides,” and their innocent image quickly faded away: in mass media, Joseonjok women were equated with marriage fraudsters, and portrayed as “cold-blooded opportunists” who deceived and left their Korean husbands while Korean men were described as the ones devastated by their wives’ betrayal (H.-K. Lee, 2005, p. 100; MBC News, 1997; Park, 1993). These fraudulent marriage discourses served as an official justification for the Korean government to change the *Nationality Act* in 1997, which created a new two-year wait period for marriage migrants to apply for Korean citizenship (*Nationality Act*, 1998).

As the fraudulent marriage discourse centered on Joseonjok women, female marriage migrants from other Asian countries (such as Vietnam, the Philippines, and Cambodia) began to emerge as alternatives to Joseonjok women. Widespread discourses of fraudulent marriage focusing on Korean-descent Chinese women served to legitimize the influx of non-Korean descent

³ While other overseas Koreans are referred to as Korean-descent Americans or Korean-descent Japanese, Korean-descent Chinese are given the specific term, Joseonjok, which carries socially discriminatory undertones. At the risk of reproducing the derogatory meanings associated with the term Joseonjok, I use it here to emphasize the particular discrimination directed towards Korean-descent Chinese women with respect to discourses of fraudulent marriage.

female marriage migrants from developing countries. Most of all, the rapid increase of commercialized marriage brokers after 1998 made it possible to explore “new” markets for international marriage. While Joseonjok women are presumed to run away more frequently because they have language resources and cultural affinities that may provide better options for them not to be dependent on Korean families, women from other sending countries who did not have the Korean language skills and cultural background were depicted by marriage brokers as vulnerable and therefore, presumed to run away less. The most prevalent and problematic catchphrase for Vietnamese marriage migrants, which increased their “desirability” among potential fearful Korean husbands, was that “Vietnamese marriage migrants do not run away” (Yim, 2006). Beginning in the early 2000s, this message quickly spread across the country. Feminist activists and Vietnamese students (who were studying in Korea at that time) actively mobilized public actions to criticize the commercialized nature of marriage brokerages which commodified women as an exchangeable commodity, and the gendered and racialized stereotyping embedded in the matchmaking process (Goh et al., 2005; H.-M. Kim, 2006). As a result, the *Marriage Brokers Business Management Act* was legislated in 2007 in order to prevent discriminatory practices involved in international marriage processes (Marriage Brokers Business Management Act, 2007). While I acknowledge these problems of the commercialization of Vietnamese marriage migrants and discriminatory practices embedded in international marriage processes, this paper focuses more on examining the discursive constitution of vulnerable female Vietnamese marriage migrants as a desirable group who serves the interest of a demographically-challenged Korean state and potential Korean husbands. I also note that this discursive construction of Vietnamese marriage migrants as a desirable group is in stark contrast to the discursive construction of non-childbearing marriage migrants and Pakistani male migrants as undesirable groups as examined below.

Female marriage migrants’ desirability is constructed from gendered and racialized stereotyping processes that treat these women as traditional, docile and vulnerable, and therefore desirable marriage partners. Such stereotyping has also affected the choice of foreign wives among Korean men. According to a survey commissioned by the Ministry of Health and Welfare in 2005, Korean husbands stated that “the most important reason for choosing Vietnamese and Filipino wives is because they deem them to be more submissive, obedient to their parents, and [more] traditional than other nationalities” (H.-K. Lee, 2007, pp. 24-25 cited in Freeman, 2011, p. 49). The gendered and racialized stereotyping of Vietnamese women as docile, feminine, traditional, and family care takers is still currently prevalent on many international marriage brokers’ websites, which advertise the advantages of marrying Vietnamese women (Vietnam International Marriage, n.d.; Wedding Club, n.d.).

Age is another factor in the construction of desirability of marriage migrants from developing countries. Younger (implying childbearing) age is considered a desirable characteristic in female marriage migrants from developing countries, who are expected to serve the demographic and patriarchal interests of the Korean state. Younger female marriage migrants from developing countries are expected to be matched with older Korean men. According to the 2009 National Study of Multicultural Families, about 88.9 % of female Vietnamese marriage migrants were under 29 years of age and the average age difference between them and their Korean husbands was 17 years (Ministry of Health, Welfare & Family Affairs, 2010). The racialized hierarchies of countries of origin, and accompanying racism,⁴ create a discursive justification for international marriage between younger foreign women (who are deemed not to have many economic alternatives other than marriage) and older Korean men. Younger marriage migrants from developing countries are considered ideal immigrants for their potential of being reproducers of the Korean family and nation.

The desirability of female marriage migrants, originating from the intersection of gender, age and race, is presumed through the much smoother spousal marriage migration process. The remarks of Min, a Korean immigration officer, reflect on the Korean government's relatively "lenient" attitude towards marriage migrant women from developing countries (personal communication, July 21, 2015). He showed a favourable attitude to the current form of international marriage, saying that it is similar to the traditional form of arranged marriage.

I do not think their intention is not genuine because they got married within a day or two after meeting. It might sound a bit old-fashioned, but, until the early 1900 in Joseon dynasty, our parents just got married with someone arranged by their family and lived well. Nowadays, they at least arrange a meeting before they decide to get married. Even though it's too short, but they still meet a few people and compare them. Of course, some might fall in love with each other at first sight, or they love after meeting only a few times. ... Nowadays, Korean men themselves visit women's family and meet their parents. If they say those things, I see that they are genuine about getting married. (Min, personal communication, July 21, 2015)

The way Min evaluates the real intention of a marriage is to confirm whether the family members of each spouse are aware of the marriage and whether all relevant information has been provided to each spouse based on

⁴ The lower economic status of the countries of origin in the global economic hierarchy has a racial connotation in Korea that differs from countries that were colonized by Western European powers, or from white-settler colonial societies. Korea was colonized by Japan, a non-Western, neighbouring Asian country, for 36 years between 1910 and 1945. J.-I. Lee (2011) traces the formation of racial prejudice in Korea, and identifies the economic prosperity achieved in Korea over the last 60 years through a rapid process of industrialization as an important cause of racism and racial prejudice against nationals from developing countries.

factual documentation. He does not seem to expect intimate or personalized narratives of “love” in their application, which is somewhat different from the expectations placed on Pakistani marriage migrants as examined below.

In sum, the binary discourses around Korean-descent Chinese women and Vietnamese women demonstrate that Korean ethnic nationalism has deployed specific intersections of gender, race, and age in novel ways. They illustrate an unexpected flexibility in the value allocated to specific gendered migrant subjects where, on the face of it, a tradition of “blood purity” embedded in ethnic nationalism takes a back seat to fulfilment of the state’s role of reproducing the Korean nation. The patriarchal control of female marriage migrants makes it possible for non-Korean bodies to reproduce and perpetuate Korean ethnic nationhood. However, the discursive construction of desirability of marriage migrant women is fragile in the event that they do not fulfil the nationalist goals of reproducing the patrilineal Korean nation as demonstrated in the case of older and non-childbearing marriage migrants below. Also, the discursive construction of desirability does not guarantee any better treatment of marriage migrants in Korean society itself: many female marriage migrants face domestic violence and diverse forms of discrimination and stigma in their daily lives (Ministry of Gender Equality & Family, 2016b).

“Older” and “Non-childbearing” Female Marriage Migrants

The second discourse I examine relates to older and non-childbearing female marriage migrants. The lenient approach to younger female marriage migrants by the Korean visa officer mentioned above is not extended to older female marriage migrants beyond child-bearing age. Non-childbearing female marriage migrants (who, in many cases, are entering into their second marriage) are subject to more scrutiny as potential fraudulent marriage migrants when applying for a spousal visa and later acquiring Korean citizenship. This discourse repeatedly came up in my interviews with different marriage migrants and Korean migrant justice activists as one of the most suspicious targets of fraudulent marriage by the Korean government.

Zhang (a marriage migrant from China and the head of a local marriage migrant support organization) and her organization support female marriage migrants who are suspected of fraudulent marriage and have difficulty proving that their relationships are genuine. She believes that unless marriage migrant women prove the sincerity of the relationship by producing the 2nd generation of Korean nation, they are under suspicion of fraudulent marriage throughout their application for visa extension and Korean citizenship (personal communication, September 4, 2014). Zhang said:

What is on earth the sincere intention of marriage? In Korea, it means only delivering a baby. ... If you do not have a baby, after one year and two years, nobody knows... you should have babies to show your sincere intention of the marriage (Zhang, personal communication, September 4, 2014).

Older female marriage migrants who do not have a child are constructed as undesirable, because they do not serve the demographic imperative behind the Korean state's spousal immigration policies. Another interviewee, Xuan, shares a similar story (personal communication, August 28, 2015). Xuan first came to Korea in 2007 to visit her 20-year-old daughter, who got married to a Korean man and became pregnant. While Xuan was staying in Korea visiting her daughter, her daughter's mother-in-law introduced her to a Korean man with a physical disability, and they soon decided to get married. She went back to China and applied for her spousal visa. Compared to her daughter's process, which was done smoothly, Xuan's visa process was much more difficult at every step, as she was asked for additional documents and interviews to prove the relationship. The suspicion of fraudulent marriage by Korean immigration officers finally thwarted her plan to acquire Korean citizenship. After she passed a written naturalization test and did an interview, she and her husband were called in for a second interview, which was rare for most applicants. They were separated into two rooms, and got interviewed separately about their marital relationship, including their intimate sexual relationship. Xuan said that she felt like she was a criminal in a prison. The atmosphere created anxieties for her and her Korean husband. She felt that her husband was not cooperating enough because he was shamed by the process, and she thought he was humiliated due to his disability. In the end, after going through intrusive personal questions with suspicion of fraudulent marriage, her application for Korean citizenship was declined on the grounds of not fulfilling economic self-sufficiency. The *Korean Nationality Act* requires marriage migrants to prove their basic economic abilities by bank balance, lease contract or estate registry equivalent to more than KRW 30 million or with a certificate for employment, or a copy of business registration certificate (Hi Korea: e-Government for Foreigners, 2016). This condition gives immigration officers much discretionary power as they consider the diverse economic life contexts that marriage migrants face. Neither Xuan nor her husband was regularly employed. She worked irregularly for a factory, and her husband worked for a junk shop. However, they owned a freight car worth KRW 30 million and some land, and they provided a record which showed regular payments of private medical insurance equivalent to KRW 500,000. The immigration officer was not "lenient" on them. Xuan's relatively older age (40-year old at the time of applying for Korean citizenship), her economic status, and presumably her husband's disability together provided immigration officers with grounds for suspicion of a fraudulent marriage. Her "real" dedication to the marriage – working for a living and taking care of her disabled husband – were not appreciated. Without Korean citizenship, Xuan became further marginalized and faced institutional discrimination imposed on foreigners. After her citizenship application was denied, Xuan continued to appeal her case. She collected neighbours' signatures that recognized her dedication to the marriage and

hard work to support the family, and submitted them to the immigration office even though the prospect that the decision would be rescinded seemed very remote. Xuan's case indicates how characteristics that are understood to be undesirable in marriage migrants – such as an older age – are easily translated into the language of fraudulent marriage, leading these migrants to face further bureaucratic barriers. By being denied Korean citizenship, migrants are pressured to remain at the margins of society, without full rights.

When I shared Xuan's story with Hyunjoo, the head of a local migrant support organization, she also emphasized the importance of having a child in order to not be suspected of fraudulent marriage (Hyunjoo, personal communication, September 15, 2015). She learned through her support work experience that "having a child or not is a basis of checking the sincerity of the relationship for the government." These anecdotes are consistent with the remarks of an immigration officer cited in H.-M. Kim's (2011, p. 9) research:

A child means it's not a fake marriage. If their marriage is real, it also goes to show how well the woman has adapted to the Korean lifestyle. In that case, she can receive Korean citizenship within a year.

Kim's (2011) research demonstrates that the citizenship applications of marriage migrants who do not have a child are easily put on indefinite hold even in the case that these women fulfil all the requirements for citizenship. The immigration officer's remarks establish the intersection of gender and reproductive age in constructing the un/desirability of marriage migrants. When marriage migrants serve the government's purpose of reproducing the patrilineal Korean nation, they can easily escape suspicion of fraudulent marriage. Fraudulent marriage discourses centre on marriage migrants who are older and who do not perform gendered roles as biological reproducers of the Korean nation.

"Dangerous" Pakistani Male Migrants

While older and non-childbearing female marriage migrants stand on one side of the spectrum of undesirable marriage migrants, Pakistani male marriage migrants, the majority of whom come to Korea as low-skilled migrant workers and marry Korean women, are positioned on another spectrum of undesirability. They are constructed as undesirable marriage migrants and stereotyped as potential security threats through an intersection of race, gender and class *vis à vis* the process of gendered and racialized boundary-making of the Korean nation.

Fraudulent marriage discourses around Pakistani male marriage migrants have been disseminated by the Korean government. In July 2003, the Korean embassy in Pakistan posted an announcement titled "be careful of fraudulent marriages" (Embassy of the Republic of Korea to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 2003). This announcement demonized Pakistani men as

intentionally approaching Korean women for the purposes of fraudulent marriage. Pakistani men were described as men of a foreign appearance who approached Korean women with “poor English skills” and who “fabricated their marriage documents to deceive Korean women.” As of this writing, a similar warning remains on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ webpage, which provides basic information about each country to the general public under “a safe trip to foreign countries” section (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). This page warns of fraudulent marriage as an example of the type of risk that Korean people may face in Pakistan, and portrays Korean women as potential victims, who are “deceived” and even “locked up” by their Pakistani husbands. The terms used in the announcement such as “remaining illegally,” “deceiving,” and “locking up” all denote a discourse of criminalization and securitization targeting Pakistani men: Pakistani men are constructed both as “illegally staying criminals” (i.e., social threats to public order) and as posing a threat to the safety of Korean women. The spread of fraudulent marriage discourses about Pakistani male migrant workers demonstrates cultural racism against Muslims, mainly with respect to polygamy, and reflects the global trend of criminalizing “illegal” migrants and racializing Muslims as a security threat, particularly since 9/11 (Arat-Koc, 2006; Thobani, 2014). None of the pages providing information about other countries on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website reports fraudulent marriage as a potential risk for Korean people. Both the announcement of the Korean embassy in Pakistan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ webpage warning feed into discourses of fraudulent marriage associated with Pakistani men, and accentuate the connection between securitization and criminalization by linking Pakistani men’s “illegal overstaying” with a supposed propensity to become marriage fraudsters.

The discourse of fraudulent marriage associated with Pakistani men shapes the experiences of Pakistani male marriage migrants and their Korean spouses during the process of immigration, and at the later stages of acquiring Korean citizenship. Throughout these processes they face suspicion surrounding their marriage, and often encounter arbitrary screening and suspicion. For example, Hyojin, and her Pakistani husband, Ahmad, got married in 2008, and he received a spousal visa without much trouble. However, when they wanted to renew Ahmad’s spousal visa in 2011, they were suddenly asked to prove that Ahmad had not engaged in polygamy in Pakistan, because he was accused by a visa officer of having a wife and children in Pakistan according to “rumor.” They had to stop their business and go to Pakistan to acquire proper documents. Although these difficulties caused her and her husband to panic, they were not surprised because they very often faced diverse forms of racism in their everyday lives. Hyojin points out the prevalent discriminatory attitudes of Korean immigration officers toward Pakistani male migrants as follows:

They [immigration officers] don't do this to American or British men. If an American man says something with their arrogant gesture, they can get everything easily. For our case, they [immigration officers] continuously ask for more documents. (Hyojin, personal communication, Sept. 16, 2014)

When Hyojin refers to American or British men, she means "white" men who are treated differently in Korean society given the colour of their skin and the power of their Western passports. The racialization of migrants from developing Asian countries takes place on a continuum, where "white" migrants from western countries are considered most desirable (S.-B. Ha, 2012). Discriminatory attitudes towards Pakistani male marriage migrants demonstrate the intersection of race and class that Pakistani male marriage migrants embody. Such migrants face hostility not only as low-skilled migrant workers, but also as Pakistani nationals because Pakistan as a country is located on a lower rung of the global economy.

Hussain is a Pakistani man who was married to a Korean woman for 14 years before divorcing her, and subsequently marrying a Pakistani woman. He expressed his frustration that Pakistani migrants are accused of being marriage fraudsters (Hussain, personal communication, August 13, 2015). He has worked as a translator for an immigration lawyer whose main customers are Pakistani migrant workers who marry Korean women. He felt that every marriage between Korean women and Pakistani men was subject to a meticulous screening process based on the suspicion of fraudulent marriage. "Why are we treated like a thief without stealing anything?," he spoke with great frustration. His remark reveals the devastating impact of the fraudulent marriage discourse, which is the outcome of ideological interests, rather than originating from empirical evidence.

Chayoung and her Pakistani husband, Noor, offer a similar story of surveillance and suspicion in the process of acquiring citizenship (Chayoung, personal communication, October 10, 2014; Noor, personal communication, August 10, 2015). After fulfilling the two-year marital status requirement for Simplified Naturalization for marriage migrants, Noor decided to apply for Korean citizenship. His application was rejected twice. At the end of his first citizenship interview, the interviewer told him that he did not "sing" the Korean national anthem "sincerely" and said, "be prepared and see you in 6 months." Given there seemed to be no other reason to fail, he believed that singing the Korean anthem poorly was the reason why he failed to acquire the Korean citizenship. For his second try a year later, he worked at perfecting his singing of the anthem. He received help from his Korean wife and a Korean social worker in a nearby immigrant support center. In his second interview he did not get a chance to sing the anthem. During this interview he was asked whether he had a car. He believes that his citizenship was denied a second time because of a fine he had paid for illegally driving his car with a Pakistani driver's license. Without any other means of knowing the official reason for refusing his application, he believed that it was the sole reason he was denied citizenship. He thus decided not to apply again for the time being

because he did not know how to solve the issue. At the same time, he took his failure in stride because he believed that all Pakistani men around him failed the naturalization test at least once based on his knowledge of other Pakistani friends' cases. He internalized the unfair nature of the racialized process in immigration as a part of being a Pakistani man in Korea where racism against Pakistani men is prevalent.

Experiencing structural discrimination against their marriage and being faced with demonized images of fraudulent marriage led some marriage migrants and their Korean spouses strategically to use the concept of "romantic love" during the immigration process as a way to prove the legitimacy of their relationship. These couples think that exceptional stories of love can constitute a legitimate rationale to replace undesirable images and conditions with which Pakistani male migrants are associated, even though Pakistani men sometimes face cultural dilemmas when they process their spousal applications. Hussain says, "as a Pakistani man, we do not have a culture of dating before marriage" (personal communication, August 13, 2015). Ironically, the strategy employed by Pakistani men and their Korean spouses to legitimize their relationship is to emphasize their romantic love towards Korean women, a strategy which may contravene what they called "traditional" Pakistani cultural norms. Their narratives about their relationship are negotiated and readjusted in order to increase their chances to successfully process their spousal application. This strategy places male Pakistani marriage migrants in stark contrast to most female marriage migrants who are not expected to prove their romantic love to offset presumed economic interests behind the marriage.

Chayoung, Hyojin, and Sunhee, who all married Pakistani men, emphasized how much their marriages are based on romantic love. All three of these Korean women met their husbands on the street, and emphasized the "destiny" of their encounter, saying that they fell in love at first sight. These stories function as a means to offset the presumed economic motivations of Pakistani male marriage. While the presumed economic motivations of female marriage migrants through marriage are taken for granted, thereby offsetting big age differences, the economic motivations of male marriage migrants conversely become a signal of fraudulent marriage. Sunhee problematizes the suspicion cast on their marriage and argues that such suspicions are discriminatory (personal communication, August 27, 2014). She questions why South Asian men are more closely scrutinized by the Korean government:

Suspicious eyes are cast on those of us who got married through "love marriage" more so than on marriage migrant women who married through commercial brokers. The frame of fraudulent marriage is imposed on men from South Asia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc. and they analyze our story with distorted perspective. (Sunhee, personal communication, August 27, 2014).

Sunhee is aware that her romantically-framed relationship with her husband was partly motivated by his desire to marry a Korean woman and reside in

Korea, but also feels that they have a loving marriage. She argues that the way to reduce fraudulent marriage is for the Korean government to open its doors to migrant workers and to allow them to bring their family members, rather than being suspicious of couples who are engaged in “real” marriages, thereby reinforcing a social stigma surrounding marriages between Korean women and Pakistani men. Sunhee criticizes the construction of fraudulent marriage discourses that is tied to structural dissuasion of male marriage migrants through the restrictive immigration policy.

As Sunhee remarks, fraudulent marriage discourses are tied to the institutional motivations of Korean immigration policies that construct male migrant workers from developing countries as undesirable immigrants. For low-skilled temporary migrant workers, who are institutionally discouraged from applying for Korean citizenship through the rotation principle, marriage with a Korean woman becomes the only institutional tool for them to permanently stay in Korea. Given the discrepancy between the demand of low-skilled migrant workers to acquire Korean citizenship and the actual availability of opportunities to do so, restrictive immigration policies that block low-skilled migrant workers from being permanent immigrants have become a source of discourses of fraudulent marriage to regulate the flows of undesirable marriage migration.

Conclusion

In this paper, I examined how the desirability and undesirability of marriage migrants are constructed along the varying and intersecting axes of gender, age, race, and class, and how discourses of fraudulent marriage manifest the gendered and racialized interests of the Korean state. The demographic and patriarchal interests of the Korean state result in the encouragement of younger female marriage migrants from developing countries, whereas older and non-childbearing female marriage migrants and Muslim male marriage migrants from developing countries are constructed as undesirable. Discourses of fraudulent marriage work as a tool to regulate flows of marriage migration and serve to reinforce racialized and gendered boundary-making of the Korean nation. In the face of discourses of fraudulent marriage, marriage migrants and their Korean spouses utilize diverse strategies to demonstrate their genuine relationships including collecting neighbors’ signatures and emphasizing romantic love narratives as a strategy to avoid fraudulent marriage charges.

The discriminatory distinctions drawn among differentially racialized and gendered marriage migrants raise significant social justice concerns and require major changes in Korean immigration and migration policies. To rectify injustices imposed on them, it is necessary to implement more open and inclusive immigration policies towards marriage migrants and migrant workers. I suggest opening up labour markets completely to both male and

female migrants alongside guaranteeing their family reunification rights and providing them with a feasible path to acquiring Korean citizenship. These policies would provide temporary migrant workers with a pathway to permanent immigrant status. In addition, an increase in the currently low refugee acceptance would assist in solving the low-birth rate problems that Korean society faces. These policies could reduce the potential for the stigmatization surrounding fraudulent marriage by making it possible for marriage to remain a choice between two individuals, rather than being the only potential means for a migrant to enter Korea.

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