Strangeness as a Reality of Living Together

Re-thinking the Inclusion/Exclusion-Process of Foreign Brides in Taiwan

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Zusammenfassung: This article attempts to critically analyze the social constructions of marriage migrants in Taiwan from the perspective of exclusion and inclusion. The naming of foreign/mainland brides is a by-product of Taiwanese identity. However, their self-naming as new migrant women is exposed to a risk of re-essentialization. Following reflections on the categorization even if positively made, it will discuss the possibility of exclusive individuality. Finally, this article will suggest that in addition to the idea of humanity and full citizenship "all are created equal", the idea of otherness "all are created different" should also be underlined.

1. Taiwan in the waves of global marriage migration

The phenomena of marriage migration and cross-border marriage, and marriage migrants themselves have been explored empirically from different perspectives in the contexts of various countries (Beck-Gernsheim 2007; Constable 2003; Hussein / Manthorpe 2007; Ito 2005; Lan 2008 b; Lauser 2008; Lievens 1999; Suzuki 2005; Tsay 2004; Williams 2010). It would not be an exaggeration to say that these phenomena can be observed in every part of the globe, albeit manifest in different ways, and eliciting different reactions and discussions in different locales.

This article will consider the case of female marriage migrants from Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines) or China coming to Taiwan. Although these two groups of female marriage migrants outline different issues and cause divergent discussions in many respects, they also share some experiences. These female immigrants come to Taiwan to form families, but are systematically excluded from full citizenship, full recognition, social resources, and participation in society (Chen / Yu 2005). Given their shared experiences, and the fact that they often cooperate in their endeavors to secure societal resources and political rights, we can discuss them as a category despite their differences.

Drawing on the concepts of inclusion and exclusion, this article aims to shed critical light on the process of the social construction of female marriage migrants as *foreign/mainland brides*. They are, in this process of inclusion/exclusion, qualified as non-citizens, and thus disqualified from full participation in Taiwanese society. Furthermore, this article will discuss the efforts and risks involved in naming themselves as *new migrant women*. The re-naming is not only concerned with bringing light to the subjective positions of these women but also issues of equality and social integration. However, it could be confronted with the problem which it firstly tries to overcome: re-categorization and re-essentialization. Before looking into this phenomenon closely, it is worth presenting some statistical as well as descriptive social facts on marriage migration and migrants in Taiwan. This will help in gaining a rough understanding of this phenomenon and will be used as a springboard for further discussion.

Taiwanese society has implicitly and explicitly thematized female marriage migrants as a potential risk for social instability and dysfunction. A significant part of national political agendas are organized to regulate their immigration, working rights and citizenship before and after their arrival in local societies. This sort of xenophobia is unreflective of external physical appearance, language, life style and daily habits, not to mention the fact that female marriage migrants are perceived almost universally to have originated from economically disadvantaged and less-developed countries. The reason lies probably also in the finding that

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their marriages are frequently arranged through commercial brokers, which, in the view of modern society, is incompatible with the crucial element of love as the basis of the family. This incompatibility between arranged marriage and love-based marriage tends to encourage discrimination against individuals who choose arranged marriages (Lan 2008 b: 846).

In the past, increases in the need for this type of arranged marriage could be explained by phenomena described as "women shortage", "brides deficit" (Lan 2008 b), "women thirsty", "bride drought" (Williams 2010), and "a marriage squeeze of men" (Wang / Hsiao 2009). And often in the marriages that arise in this manner, the men are also disadvantaged and live marginally in Taiwan (Wang / Tien 2009).

Corresponding with economic development, the educational opportunities have been increasingly expanding for women who could, in the past, only draw on minimum educational resources and commonly remained illiterate for life. With better education, women tend to postpone their marriage age for career attainment or even choose to stay single for life. In addition, industrialization results in a stream of pressure to absorb its new recruits from rural areas. People who stay at home are mostly those whose career skills do not fulfill the requirements of the new industrial branches; they constitute a marginalized minority in their societies. Besides, it is conventional for women in these countries to marry up with regards to educational attainment or income level (Wang / Hsiao 2009).

This, however, makes it more and more difficult for men who have physical handicaps, few skills or a limited education, or, who simply resides in the countryside, to find a woman to marry.[1] Added to the pressure to build a family and to have descendants to carry on the family name, this gives such men ample incentives to try their luck abroad. However, due to a lack of experience in dealing with visas, passports and international air travel, they begin their overseas search for marriage partners through match-agencies or brokers. They are normally required to pay a significant sum of money for the agency and for the brides whom they will marry. The money is, for many who embark on this pathway, a large fortune which they have to borrow from friends and relatives.Taiwan, an island country in East Asia, has been a recipient of marriage migrants from Southeast Asia and China since the early 1990 s. A comprehensive look at the statistics over the years reveals a considerable trend, with the number of marriage migrants increasing to a point such that it can no longer be ignored. Of the total registered marriages from 2002 to 2005, more than a quarter (26.05%) featured non-native spouses, a conspicuous proportion arousing public discussion and xenophobia, propagating an identity crisis in Taiwanese society. In 2003, the proportion is almost one-third (31.86%). To prevent sham marriages between female migrants and male Taiwanese, the Ministry of Interior has introduced a policy of Interview for mainland brides since 2003 and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has enhanced interviews outside the country for foreign brides from Southeast Asia since 2005. The proportion of foreign/mainland brides was then on a downward trend to 18.7% in 2009 and 13.2% in 2014.[2] Even so, the total amount of foreign/mainland brides in Feb. 2015 was about 478,280 (2.04% of total population).[3] In addition, in recent years, there has been a radical increase in the number of "new Taiwanese

1 Wang and Tien (Wang / Tien 2009: 34) have argued in their article *Who Marries Vietnamese Brides? Masculinities and Cross-Border Marriages* that Taiwanese women are, because of higher quality education and salary work, too independent for some Taiwanese men. They are regarded as women losing traditional merits and therefore unmarriageable. This is because they may challenge the traditional hegemony ideology and patriarchal code. So, marrying a woman from the Southeast whose socio-economic status is obviously disadvantaged is not only a way to get married but also a way for some Taiwanese men to strengthen their masculinity.

2 The calculation is based on Ministry of the Interior (2015 a).

3 The calculation is based on Ministry of the Interior (Ministry of the Interior, 2015 e).

children"[4]; this has gradually become an important topic in the media, and an issue in political debates and educational promotion (Fung & Liang, 2008). With marriage migration acting as a form of recruitment, Taiwan faces radical changes in population and social formation.

Within this context, perhaps the first thing to say about Taiwanese society, like any other, is that it begins to define the self through its consciousness of the Other. In the case of foreign/mainland brides, the other approaches the intimacy of personal relationships, stirring deeply ingrained cultural fears and anxieties of miscegenation. Historical concept of racepurity is relevant in common fears that marriage migration is a threat to national quality, leading to social disorder and civic decay. Taiwan's response to female marriage migrants by excluding them from citizenship is a hostile treatment that reinforces these old miscegenistic views. However, the problem is much more ambiguous, as Taiwanese society depends upon these female marriage migrants to solve the problem of a shortage of women and and new-born children. Given the paradoxical reactions of Taiwanese society, the reason for the limiting restrictions and bureaucratic regulations in place for female marriage migrants applying for permission to come to Taiwan is evident: after their arrival, Taiwanese society continually builds fences, formally and informally, to exclude them from full citizenship and recognized equality.

2. The naming of foreign/mainland brides is a by-product of Taiwanese nationalism

The process of inclusion and exclusion has not only to do with the distinction of self and other, but also with available resources, cultural assignments and societal arrangements. It marks primarily the way a society identifies its members, labels them socially, and correspondingly distributes the social resources (Hall 1996).

The demand for self-definition, that is the act of drawing a line for inclusion and exclusion, is especially urgent when strangers appear. Self-identity is altered when judgments and images are created in the encounter with the Other. As Rosemary Breger and Rosanna Hill (1998: 7) have said, "There can be no concept of Self without a concept of Other, that which Self is not". There is no concept of inclusion without a concept of exclusion. When the Other is regarded as superior and excellent, one's self-image is created as inferior. When the Other is regarded as less privileged, the self automatically takes on a more exaggerated or superior image.[5]

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4 Taiwan has a very low birth rate. The total fertility rate in 2013 is 1.06% (Ministry of the Interior, 2013). Facing this fact, Taiwanese society hopes on the one hand that foreign brides will raise the rate and solve the problem of aging society. On the other hand, the anxiety of miscegenation rages. Regardless of this paradoxical feeling, the fact is that in 2003, 13.37% of newborn babies had non-Taiwanese mothers; in 2014, 6.58% of newborn babies have mothers of Southeast Asian origin and 2.7% mothers from mainland China. The percentage changes year by year, but, all in all, the number of mix-blood children has grossly increased (Ministry of the Interior, 2015 c).

5 As Lan (2008 a: 97) points out, the Taiwanese generally suffer from an inferiority complex when face to face with Caucasian foreigners. Those from the Western world are called "foreign personages" and are generally seen as belonging to a white-collar class. Face to face with the other in this case, national pride is withdrawn and self-image suffers. In contrast, workers from Southeast Asia are named "foreign workers" which connotes the blue-collar workers that come from economically less-developed countries. Faced with this type of foreigner, the average Taiwanese however, replete with Taiwanese culture's negative stigmatized stereotypes, tends to perceive him or herself as superior, further boosting an inflated national pride. Within these dynamics, the politics of designation is in full operation under the veil of culture, religion, ethnicity, and national identity as Taiwanese society attempts to define and identify itself and the Other through an intricate process of labeling and demarcation.

Taiwan's social identity is built, consolidated, kept and fostered on the dynamics of intercultural relationships between native Taiwanese and the Other experienced through the increasing population of female marriage migrants. One of the most efficient ways to identify something or someone as belonging to a distinct other-group, separate from the we-group is the act of designation. A name can be randomly and contingently given to a person, a group or an object, determining and defining one's group or self-image and thus one's image of the other. Thus, the relationship between a name and an object is not made *a priori*. The name of an object is not immanent in the thing itself, but a social construction through designation. However, once the title or the name is given, it helps to build a quasi-naturalized image of the object and a set of contextual meanings. Since most take the word for the thing itself, the naming of an object or the use of that name within societal constructs contributes to a synthesis of reality itself.

Taiwanese society tends to label female marriage migrants from the Southeast Asia "foreign brides" or "foreign spouses", while labeling female marriage migrants from China "mainland brides". The self-image of Taiwanese society is emerging through these designations; it is not a static existence, but rather one that is more fluid and dynamic. With the naming, and thereby the exclusion from full citizenship and social participation, Taiwanese society attempts to exclude all non-Taiwanese (human and cultural) elements while simultaneously defining self through idealized images of what it should and ought to be. It is worth mentioning that female marriage migrants from the West with white skin are usually not counted in the category of foreign brides and are seldom seen as negative factors with regards to social quality.

When the distinction between self and other is related to an asymmetrical distribution of social resources and rights, inequality and disintegration become an issue, and thus the focal points of sociological as well as political circles. This distinction functions then as a mechanism to filter who is eligible to be a part of the society and who is not; determining who is entitled to which resources. This mechanism is institutionalized insofar as the preclusions in many social fields are sequentially interlinked and bundled as a set of categorized schemata and expectations. People are thus divided into two groups with a social distance between the two strata that is hierarchically prescribed and typically too great to overcome. One group of people are considered superior, and a downward social comparison determines their social participation and rights, while the other group of people are systematically excluded from social acceptance and recognition. In terms of distinction between the superior and the inferior group, the process of inclusion and exclusion is grossly reconstructed as a process of power and struggle. Those who are included have power and resources while those who are excluded suffer a lot materially as well as morally. Thus, the inclusion-exclusion-split, or precisely the exclusion, has to be eliminated in order to guarantee social integration and human equality. However, as I will discuss later, inclusion can also be a negative process and operate as a way to stigmatize and socially categorize a group of people. In this respect, inclusion is anything but a goal worth fighting for. The point here is that inclusion and exclusion should be taken into consideration simultaneously and that the distinction of inclusion or exclusion does not equate with the moral judgment of good or bad.

In 2004, the Vice Minister of Education Chou Tsan-Te made controversial statements about foreign brides and the educational achievement of their children at a national education conference. "The quality of foreign brides is problematic. They should limit the number of their children." Here, their "low" qualityis reduced implicitly to biological factors and is believed to be responsible for the perceived downfall of educational achievement in schools. In the same prejudiced tone, two officials of the Control Yuan (監察院) suggested, in 2004, that the Executive Yuan should correct the immigration policy and incentive mechanism in

response to the polarization of emigration and immigration. He warned that, while the Taiwanese who receive the highest quality of education emigrate aboard, there is a lot of "low quality" foreign brides and workers immigrating to Taiwan. This polarized trend will decrease the country's power and harm quality of life in Taiwan. In 2006, a legislator, Lau Ben-Yen, pointed out during a legislative meeting that the gene pool brought to Taiwan by foreign brides is defective. So, he has proposed that the interior ministry, regarding subvention for promotion of increasing birth rates, should separate the Taiwanese families from the families with foreign brides. He said that the interior ministry "should urge local native Taiwanese to have more children. Otherwise, it will result in a watering down of the gene pool (劣幣驅逐良幣) and will not produce good quality offspring." The same legislator – whether or not conscious of his hegemonic gesture – further recommended that the Taiwanese government should inspect the women from Vietnam in order to make sure there are no remaining chemical toxins in their bodies as many Vietnamese children are born with both physical and mental birth defects due to Agent Orange and other defoliants used by the American Army during the Vietnam War (Lin 2006.04.01, A3/Focus).

Regarding mixed-blood children or, as they are known in Taiwan, "new Taiwanese children", Taiwanese society exaggerates the influence of a foreign gene pool on educational achievement and learning capability. Furthermore, the developmental delay of these children is massively exaggerated. In the process of blaming the "natural" gene, the social and cultural factors of institutions and structures which discriminate against female marriage migrants and their families are completely neglected. The failure is grossly attributed to the *physical-categorical* disabilities and even more critically reduced to the *physical-categorical* defects in genes. Here, the description of *physical-categorical* seems at the first glance paradoxical and therefore ineffective. Upon closer inspection, this descriptive assertion of *physical-categorical* displays its suitability and plausibility. It is *physical* because in contrast to external force of social structures, the personal physical and biological inherent attributions are emphasized. It is *categorical* in that it is not the defective attribution of *a* female marriage migrant, but *the* female migrants as a whole. The female marriage migrants from Southeast Asia and China are in this sense categorized as foreign/mainland brides and eventually lumped together in a generalized collective (Lan 2008 b: 844). The reduction of the issue to a genetic factor and placing the blame on physical/biological factors is a convenient way to naturalize the blatant discrimination and the unfair allotment of actual resources and aid. On the basis of this process, the marginality of female marriage migrants and their children is consequently naturalized, which creates a situation where no one is to blame but biological 'fact'. On the other hand, naturalized migrants are compressed into a single category of foreign/mainland brides, which refers to all female marriage migrants and which treats them in an impoverished sense equally.

The situation of female marriage migrants and their children mentioned above has taken place *with/in* Taiwanese society. Clearly, the exclusion has to occur *with/in* the society; in this meaning, exclusion is also a kind of inclusion (Stichweh 2009: 32). Relying on the exclusion of female marriage migrants from the label of qualified citizens, Taiwanese society tries to draw a clear distinction for identifying self and in doing so excludes the non-Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese elements from the societal self-image. These operational negations are quite practically and precisely *included* to the formation of self-definition and self-image. In this dynamic process of doing and becoming, everything – including exclusion – that happens in the society is included to mold Taiwanese identity. These happenings as practical and empirical events construct and depict the "being" and identity of Taiwanese society. They are "ontological operators" (Meijer / Prins 1998: 279) of Taiwanese society as such. This leads us to think procedurally *how* Taiwanese society makes and performs itself to be and become *what* it is. To look at this with an ethno-methodological perspective, Tai-

wanese society has done, does, is doing, and will do Taiwanese society in the operation of exclusion and inclusion. Meanwhile, this procedural thinking also alters epistemologically the concept of reality. Taiwanese identity as a mode of solidarity or as a collective reality does not exist *a priori*, but is produced *a posteriori*, and could thus also be revised.

In the process of inclusion and exclusion, Taiwanese society tries to defend and assert its identity, purity and differentiation of self into one conclusive 'we-ness'. The identity can only be made and is only meaningful, when there are differences and opposites. This distinction between we-ness and otherness is not identifiable with the distinction between friend/enemy or goodness/badness. It tells firstly and most importantly that the identities such as Asian identity and I-identity can only be operationally or semantically possible and meaningful, when there exists a foreign identity, for example, the European identity and you-identity. Here, we see that identity is based on difference, but not on the "identity" itself (Hall 1996: 4). Taiwanese society excludes foreign/mainland brides from the possibility of integration into Taiwanese society. On one hand, it is said that the Taiwanese qualities and social level are by exclusion reserved, fostered and sustained. On the other hand, as mentioned above, the exclusion is in its actual meaning a practice *in* Taiwanese society. In this respect, the operation of exclusion goes back to the formation of Taiwanese society, contributes ironically to the creation of the Taiwanese image, pitiably, a racist Taiwanese image.

In plain terms: Taiwan's attempt to proclaim its "importance", "correctness", "authenticity" and "superiority" from a superior vantage point by excluding foreign/mainland brides from full citizenship, paradoxically and consciously or not, deploys another image of Taiwan, namely a racist one. This is how one can argue that the naming of foreign/mainland brides is a by-product of Taiwanese nationalism. They are not only excluded from Taiwanese society *in* Taiwanese society, they are also excluded from Taiwanese society *for* Taiwanese "imaged communities" (Anderson 1991), and in this respect they are indispensable to Taiwan's current self-image.

Empirically, it is observed that the female marriage migrants suffer under such essentializing and universalizing categorization. As a female marriage migrant has defenselessly complained:

> "I was a foreign bride at the beginning. Then, in an instance, six or seven years have gone. I have already obtained an identification card and citizenship. I am the master of future and have forgotten that I am a foreign bride. Unfortunately it happens that the other people remember it vividly." (Hsia 2005: 51)

Memory's vividness does not fade with the obtainment of citizenship. In fact, prejudice functions stubbornly to the extent that in everyday face-to-face interactions her physical characteristics and linguistic capacity/accent give her away to the preformed expectations that a one-dimensional role as foreign/mainland bride allows.

With regards to physical materials, there is a stigmatization and accusation involved in the making and labeling of foreign/mainland brides as non-qualified citizens. It becomes an act of prejudice when Taiwanese make situational definitions through their day-to-day interpersonal relations with foreign/mainland brides. A female marriage migrant from China disclosed concisely the sweeping categorization and naturalization of foreign/mainland brides as negative entity as a whole, when she mourned:

> "'Mainland brides', such a title does not matter anymore. Their sorrows lie on the fact that they are very lonely wherever they go. In the eyes of Taiwanese, they are labeled beforeh. It was as if they carried with them a certain smell of 'foreigness'. No matter which corner they are located

> at, once they open their mouth to speak the first sentence, they [the Taiwanese] can immediately tell that you are foreign brides or foreigner." (Hsia 2005: 63).

The physical features and audible accents are convenient hooks on which to hang the stigmatized expectations, imaginings and the consequent naturalized discriminations. The same complaint can also be heard in the following intense statement:

> "'Mainland Chinese brides' are a generally accepted title. However, nobody can perpetually be a 'newly-wedded woman'. When I am 40 years old, obtain Taiwanese identification card and become a Taiwanese old woman, should I still struggle between my pride and the prejudicial judgments of Taiwanese and grow old with that?" (Hsia 2005: 51)

Regarding the process of inclusion and exclusion in informal face-to-face encounters and interactions, one can shed light on the creation and functioning of the categorized inclusion. By focusing on this process of labeling female marriage migrants as part of a negatively designated group of "foreign/mainland brides", it is possible to see that these female marriage migrants are not only excluded from society, but this categorization is carried out in such a way that it would be difficult to escape. With moral judgment, it becomes a "mode of address" (Butler 2001). One could even imagine the metaphor of this inclusion into the category of 'foreign/mainland brides' as an "iron cage" from which the female marriage migrants within find it near impossible to escape. It happens not only on the level of law, but in a subtle way through which a glance, a gesture, a naming, a facial mimic or an inattentive attitude emphasizes the exclusion from we-belongingness, placing the female migrant into the category of other. This sort of dynamic is hard to pinpoint because the meaning and interpretation of these kinds of rejections are easily denied and argued. However, the feelings of rejection deeply affect the well being of the foreign/mainland brides and their children, evident in the common action of either denying that their mother is a migrant, or feeling disgraced by this admission. For the children, this labeling is a form of constant debasement so profound and widespread in that it seems to happen in practically every encounter and situation, and usually in a way that is too sudden to digest or even react to.

Recapitalized: Foreign/mainland brides are excluded from full social participation and resources. They are not, in fact, expunged from society but rather narrowly and stereotypically labeled in Taiwanese society. They are outsiders within Taiwan. The society has strongly influenced and constrained their daily life, working rights and medical and emotional well-being. From this viewpoint, they are – *in an excluded way* – included to the formation of Taiwanese self-image, albeit an inadmissibly racist nationalism (Lan 2008 b). Further, they are included into a stigmatized as well as universalized category of foreign/mainland brides who are systematically discriminated against in legal regulations as well as face-to-face interactions. Here, as discussed above, inclusion can also be a negative process and operate as a way to stigmatize and socially categorize a group of people. In this respect, inclusion is anything but a goal worth fighting for.

3. Self-naming as new female migrants

Certainly, the act of naming *per se* does not mean unanimously stigmatizing or negatively stereotyping. However, in the case of foreign/mainland brides, it declares that they are firstly foreign and therefore other: a distinguishing line is drawn. Accompanying the ritual of naming, there is a set of expectations and restrictions placed upon the female marriage migrant. One of the major premises this paper will examine is how the expectations which Taiwanese society places on female migrants through the act of naming are biased and reduced to a set of traditional female roles. These expectations are quite universal, which makes it difficult for them to be overcome even over a long period of time.

The title of foreign/mainland bride is not self-defined by the female marriage migrants from Southeast Asia and China; it is an obtrusive designation by Taiwanese society, a by-product of Taiwanese self-definition and identification. The naturalization of foreign/mainland brides sets up a categorical culprit. The female marriage migrants experience indelibly what the title of foreign/mainland brides implies when Taiwanese society refers to this term. This term is everything but indifferent, a term loaded with predefined and confining ideas and stereotypes.

In this designated title, female marriage migrants feel that their own subjective experience has been infringed upon by an unavoidable injurious labeling. In an attempt to de-essentialize and de-naturalize the one-dimensional role placed upon them, foreign/mainland brides are organizing themselves to advocate for legal amendments and for a more consistent social recognition. They fight for more friendly and equal circumstances in life through enforced polices as well as in daily interpersonal interactions. One of the most significant movements is the rectification of the name foreign/mainland brides: a name that carries disparaging implications and biased views illogically and arbitrarily shaped by Taiwanese society. In a pioneering activity of a Taiwanese NGO Awakening Foundation (婦女新知), the female marriage migrants appealed: "Do not call me a foreign bride anymore!" In an attempt to free themselves of this stigmatized category, they polled one another to choose a more correct and just form of address. The name *new migrant women* resulted from this voting, a self-naming act attempting to re-define and re-describe their position in Taiwanese society.

The act of renaming should definitely not be interpreted as a simple act of political correctness. If we look at Judith Butler's performative theory, it is particularly clear that the act of naming is simultaneously an act of producing and constructing reality (Villa 2011). It produces even the object which is named. A name is not merely a name. As Butler has indicated, "Within speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names." (Butler 1993: 13) The initiative to re-name themselves has helped to revamp the cultural image of female marriage migrants as, in actively executing a name-change, they attempt quite practically to rid themselves of the negative incantation of 'foreign/mainland brides' cast upon them by Taiwanese society. To look at this in terms of inclusion and exclusion, female marriage migrants have, in this self-definition, excluded themselves from the stigmatized and problematic category of 'foreign/mainland bride', while endeavoring a new sort of inclusion into a more positively connotative appellation, literally speaking, into new female migrants.

Here, it would be useful to stress some perspectives about inclusion and exclusion that remain primarily relevant. It is obvious that the inclusion and exclusion cannot be examined separately. In fact, it is the dynamic interrelation of these two processes that determine and define concepts of self and other. For inclusion and exclusion cannot in a simplistic way be divided into two incongruent polarities as if inclusion only should be morally pursued and any form of exclusion the subject of attack. The interpretation and meaning of the dividing line between inclusion and exclusion, in effect, becomes extremely fluid at closer inspection.

This self-naming is an attempt to alter the callously uncritical negative categorization of foreign/mainland brides. It aims to (re-)gain subjectivity by describing, defining and interpreting themselves for themselves, most representatively in the female marriage migrants' power to narrate their own stories and create their own identity. It is meaningful in the measure that the female marriage migrants are dissociating themselves from a punitive classification in favor of the more optimistic 'new migrant women' taking their own autonomous power into their own hands.

However, the title of new migrant women is subjectively inclusive to the extent that it is, like the title of foreign/mainland brides, still a general categorization and thus unable to recognize the differences and uniqueness between the individual people. Gayatri C. Spivak is aware of the risk of re-essentialization, but accepted it as "strategic essentialization", a "necessary evil" in favor of political empowerment and mobilization of social movements (Spivak 1990: 10 f). For the disadvantaged, it functions, at least, strategically and expediently. However, it is certainly exposed to another kind of naturalization and categorization, albeit a classification made in reaction to oppressive cultural thought and action. The theoretical and empirical problem of this positive categorization and stereotyping is troublesome especially when the appeal for individual specialty and peculiarity is an increasingly important aspect of modern society (Beck / Beck-Gernsheim 2002).

In addition, the categorization tends to homogenize its members as a whole and is insufficient to explain the situation when a biased case emerges. Usually, that would simply be seen as an exception and then be suspended for further investigation. However, for a proper explanation of exceptions, it is worthwhile to take a view more delicately on the process of de-categorization and de-classification made negatively as well as positively. In terms of individuality as exclusive in his/her own way, the idea of subjectivity and individuality radicalizes itself. It indicates that the radical individualization will not be satisfied with the collective or generalized subjectivity or individuality, but strives for personal and personalized individuality. This radicalization of individuality is not merely an academic raving or abstract speculation, but a most empirical circumstance of the modern world. Briefly, the question which we investigate here is how modern society deals with the strangeness, differences, and uniqueness of others when each person can claim his/her individuality as exclusive in his/her own way, when individuals are reluctant to be incorporated into a certain group as a whole. The answer to this question is also an answer to the question of social integration and multiplicities; moreover, negative (foreign/mainland brides) as well as positive (new migrant women) categories should be given serious consideration at the same time.

4. Inclusive individuality vs. exclusive individuality

With more serious consideration of exception and of the goal to de-essentialize the normative predominance of foreign/mainland brides, to unmask the untenable premises upon which it is taken for granted, universalized and in the end naturalized, the focus has shifted from inclusive individuality to *exclusive individuality*. This is a concept proposed by German sociologist Niklas Luhmann and seems at the first glance very unconventional. In discussing the modern individuality in its radical form, Niklas Luhmann has noted that modern society cannot identify a person according to his/her one-dimensional status or role bounded with the natal family. In modern society, personal identity is individualized and multiplied and can only be outlined by dissociation from the group. Thus, he formulated the modern individualization of a person in a somewhat unusual way: "An individual cannot be defined through inclusion, but only through exclusion" (Luhmann 1989: 158). The real meaning of exclusivity lies in the "not-belongingness" (Nassehi 1997: 127) to a group, a class or genre – be it foreign/mainland brides or new migrant women – in the assertion that an individual identity is endowed with distinctive characters and qualities.

In the interviews of female marriage migrants conducted by various scholars, it is remarkable how many female marriage migrants from Southeast Asia and China and their husbands complain about the social stigmatization and external pressure while, paradoxically, they treat themselves as an exception by emphasizing their own exclusion, or not-belongingness.

It is not difficult to comprehend that the basic assumption of this exclusive individuality aims to de-essentialize, de-categorize and de-naturalize the homogenous whole.

This struggle of dissociation from the whole is more easily understood when it involves dissociation from a negatively stigmatized whole. In the case of foreign/mainland brides, it can be observed that they tend to declare their difference from other female marriage migrants in many and varied ways, no matter how trivial these differences may sound to others. For example, in a statement by a female marriage migrant: "I have tasted Taiwanese fondue in Jakarta [the capital of Indonesia] and I am not the same as some people who have just seen it for the first time when they came to Taiwan and are not yet used to it." (Chiou 2003: 292). Another female marriage migrant from Indonesia is only too well aware of what the category of foreign brides from Southeast Asia coming to Taiwan means within Taiwanese society. Emphasizing how she became acquainted with her husband and the economic status of her birth family, she asserts the "normality" of her marriage in contrast to other foreign marriage migrants:

> "I became acquainted with my husband while doing translation work. The economic status of my parents is highly positioned. Besides, I am ethnic Chinese and am different from the foreign brides coming to Taiwan through agency brokers." (Chiou 2003: 292)

Hsiao-Chuan Hsia, in her studies of female marriage migrants and their Taiwanese families, has noted also that the men marrying women from Southeast Asia have the same paradoxical impression. On one hand, they are annoyed by the prejudices held by the general public and constraints set up by the Taiwanese government. On the other hand, they internalize this stigmatization and treat themselves as an exception. The popular notion in Taiwan is that only the disabled, the disadvantaged and invalids who would be willing to seek a wife from Southeast Asia. It is interesting to note that while it is often assumed that there is a collective solidarity between the disadvantaged, such may not be the case in reality. In a disdainful and whispering tone, a man summarized his opinions in the following way,

> "Most people (who marry Indonesian brides) are disabled. Many of them are heavy drinkers! Which woman would marry them? Many women know that after marriage and regret it. You have heard about women who escaped, it is all because they marry a man of this kind. But I am different. I have had relationships with many women before. But I did not want marry at that time and just wanted play about. Consequently, I am now too old to find a wife." (Hsia 2002: 246 f.)

A man who has Poliovirus treats himself also as an exception from other men who marry foreign brides.

> "Most people who marry foreign brides are mentally defective or have psychiatric disorders. Although my legs are not in a good condition, I am quite normal. To be quite honest, who wants to marry a man who is out of his mind (The brain is damaged)? Their marriages will definitely have problems" (Hsia 2002: 247).

Another man who had brain damage when he was a baby also differentitates himself: "People said that I am blunt, but I am not an idiot. I am not same as those who drink excessively and beat their wives. I am very nice to my wife" (ebd.): All of these men, however, exclude themselves from the stereotypical image of the men who choose migrant wives from Southeast Asia and thus treat themselves as exceptions, separating themselves from the contextually disgraced men who marry foreign/mainland brides.

However, in her work, Hsia does not focus on this common theme of exception seriously and leaves it aside merely pointing out that it is another stigmatization. Here, we see the power of inclusion – in an excluded way – into a category which will be naturalized, stigmatized and finally universalized. The hidden principle is to de-essentialize the normative

expectations and universalization. Put another way, the people involved want to be excluded from this essentialized and negative classification. It is thus understandable that some female marriage migrants and their Taiwanese husbands try to vindicate their marriages as different from the usual cross-border marriages which are commonly perceived to be arranged and therefore subject to moral criticism. They tell a story corresponding to an acceptable expectation of self-identity.

The case of female marriage migrants in Taiwan serves as a good example to explore the process of (de-)categorization and inclusion/exclusion. It is worth to look at their self-definition and self-naming as new migrant women. Here, we come to a critical point of de-essentialization and withdrawal from a more homogeneous being. As said above, the exclusion from foreign/mainland brides and the inclusion into new migrant women are regarded as a collective effort that demands freedom from stigmatized categorization by the auto-creation of a new category. This effort is a stand against the inequality, injustice, and hegemony that brings into account the subjectivity and individuality of female marriage migrants by a certain proclamation of human pride and rights. The act of re-naming is a worthwhile effort if it allows Taiwanese society a glance at the real suffering and the insufficiency of resources and opportunities caused by the denial of full citizenship status and the naming of foreign/mainland brides. The goal of inclusion into the new migrant women is of course not limited to this; moreover, it is extended to the widest category, namely the human *per se*.

This kind of *inclusive individuality* operates in support of the idea that "all men are created equal", but as said, this does not separate one person from another or precisely a new migrant woman from another. In other words, it is unable to treat a person as exclusive in his/her own way and is therefore exposed to the risk to re-essentialize new migrant women as a homogenous whole. And an investigation which takes into account the theoretical as well as the empirical meaning of de-essentialization and de-categorization, should look closely at the homogenous categorical generalization, even if made positively. In this sense, the *exclusive individuality* is a more appropriate concept to describe the exclusive and personal-specific individuality.

The idea of exclusive individuality brings us back to consider the category of new migrant women in all seriousness. While the self-definition, self-naming, and self-narrative as new migrant women is perceived more positively by many people, one must concede that it can actually not represent the exclusivity and singularity of an individual person. In fact, like the category of foreign/mainland brides, this appellation contains, just as potentially, a set of immanent expectations. In the instance of new migrant women, it is tricky and tough to deal with the theme of de-essentialization, de-naturalization, and de-categorization. In the distinction of new migrant women from foreign/mainland brides, the latter are usually regarded as a social category which comes to be essentialized and naturalized due to an universal categorization and ought be criticized, revised or reversed. However, there are not many people who see the former as a socially construable category as it is also exposed to the risk of being essentialized, naturalized and finally universalized. The primordial approach of de-essentialization is embedded in the idea of decoupling one person from category-based identity and group-approved (group accounting) identification. There is thus a danger that a preoccupation both with the naming as foreign/mainland brides and as new migrant women blurs the fact that the people involved cannot be and are not in fact included into a homogenous and generalized category. As Rosemary Breger and Rosanna Hill (Breger / Hill 1998: 9) have noted in her discussion of ethnic differences, there is a risk of essentialization and generalization by highlighting the peculiarity of any cultural or ethnic category:

> "In this way, 'ethnic culture' is homogenized, that is, it is assumed that the cultural conventions, including religion, language, norms and expectations, are not only the same for people of a par-

> ticular ethnic identity, but are also completely accepted and practiced by them all, that there is one 'pure', easily identifiable set of ethnic 'traditions', religion and speech."

The personal differences which form each person's individual habits, interests, education and biographical experiences will be ignored and undermined under this "cultural mask".

The change of thinking from inclusive individuality to exclusive individuality brings us to an empirically reasonable insight about *a* (but not *the*) real individuality according personal characters and experiences. Furthermore, it illuminates also, in addition to full citizenship, a new idea of integration that envisions a personal identity as exclusive and individual in its own way. Finally, it leads us to perceive strangeness and differentness as social resources that can enrich instead of diminishing the shape and quality of Taiwanese society.

5. Appraising strangeness as a strategy for social integration

Having the idea of exclusive individuality in mind, we must seriously rethink the progressively urgent appeal of individuality as exclusive and the meaning of de-essentialization. In modern culture, it is taken for granted that a person is expected to be an individual exclusive in his or her own way. Individualization has radicalized itself. The rectification of new female migrants offers us an interesting way to observe the process of de-essentialization and de-categorization. By beginning to re-name, interpret, and define themselves by motivating a movement "Do not call me a foreign bride anymore!", female marriage migrants describe themselves as "new migrant women", and in doing so, they de-naturalize the damaged image of foreign/mainland brides.Upon closer insepection, the self-description as "new migrant women" is in the strict sense also made collectively and wholly. It implicates the risk of re-essentialization, and re-categorization. Ultimately, it will undergo re-naturalization and re-universalization. More specifically, female marriage migrants are in this respect "integrated" again into a lifeless category, that of "new migrant women", which cannot show the uniqueness of positive as well as negative characteristics and experiences collected by each individual throughout a lifetime. Indeed, even the shortcomings of each new female migrant are individually specific. The point here is that one should take seriously consider person-specific characteristics which cannot easily be reduced to a certain normalized and standardized frame of expectations.

Correspondingly, I argue that in addition to the idea of full citizenship (Parsons 1964) "all are created equal" (inclusive individuality), the idea of differentness/otherness "all are created different" should also be heightened. It would not be limited to different cultures on a collective level, but extended to different individuals on a personal level. No one should be presumed to subscribe to a stubborn category – be it perceived positively or negatively. Therefore, appraising differentness and strangeness can act as a strategic mechanism for social integration and co-existence. It confirms, on the basis of equality and full citizenship, the multiple levels of exclusive individuality, by asserting otherness and difference as a standard – gender, race, life style, verbal accent, eating habits, and religious belief – in social encounters and interactions. It aims not to eliminate differences but, contrarily, to sustain differences; treating strangeness as accepted fact and not counting a person too quickly into a set of categorized expectations. Facing an ever more complicated society, peaceful living and social integration can only, on the basis of full citizenship and humanity, be reached by accepting differences. It means to regard differences, strangeness and hybrids as a rich social resource, and not as a barrier that limits social integration.

In fact, many differences are often irrelevant to social interactions, including gender, age and race. However, irrelevance does not mean that we must feign ignorance or treat people with certain physical features as non-persons (Goffman 1963: 84). Contrarily, the differ-

ences are absolutely conceived and maintain a polite distance or boundary. One can image a situation in a park: A female marriage migrant can, due to her physical features, easily be identified. One perceives and recognizes the difference, but the gaze will not linger curiously on this female marriage migrant. Thus, each person could be assumed to be a stranger in some way and one has only to pay "minimum sympathy" (Stichweh 2004) and "civil inattention" (Goffman 1963: 83) to people whom we encounter in our daily life. We interact with someone in our daily life according to what is situational and required, but not according to physical characteristics or verbal accents. In a complicated and mixed society, it is inevitable that we cross strangers who are different to us in diverse respects. It is definitely a bias to deal with a categorized group according their one-dimensional role and unduly reduce all of their behaviors to this role which presumes what they should be and do. Civil inattention sends "a sign of recognition that others have claims to a shared space or environment" (Finkelstein 2007: 109). Meanwhile, it manifests a "signal to strangers a sense of boundary and self-enclosure" (Finkelstein 2007: 109): Otherness and strangeness are then, in this respect, not simply undermined for social assimilation, but enormously respected. That they delimit boundaries for claiming self-identification and ask for recognition from others, strangeness and otherness are not barriers which interrupt the maintenance of a society, but elements for the ongoing self-creation of a society.

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