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## Chapter Four

# Patriarchal Racialization

### *Gendered and Racialized Integration of Foreign Brides and Foreign Husbands in South Korea*

Seonok Lee

South Korea has long referred to itself as *tanil minjok kukka*—“the single ethnic nation state.”<sup>1</sup> Until recently, enhancing pride in being a single ethnic nation and emphasizing the importance of maintaining “Korean blood” were popular themes of public education in South Korea. Therefore, the majority of Koreans still believe that maintaining *tanil minjok* (the single ethnic nation) is essential to Korean identity. However, since the mid-1990s a rapidly growing marriage migrant and foreign migrant worker population has led to an increased awareness that South Korea is becoming more ethnically and racially diverse (Jung 2007; Lee 2008; Hong and Kim 2010; Jo 2011; M. Kim 2014; H. Kim 2014).

Due to declining birth rates, the South Korean government began recruiting marriage migrants from neighboring Asian countries, such as China, Vietnam, Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand and Mongolia. Since 2005, in response to the dramatically growing numbers of marriage migrants, the South Korean government has actively supported multicultural integration programs for marriage migrants through multicultural family support centers. These centers provide free Korean language classes, Korean culture classes, Korean cooking classes, parenting seminars, speech clinics for children, legal aid, translation services (usually in Chinese, Vietnamese, and Tagalog), and basic job training programs. Particularly popular amongst new marriage migrants are the Korean language and culture classes, because these courses provide the participant with an exemption from the written and oral tests for acquiring permanent residency or citizenship. There is no doubt that multi-

cultural family support centers and their integration programs greatly assist marriage migrants in adapting to Korean culture and society. In fact, many couples of international marriages even try to find housing near such centers.

Yet a closer look at who these multicultural activities are created for, and what they actually entail, reveals that the South Korean government mainly supports the integration of foreign brides rather than foreign husbands. This raises a number of questions: Why, despite strong undercurrents of ethno-nationalism and the myth of ethnic homogeneity, is the South Korean government attempting to integrate foreign brides from different racial and ethnic backgrounds? At the same time, why is the South Korean government not attempting to integrate foreign husbands?

Drawing upon ethnographic research on marriage migrants, their Korean family members, and neighbors in South Korea, I argue that racial logics play a central role in reproducing patriarchal family structures and that to do so, these logics operate in opposing ways for foreign brides and foreign husbands. I call this active process *patriarchal racialization*. Patriarchal racialization is a gendered racialization process whereby patriarchal gender roles are emphasized to minimize racial differences for certain groups that need to be integrated into the existing socio-cultural system. At the same time, the racial differences of other groups are maximized to amplify their “foreignness,” which delay their integration into the society. Patriarchal racialization involves multiple actors, such as the state, community, and family members in the microsphere of the household. The outcome of patriarchal racialization involves both the production of a new racial category and the inscribing of specific gendered rules within racial hierarchies. Patriarchal racialization is problematic because it justifies the unequal distribution of access to resources such as work and education, as well as social, economic, and political power. The co-formation of patriarchy and racialization can be broadly observed even though the actual cases may appear differently in historically and locally specific contexts. Therefore South Korea offers a prime example for studying how economic migration interacts with global systems of gender and racial inequality.

This chapter is organized as follows: I begin by weaving connections between the literature on patriarchy and racialization in race and gender studies. I then turn to my empirical study of foreign brides and foreign husbands living in South Korea. This involves analysis of the role of the South Korean state in gendered marriage recruitment, settlement services, and citizenship policies. I also examine both migrant women and men's everyday experiences of difference and hierarchy in the micro-space of the household and in the community. I conclude by exploring patriarchal racialization, which reproduces patriarchy as a system of gender domination and subordination by facilitating racial logics.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND FOR PATRIARCHAL RACIALIZATION

As one specific way of Othering, racialization imposes otherness on a certain group of people. According to Omi and Winant (1994, 64), the category of race is an outcome of a racialization process, which involves “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially un-classified relationship, social practice or group.” Similar to Omi and Winant’s definition of racialization, Miles and Brown (2003, 102) define racialization as “a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings, as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons which reproduces itself biologically.” Racialization is problematic because it includes a dialectical process of the conceptualization of the self (in-group) as a superior race, which simultaneously solicits the conceptualization of the other as the inferior race by attributing a negative evaluation to the Other (Miles and Brown 2003). Van Dijk (1993, 20) points out that racism “affect[s] other people primarily because they are thought to belong to another group, that is, as group members and not as individuals.” This means that a specific ethnic group is seen as “alike and interchangeable” (Ibid., 20). This process inscribes racial meanings to specific ethnic groups and individuals within the existing ethno-racial hierarchy, which influence social mobility, access to societal rewards and resources, and overall quality of life (McDonnell and de Lourenco 2009).

Building upon Omi and Winant’s (1994) racial formation theory, Kandaswamy (2012, 12) argues that “racial formation is fundamentally a gendered and sexualized process.” In this view, gender and race do not exist and create inequalities in isolation. Rather gender and race—as mutually constitutive powers—engage with one another in the distribution of uneven power and the creation of social inequalities. However, despite increasing recognition of the intersectional relations between gender and racialization, patriarchy as a social system of organizing gender and of privileging male authority is not typically analyzed in its co-formation with racialization. The role of patriarchy tends to be marginalized from the scholarly discussion of racialization, which overlooks the way various forms of patriarchy have intersected with other forms of inequalities such as racism.

The intimate space of home and family is an important site for reproducing not only gender hierarchies but also racial hierarchies under the patriarchal order (Collins 2001, Stoler 2002). The inseparable relationship between race and gender under patriarchal domination can be easily traced back to the 19th century of European colonial power. For example, Stoler (2002) examines how the management of sexual arrangements was fundamentally structured into the making of racial categories and racial hierarchies in colonial Indonesia by looking at sexual and racial dynamics among white Dutch men,

white Dutch women, local Indonesian women, and mixed-race children. While returning to the Netherlands from colonial Indonesia with an Asian wife and mixed-race children was prohibited, Dutch bachelors in Indonesia were encouraged, or at least tolerated, to live with native Indonesian women. Their cohabitation was considered to help colonial development and expansion by stabilizing political order and public colonial health. When Dutch women entered colonial Indonesia, however, the boundary between white Dutch families and native Indonesians, and the hierarchy of the colonizer and the colonized, became much clearer. Mixed-race children of Dutch men and native Indonesian women were located above the local population but below that of the Dutch colonizers. Thus, control over sexual activities, marriage, and reproduction were a crucial colonial apparatus for constructing racial hierarchies between the colonizers and the colonized. As Stoler puts it, “gender-specific sexual sanctions and prohibitions not only demarcated positions of power but also prescribed the personal and public boundaries of race” (Ibid., 42). Along the same line, McClintock (1995, 56) describes a patriarchal racial order in the 19th-century Britain in her book *Imperial Leather*: “The English middle-class male was placed at the pinnacle of evolutionary hierarchy. White English middle class women followed. Domestic workers, female miners and working-class prostitutes were stationed on the threshold between the white and black races.”

However, the main literature on racial boundaries under patriarchy is concentrated on 19th-century European colonialism (cf., Stoler 2005; McClintock 1995). There is little literature on the intersections between patriarchy and racialization in relation to contemporary migration in East and Southeast Asia. Therefore, building upon the discussion on gendered racialization shows how patriarchy reproduces racial hierarchy, and racialization reinforces patriarchal order in the context of gendered migration in East Asia.

## ETHNOGRAPHY ON MULTICULTURAL FAMILY

This article is based on ethnographic research conducted in two typical industrial working-class cities in South Korea—Ansan and Siheung—between September 2013 and May 2014. A significant population of immigrants and foreign migrant workers populate these neighboring cities because of the industrial complex located there. In this industrial complex there are more than 10,000 small- and medium-sized factories. I was interested in examining not only “what people say” about race but also “what people actually do” (Waters 2001, 11). While working alongside migrants in several factories, and participating in classes at the migrant centers, I observed everyday interactions and experiences amongst different actors in order to gain insight into the process of patriarchal racialization.

The migration flows toward South Korea are characterized as labor and marriage migration. As female migration between East Asia and Southeast Asian countries has increased, Korean migration scholars place migrant women at the center of marriage migration while paying little attention to migrant men. Most of these men from South and Southeast Asia married Korean women after originally entering Korea as unskilled foreign migrant workers. Therefore, I include migrant men in order to examine the gender and racial dynamics amongst Koreans, and both migrant women and men.

I volunteered as a child minder at the Ansan Multicultural Family Support Center. I also attended some classes offered to female marriage migrants and their families, such as Korean cooking classes, basic job training (cooking certificates and coffee brewing), childcare seminars, and language classes alongside Chinese, Korean-Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipina, Japanese, Mongolian, and Uzbek women. At the center, the majority of programs were intended for migrant women under the official category of “multicultural family” based on the assumption that marriage migrants are women and full-time homemakers. Even though I am a native-born ethnic Korean, I was able to take these classes with other female marriage migrants, because of my “foreigner” husband. Therefore, my family was also officially categorized as a multicultural family. My foreign husband was not in South Korea with me during my field research, but my daughter often accompanied me to the classes whenever I could not arrange child minding for her.

Theoretically, foreign husbands can also use the services and classes in the multicultural family support center. However, they usually do not visit the center because they see the center as a place “for women” but not for them due to its immigrant women-oriented services. Instead, they use the foreign migrant workers’ welfare center, which is intended for documented and undocumented foreign workers who enter Korea with a three- to five-year contract for manufacturing and service industries. The foreign migrant workers’ welfare center mainly provides labor counseling services on top of computer classes, driver’s license classes, martial art training, free medical services, and ethnic group meetings. These centers are open for any foreign migrant workers, but usually young male foreign workers hang out in the lobby more often than female foreign workers. I regularly visited the foreign migrant workers’ welfare center to meet male immigrants and foreign migrant workers.

I realized that the neighborhood is also a very important site to capture the interactions between migrants and Koreans. Whenever I traveled by subway or bus with my toddler daughter, I noticed that my daughter always drew very visible attention from people because of her biracial look. Responses differed depending on whether they saw me as an Asian foreign bride with a non-Korean looking child, or whether they saw my daughter as a white *honhyŏl* (mixed blood) from a white father. I also had to deal with inconsid-

erate comments and curious glances at my child and me, and I learned about my new social category, *tamunhwa* (multicultural family), through social benefits programs that I applied for, and in everyday interactions with people. For example, I learned that my family is *tamunhwa* when I registered my daughter on the wait lists of public daycare centers. The director of the public daycare center told me that my family is in the category of *tamunhwa*, so my daughter could get a priority for the registration, which is the same benefit offered to underprivileged families, such as single parent families, low-income families, and disabled parents families.

Interestingly, my status as the mother of a biracial child offered opportunities to get closer to migrant women. As they found out that I also have a foreign spouse and a biracial child, they invited my daughter and me over to their homes for playdates and family occasions like birthday parties. Sometimes, we went on picnics with our children to the local museum and parks. As part of the ethnographic research, I conducted semi-structured interviews with local Koreans and migrants from Bangladesh, Vietnam, Philippines, Cambodia, Nepal, and China about their feelings about international marriages or their experience living together as a multicultural family.

In the following section, I examine the role of the state by looking at the institutional conditions of marriage immigration and gendered settlement services.

### THE STATE'S INTERVENTION TO GENDERED MIGRATION FLOWS AND SETTLEMENT

In this section, I explore one facet of how patriarchal racialization occurs—the state, which institutionally controls migration flows, settlement process, and membership through the citizenship and settlement policies. In South Korea, almost every city has a multicultural family support center to assist marriage migrants' successful settlement and their families' cultural adjustment to the new relationship. However, these government-installed centers are gender-specific venues. In other words, the center is a place for foreign brides and their children, but not for foreign husbands. For example, Nepalese husband Udaya,<sup>2</sup> who is in his early thirties, did not go to the center near his house. Right after marrying a Korean woman, he visited the center to see if he could use its programs and services. However, he found that there were no programs and services for him. He explained, “it seems mainly foreign ladies go to the center, because they need to learn how to look after their babies, learn how to cook Korean foods, and how to deal with their Korean family-in-law. I heard that their Korean mothers-in-law give them lots of stress.” Although the multicultural family support centers offer Korean language classes and some other useful services, foreign husbands still do not

feel comfortable going to the multicultural family support center. Perhaps they see it as not for them.

By 2013, there were 211 multicultural family support centers across the country that had been installed under the Multicultural Family Support Act. These centers are supposed to serve any family who is categorized as a multicultural family. However, not everyone can use these centers. The majority of the programs are designed to help foreign brides adapt to their Korean family's culture and for Korean-born children to improve their Korean language proficiency. Thus, they provide Korean language, cooking, child-rearing, and culture classes based on the assumption that visitors to the center are full-time homemakers and primary caregivers. The center also organizes foreign wives as volunteers and connects them to local charity groups in order to enhance their social integration. However, it is rare for these centers to provide services in the evenings or on weekends for foreign husbands who usually work in the factories during weekdays. Therefore, while these centers teach specific gender roles to foreign wives through their settlement programs, the centers neglect foreign husbands from integrating into Korean society institutionally.

This gendered approach to marriage migrants is clear even before foreign brides enter South Korea. Foreign brides are advised to take Korean cultural programs while they are waiting for their visas. There are several overseas Korean culture centers for new brides in the Philippines, Vietnam, and other countries. These overseas Korean culture centers provide an overview of Korean society and Korean culture. In particular, they provide the new brides with information on how to have a successful marriage with a Korean man—for example, how to manage in-law relationships and how to behave properly as a wife and a daughter-in-law.

When we look closely at the citizenship and immigration policies, it is clear that the Korean state plays a critical role in reproducing patriarchal family relations by controlling marriage migrants' gender composition. The state promotes importing foreign brides from lower income countries but restricts the entry of foreign husbands. Accordingly, settlement services are also geared towards foreign brides in order to strengthen the patriarchal family relations which contemporary Korean women are increasingly resisting. South Korean immigration policy is oriented towards female marriage migrants. It is based on two interrelated gender ideologies: blood passing down paternally and a wife being under her husband's control. First, Koreans' belief that blood passes down through a father is important to understanding gendered immigration and citizenship policies which are inclusive of foreign women but exclusive of foreign men. Until 1997, a foreign bride could automatically attain Korean citizenship upon marriage to a Korean husband, but a foreign husband was only allowed to get a temporary visitor visa. In many cases, foreign husbands had to re-enter South Korea every



three months to renew their visitor status. Since they were officially tourists, they were not allowed to get jobs in South Korea until 1997. While the children of a foreign bride and Korean man were Korean citizens, the children of a foreign husband and a Korean woman were not recognized as Korean citizens (Jung 2007). They had to register as foreign nationals in their homeland because they had to follow their father's nationality (Ibid.). In 1998, the Korean nationality law was revised, but instead of allowing fast-track citizenship for foreign husbands as well, the South Korean government discontinued automatic citizenship for foreign brides (Lee 2008). Thus, both foreign men and foreign women now have to wait at least two years before applying for Korean citizenship.

Immigration policy and citizenship are crucial tools to define outsiders, insiders, and racial others. Immigration policies have historically made a distinction between the alien and the citizen in order to legitimize a specific group's modern citizenship rights (Ibid.). This is a way of differentiating between who is, and who is not, a member of the national community.

#### PERFORMING TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES: FOREIGN BRIDES' GENDERED INTEGRATION

Having a foreign wife is considered a less-than-ideal situation in South Korea. Having a wife from a lower-income country signals a man's incompetence in the Korean marriage market compared to his middle-class white-collar counterparts and hurts a man's honor and his family's pride (M. Kim 2014). However, symbolically an unmarried man is in some degree infantilized, so to remain unmarried is to be seen as a total failure as a man (Ibid.). He is not seen as the patriarch of his own household or a "respectable family man" (Freeman 2005). The parents of an unmarried man often feel responsibility to make sure their son has a wife in order to continue the family lineage, so it is not rare for parents to initiate international marriage for their sons.

While a Korean wife is ideal, if an international marriage is necessary, a foreign wife's nationality and her homeland's economic status are carefully considered. The relative desirability of a foreign wife depends on her country of origin, whether she comes from a relatively developed country or a less developed country, and what ethnicity or race these countries represent. However, the majority of international marriages are unions of rural farmers or working-class Korean men and foreign women from Southeast Asia and China. Western European or North American wives who reside in South Korea are not common. These Korean husbands of Western European or North American wives are usually professionals—or at least middle class. Therefore, there is a clear class division in the international marriage market

along the husbands' privileged class position, and perceived hierarchies of wives' country of origin. Based on this hierarchy, expectations toward foreign wives differ. Wives from Western Europe and North America are treated as bilingual cosmopolitans without much expectation of domesticity (Hong and Kim 2010). This is in sharp contrast to the way that wives from Southeast Asia and China are treated: as obedient wives and good homemakers whose main quality comes from her domesticity. Regardless of the class status of a Korean family, Korean husbands and in-laws believe that they are superior to their foreign wives based on their nation's position in the global economic hierarchy (Abelmann and Kim 2005, M. Kim 2014, H. Kim 2014).

Corresponding to this social expectation, female marriage migrants have to adjust by identifying as "the good wife and mother." As H. Kim (2014) points out, however, female marriage migrants are neither from the past nor intrinsically obedient and traditional. Rather, many of them have previously experienced more gender-equal relationships under socialist regime or matriarchal family culture of their home countries. They, thus, have to adapt to Korean gender roles and perform "the good wife" to integrate into Korean society. Thirty-three-year-old Filipina immigrant Susanne's case illustrates this well.

Susanne and her Korean husband Young-Hoon live on the outskirts of the city, with their children and her Korean mother-in-law. Susanne expressed that she has a good relationship with her Korean mother-in-law. Her neighbors complement her cooking and hard work, saying Susanne is just like a Korean. She seemed well integrated into traditional Korean family culture. However, Susanne recalled that it took years to adapt to the Korean way of interacting. There were lots of arguments and tense situations until she finally adapted her husbands' family culture:

When I just got married, I could not understand my father-in-law at all. He asked me to serve every little thing, like serving water or coffee whenever he needed it. And my husband asked me to do everything for him too. In the Philippines, all the boys know how to do household work. But Korean men, they asked me to even serve water. I felt that it's very unfair. One day I talked back to my father-in-law. This made him angry and he overthrew the dinner table. It was tense. I was so frustrated and angry because of this culture where women should serve men. Why did they ask me to bring water in the morning? [Laughs.] Now I understand it is just Korean culture. I learned that respecting seniors and listening to them is part of Korean culture. Also I learned cooking and serving meals are a wife's duty.

At first, she protested against traditional gender roles, but she eventually accepted her role in the family. Susanne understood this to be Korean tradition and a cultural difference between the Philippines and South Korea, instead of exploitation of women within the family. Not every foreign bride

accepts this traditional gender role though. For example, patriarchal family culture is one of the main complaints of foreign women about their marriage lives and patriarchal expectations often cause family troubles or divorces (Freeman 2005; Yu 2010; Park 2011). However, when a foreign bride adapts to patriarchal gender roles, they tend to have a comparatively peaceful marriage life and decent relationships with their in-laws.

While foreign brides are integrated into Korean society if they accept the role of a good wife, Korean husbands also have to perform the traditional gender role of “the respectable family man” (Freeman 2005). While a Korean husband relegates reproductive and domestic labor to his foreign wife, he is expected to be the main breadwinner and financially support his wife’s natal family. However, since the majority of Korean men who chose international marriages are factory workers or rural farmers, being able to financially support a wife’s natal family is often quite difficult (H. Kim 2014). Sending remittances to the wife’s natal family is also expected even though not every couple is able to send remittances regularly, or at all (Ibid.). Younger generations of Koreans in their 20s and 30s tend to be less patriarchal and more sensitive to gender equality. This means not only that young Korean women challenge their traditional gender roles as a wife, daughter-in-law, and mother, but also that young Korean men do not want to take the full responsibility of being the sole breadwinner. However, Korean patriarchy is still influential in shaping family relations, especially for multicultural families who expect both foreign brides and Korean husbands to perform traditional gender roles, as foreign brides are integrated into Korean society through demonstrating their Korean-ness through the family.

### RACIAL/ETHNIC PREFERENCES OF A FOREIGN WIFE

Koreans are highly perceptive of ethnic and racial differences. Depending on a spouse’s skin color and appearance, the family may be able to pass and possibly blend into Korean society, or they may constantly encounter gazes from strangers and discrimination. Thus, Koreans prefer East Asian-looking brides such as Chinese or Vietnamese women to darker skinned brides from the Philippines or Thailand. The following excerpt shows the racial/cultural preferences in choosing a foreign wife. In September 2012, a Korean man posted about his experience of international marriage on an online forum for the benefit of other Korean bachelors. After careful deliberation, he narrowed down his wife-to-be’s nationality to Vietnam and Uzbekistan. In the end he chose an Uzbek bride because his parents would not accept a Southeast Asian woman as their daughter-in-law. The following excerpt of his racial/cultural evaluation of foreign brides provides a snapshot of some common cultural and racial stereotypes.

## **China**

Pros: Similar appearance to Koreans, thus children easily blend into school life.

Cons: High risk of fake marriage or divorce. There are huge cultural differences in terms of caring for in-laws due to socialism.

## **The Philippines**

Pros: Speak English, so they can teach English to children.

Cons: Thick lips and flat nose. Their darker skin never becomes lighter even after living in Korea. No Confucian culture—huge cultural differences.

## **Vietnam**

Pros: Have Confucian culture so they can easily accept the Korean family culture; they are obedient. They have a bit darker skin but it turns pale like Koreans after living in Korea.

Cons: None

## **Uzbekistan**

Pros: Not everyone, but Islamic culture may share some similarities with Confucian culture (support parents, dominance of men over women).

Their western appearance may satisfy Korean men's sexual fantasies.

Cons: Too stubborn because of former socialism and nomadic culture.

On the list, two prominent evaluation rubrics are present: racial attributes and cultural characteristics. The cultural characteristics indicate whether a foreign woman's country has a patriarchal culture. This may help the woman accept Korean patriarchal family culture and carry out the traditional role of wife, as is the expectation. On the other hand, the racial attributes describe a foreign women's skin color and facial features. Historically, light and dark colors were associated with class status in traditional agrarian Korean society long before Western racial hierarchies were introduced. Light colors represented ruling class, higher social status, and cultural sophistication, while dark colors represented lower social status, cultural vulgarity, and ignorance. This was because the ruling class had a paler skin tone while peasants and laborers were tanned from working outside. Thus, historically Korean color prejudice was closer to class prejudice rather than ethnic/racial prejudice. However, after racial hierarchies were introduced to Korea after the Korean war in the 1950s, this traditional Korean class-based color prejudice was fused with skin-color distinctions in the making of racial others (Kim 2008). Thus, this classed and racialized color distinction connotes that lighter skin

equals superiority and darker skin is an indication of inferiority. A wife's skin color is one of the main considerations when choosing a bride-to-be.

Regardless of the type of marriage—an arranged marriage or a love marriage—a wife's skin color is carefully considered for different reasons. Most families want to avoid unwanted attention and reduce potential discrimination against their family and children. Sometimes, however, a Korean family prefers a very dark-skinned wife with the belief that her unfavorable appearance would reduce her chance of running away and would increase the “pitiful” woman's loyalty to her Korean family because no other Korean man would like to live with her. Therefore, racial/ethnic preferences and expectations that foreign brides from less developed countries will accept patriarchal culture reinforces the gender ideology of the traditional good wife and mother. This makes for an interesting contrast to the situation that foreign husbands face in South Korea. It is to the topic of foreign husbands as “forbidden patriarchs” in Korean society that we now turn.

### FORBIDDEN PATRIARCHS: FOREIGN HUSBANDS

Marriages of Korean women and foreign men tend to be so-called love marriages (*yōnaegyōrhon*); however, they usually elicit strong protests from the Korean woman's family members, regardless of the husband's nationality and race. Traditionally a marriage used to be understood as a bride merging into her husband's family culture, and her essential role was to reproduce children, especially sons, who are expected to continue the patrilineage. Traditionally Korean parents showed great hospitality to their son-in-law (*sawi*) in concern of their daughter's comparatively lower position to her new family as a *myōnūri*. Even though this traditional meaning of marriage is gradually eroding, it is still problematic for a Korean woman to marry a foreign husband because she is joining an ethnically and racially different family lineage.

Since the majority of foreign husbands are North Americans, Western Europeans, and Japanese men, a Korean woman's international marriage is considered as a form of global “marrying up,” and these couples tend to reside in the husbands' home countries. On the other hand, couples who remain in South Korea tend to be unions of Korean women and foreign husbands who initially came to South Korea as foreign migrant workers from China, South Asia, or Southeast Asia. Thus, a white husband is somewhat more acceptable compared to a South or Southeast Asian husband because the white husband, in moving the unit back to his homeland, does not disturb Korean blood lineage.

South and Southeast Asian men are considered an underclass due to their initial entry to Korea as foreign migrant workers, even if they have college or

university degrees from their home countries. Thus, the union of a Korean woman and a South or Southeast Asian man is seen as the Korean woman's "marrying down." As a South or Southeast Asian (*tongnama*) man is more likely to stay in South Korea, he may become a financial or social burden to his Korean wife and her family. More critically, Koreans understand a South or Southeast Asian husband and his children as a symbol of contamination of Korean lineage. Therefore, a Korean woman with a *tongnama* husband faces stronger social stigma and protests from the Korean woman's family and from society than a Korean man with a *tongnama* wife.

When a Korean woman marries a South Asian or Southeast Asian man, she struggles to convince her Korean family to accept her husband-to-be as their parents' *sawi*. She often threatens her parents that she will not contact her parents until they acknowledge her partner, or her parents threaten their daughter that they will disown her if she follows through with the marriage. Udaya (age 30), a Nepalese immigrant who came to Korea as a foreign migrant worker, recalls his experience of marrying a Korean woman. His Korean wife is very close to her mother and they talk on the phone several times a week. When she planned to marry him, she told her family "I won't see you anymore if you protest this marriage."

At the same time Korean women dating South or Southeast Asian men also try to reduce protests from the family as much as possible. They sometimes do this by presenting their husband-to-be as a white-collar office worker. This is thought to compensate for the low position of the husband-to-be's home country. Since marrying a South or Southeast Asian man is considered as marrying down in South Korea, Udaya's wife was already concerned about her family's reaction when they started dating. She thus asked him not to tell her family that he was a factory worker when she introduced him. She assumed that her family would never accept Udaya if they found out that Udaya was a foreign migrant worker, on top of his undesirable Nepalese nationality. Accommodating his wife's wish, after their marriage Udaya quit his factory job and moved to the government-funded migrant worker center to take a job as a counselor assistant. Even though the salary is significantly lower than what he received doing factory work, his wife prefers him to be an office worker at the government institute.

As this case demonstrates, couples made up of Korean women and Southeast Asian men have to struggle to get married. Having a foreign spouse is treated as a less-than-ideal marriage in general. However, there are huge differences between marrying a foreign bride and marrying a foreign husband. Although there are prejudices and stereotypes against international marriages, the South Korean government actively recruits foreign brides based on the social consent that importing foreign brides is inevitable in order to maintain the Korean population and to solve the care deficit. Foreign brides are expected to accept Korean culture. While a Korean man's interna-

tional marriage is understood as a choice made under conditions of necessity, a Korean woman's international marriage is questioned. Nevertheless, there are distinctions within this category as white men from the first world are acceptable, but not South and Southeast Asian men. White men in South Korea are seen as professionals or English teachers who may be financially more stable and culturally more advanced, and who, it is assumed, will eventually return their country with their Korean wives. Thus they are not expected to compete as patriarchs with Korean men, nor form racially different families within Korea.

However, South Asian or Southeast Asian men in South Korea, who are associated with the image of the underclass, will most likely stay in Korea, Koreans generally fear that they may attempt to become substitute patriarchs, and they may even form ethnically and racially distinct families in Korea. Thus, while the marriage of a Korean man and a foreign woman is acceptable and even encouraged, the marriage of a Korean woman and a South and Southeast Asian man is deeply frowned upon.

South and Southeast Asian husbands who initially came to Korea as foreign migrant workers are permanent foreigners, regardless of their current legal and economic status (Jung 2007). While female marriage migrants are considered *myōnūri* who are accepted under their Korean husbands' control, foreign husbands are not accepted as members of society because Korean society cannot permit foreigners to rule the family as substitute *sawi*. In terms of degrees of inclusion then, a gendered racial hierarchy is in the process of being constructed in which Korean men are followed by Korean women, who are followed by foreign brides and finally foreign men.

#### FOREIGN HUSBAND'S SKIN COLOR AND RACIAL DISTANCE

A foreign husband's ethnic and racial background is one of the reasons why a Korean family may not accept him as the legitimate partner of their daughter. In general, as the foreign population and the mixed-race second-generation population increases, racial discrimination has become a growing social issue. However, foreign husbands' ethnic and racial backgrounds are considered more negatively than those of foreign brides. Koreans regard their skin to be lighter than South and Southeast Asian skin tone. In South Korea, brown or even light brown skin is considered to be closer to black skin than to Korean skin color. As a result, while Koreans consider their skin color to be closer to that of Caucasians, South and Southeast Asians' skin tone is considered closer to black skin. During my field research, I often met interviewees who used the black/white color frame to describe South and Southeast Asians and mixed-race second generations.

Why is brown skin seen as black in South Korea? In order to answer this, we need to take into an account U.S military involvement in Korean modern history. As Nadia Kim (2008) points out, contemporary Korean skin color distinction is influenced by the American black/white binary racial order, which was introduced to South Korea after the Korean War in the 1950s. So-Young (Korean woman, age 40), who is a manager at a publishing company, got married to a Bangladeshi man named Said, who initially came to Korea as a foreign migrant worker. Their case illustrates this point well.

My dad expected that Said was some sort of Asian, but when he saw the photo of Said, he got a shock. "He is not even Asian. It is such a shock for me. I can't allow this marriage." [Loudly laughs.] For him, Said is not Asian; he is almost black and a very different race. My dad was in the South Korean army, so he saw lots of American soldiers at camp towns. In his words, American *kömdungi* [black] harassed Korean girls, to be specific Korean prostitutes. I think his generation has a huge racial trauma about this. Do you remember the American TV drama *Roots*? There is a scene where the main character scrubbed his body very hard to bleach his dark skin. My dad said that was a very sad scene, and he thought being born with black skin meant becoming a being with lots of obstacles and difficulties in life. That being will become my daughter's partner, and your child will be *kömdungi*, who will be looked down on and neglected. He wrote in his e-mail that these were the reasons why he could not accept this marriage.

In this interview, So-Young's father opposed her Bangladeshi husband-to-be because his dark skin color reminded him of the racial trauma that the older generation experienced after the Korean War. So-Young's father interpreted this Bangladeshi man's race through the American black/white racial hierarchy that he had learned from the U.S. military camp and from American TV, which was dominant in South Korea until the 1990s.

Until the mid-1980s, many Korean women worked as sex-workers near U.S. military camps. The child of a Korean woman and an American soldier was called a *honhyö*l (literally "mixed blood"). Scholars point out that Korean men felt emasculated by the U.S. military after the Korean War and *honhyö*l were a living symbol of Korean men's impotence under the regime of the U.S. military (Choi 2009; Park 2007). Korean society, especially in those days, was very patriarchal, so women were blamed for sleeping with U.S. soldiers. *Honhyö*l were considered to be byproducts of prostitution with foreign men. Amongst *honhyö*l children, a racial hierarchy existed according to the father's race. *Honhyö*l children born to a Korean woman and a black American soldier faced far more discrimination than *honhyö*l children with white fathers (Park 2007). Koreans internalized the racial hierarchy that was visible within the U.S. military and American media (Moon 1997; Park



2007; Kim 2008). Thus, So-Young's father could not accept her daughter marrying a Bangladeshi man, who is almost black to him.

Therefore, a foreign husband's ethnic and racial background is judged more seriously than a foreign bride's. Since the patriarchal idea of marriage is still influential in shaping family culture, a Korean woman's international marriage to a South and Southeast Asian man is understood not only as marrying down but also as the voluntary formation of an ethnically and racially inferior family whereby the Korean woman's racial/cultural attributes may be absorbed into the foreign husband's. At the same time, the American black/white racial binary is influential in shaping Koreans' understanding of foreign husbands and their location within Korean racial hierarchies. In the making of South and Southeast Asian husbands, therefore, there is a complex intersection of foreign husbands' race and Korean women's gender roles under Korean patriarchy. The intersectionality of race and gender in the racialization process of South and Southeast Asians becomes more prominent when we see how the second generation of multicultural families is understood in Korean society.

#### RACIAL PROXIMITY OF THE SECOND GENERATION

In South Korea, there exists a strong sense of ethno-nationalism, often expressed as *hanp'itichul* (one blood) and *tanilminjok* (single ethnic nation). The idea of one blood and of a single ethnic nation arose comparatively recently as a way to mobilize the country as it aimed to achieve modernization after independence from Japanese colonialism (Choi 2009). Ethno-nationalism is so pervasive that non-ethnic Koreans are not fully recognized as Korean citizens even if they acquire legal citizenship status (Lee 2008; Jo 2011). Even though Korea is transforming into a multicultural and multiethnic society, the powerful ideology of "one nation" and "pure blood" reinforces the category of *han'guk saram* (Korean) (Kim 2008). The following conversation with Mrs. Park (Korean woman, age 37) shows this clearly:

Lee: What is the most important thing for Korean identity?

Mrs. Park: I really think father and mother should be ethnic Korean, then the children can be *han'guk saram* (Korean). Living in Korea, and knowing Korean culture is not enough to be *han'guk saram*. Korean father and Korean mother, this is the most important thing for Korean identity.

Like Mrs. Park, for those who believe that sharing Korean ethnicity is the most important ingredient for Korean identity, cultural assimilation into Korean society is not sufficient to be an "authentic Korean." Along the same lines, for them multicultural children (*tamunhwa adong*) are almost but not

quite Korean, because one of their parents does not have Korean blood, regardless of the fact that these children were born in South Korea and raised in the Korean culture.

The ideology of ethno-nationalism intersects with patriarchal ideology to ensure that Korean blood passes through the father's line. This creates a symbolic boundary between multicultural children and authentic Korean children. Furthermore, it creates another symbolic boundary among multicultural children, based on who has a Korean father and who does not. Foreign fathers are treated as contaminants of Korea's "pure blood" and "one nation," regardless of their ethnicity. However, relationships between Korean fathers and foreign mothers are acceptable because the child of such a partnership is considered to be more Korean. The following conversations between three Korean women (Mrs. Seo, age 63; Mrs. Choi, age 59; and Mrs. Kim, age 54) and Mr. Han (Korean taxi driver, age 58) illustrates this patriarchal understanding of nationhood and race:

Lee: Well, is a child of a Korean father and a foreign mother Korean?

Mrs. Kim: [Raises voice.] Of course, Korean! That's obvious.

Mrs. Seo: Of course. They have Korean blood.

Mrs. Choi: Because the foreign mother came to Korea.

Lee: Do you consider foreign wives Korean?

Mr. Han: I consider them foreigners. But they speak quite good Korean. Those foreign wives are very nice people.

Lee: Then what about the children of Korean men and foreign women? Do you consider them Korean?

Mr. Han: It depends. Some kids look like Koreans—similar to their fathers. But some kids look like foreigners—similar to their mothers.

Lee: Then, there are foreign men who get married to Korean women, do you consider them Korean or foreigner?

Mr. Han: Yeah, there are some Korean ladies who get married to Filipino Manila hubbies and Bangla hubbies. These guys have a small business, so they have some money, they speak good Korean. But, I still don't feel that they are Korean.

Lee: What do you think of the children between them?

Mr. Han: I don't feel they are Korean, to be honest.

The conversations above show that while foreign wives and foreign husbands are both considered non-Korean, foreign wives are considered “less foreign” than foreign husbands, because they are supposedly under their Korean husbands' control, and therefore they are able to integrate into Korean culture. Moreover, the children of a foreign mother and a Korean father are generally considered to be Korean because Korean people still believe that blood is passed down paternally. Mr. Han nevertheless makes a distinction between children who resemble their Korean fathers and those who take after foreign mothers. However, the children of a Korean mother and a foreign father are considered less Korean despite their looks and their legal status as Korean citizens, for “Korean-ness” is not passed on by the Korean mother. The children of a Korean father and a foreign mother are seen as racially closer to Koreans than the children of a foreign father and Korean mother. Thus, Korean ethno-nationalism and continued belief in paternal blood lineage results in patriarchal racialization, as foreign wives are considered to be culturally and biologically more adaptable than foreign husbands.

## CONCLUSION: PATRIARCHAL RACIALIZATION

This article has explored the inextricable relationship between patriarchy and racialization in the context of marriage migration in South Korea by looking at two categories of marriage migrants: foreign brides and foreign husbands. In contemporary Korea, patriarchy becomes one of the domains through which rural farmers, working-class Korean men, and their families recover their dignity and exercise power in the micro-sphere of the household. They do this by mobilizing foreign brides from Southeast Asia and China. In order to create the perception of Korean culture as conservative and homogenous, reproducing patriarchy depends on structural arrangements (government-sanctioned importation of foreign brides, marriage, immigration law), social activities in the community, and everyday interactions in the family and extended kinships.

Working-class and rural Korean men attempt to reproduce patriarchal family structures through marriage immigration with women from lower-income countries. Reproducing Korean patriarchy as essential and ahistorical requires minimizing the “foreignness” of foreign brides. Thus, parents and husbands emphasize the cultural and racial similarities between specific groups of foreign brides and Korean women. On the other hand, the racial differences of foreign husbands are underlined in order to amplify their “foreignness.” Thus, children of a Korean father and a foreign mother are

seen as racially closer to Koreans than the children of a foreign father and Korean mother.

In the case of South Korea, patriarchal racialization creates an opportunity for working class and rural Korean men and their family members to exercise their power by re-entrenching patriarchy in the micro-sphere of the family. It offers them a way to maintain their status within the family and the kin circle despite their socially disadvantaged class position. Patriarchal racialization reinforces the continued ethno-racial belief in patriarchal blood lineage—the belief that lineage passes down through the Korean father’s line. In this regard, the reconfiguration of racial hierarchies has a very critical role to play in reproducing patriarchy.

Patriarchal racialization involves two processes. The first process is about connecting the ideology of patriarchy to race, which normalizes patriarchal racial hierarchies in family and society at large. The rhetoric of *han’guk saram* (Korean) and racial stereotypes of foreign spouses works to normalize racial hierarchies among Koreans, immigrants, and their children. In particular, the ideology of Korean ethno-nationalism idealizes the blood tie as the natural link connecting family, kin, and the national community. While the Korean national community is still seen as an extended blood tie, a father’s blood lineage is considered more dominant and superior than the mother’s blood lineage. Therefore, the “foreignness” of foreign brides can be minimized by emphasizing their traditional gender roles, while the racial differences of foreign husbands are maximized to amplify their “foreignness.” As a result, a multicultural family with a Korean father is located in a better position than a multicultural family with a Korean mother within the racial hierarchy of multicultural families.

The second process involves gendered racialization. The excerpt from the online forum about the pros and cons of four different groups of female marriage migrants shows how Koreans create bounded understandings of regional/country-specific developmental stereotypes, racial stereotypes, and patriarchal rhetoric of the ideal Korean family. It also illuminates how these stereotypes work to normalize racial and gender hierarchies. Koreans’ racial and cultural stereotypes of Southeast Asian women are drawn from Koreans’ understanding of what Southeast Asia is, and who Southeast Asian people are. In the process of constructing these racial and cultural differences, very specific and particular images are chosen to delineate the identity of a Southeast Asian.

As a consequence of patriarchal racialization, a gendered racial hierarchy is constructed in which Korean men are followed by Korean women, who are followed by foreign brides and finally foreign husbands. Patriarchal racialization involves multiple actors; such as the state, community, and family members in the microsphere of the household. The outcome of patriarchal racialization involves both the production of a new racial category and the

inscribing of specific gendered rules within racial hierarchies. Patriarchal racialization is problematic because it justifies the unequal distribution of access to resources, such as work and education, as well as social, economic, and political power.

## NOTES

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2. Pseudonyms were used for the interviewees.

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