

**MARRIAGE ACROSS THE TAIWAN STRAIT:
MALE MIGRANTS, MARITAL DESIRE AND SOCIAL LOCATION**

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This dissertation addresses the ways in which government policies and agendas, media representations, local histories and perceptions influence marriage patterns across the Taiwan Strait. While socio-economic interactions between the Republic of China (Taiwan or ROC) and the Peoples Republic of China (PRC or Mainland China) have deepened in recent years, both governments continue to often have conflicting agendas and policies aimed at supporting their own goals. As a result, Taiwan promotes a policy of careful interaction with Mainland China which is reflected in Taiwan's strict immigration policies with regard to Mainland brides who are considered a threat to Taiwan's "population quality" (*renkou suzhi*).

The PRC, on the other hand, has established policies aimed at increasing economic and social integration with Taiwan. Taiwanese men on the Mainland enjoy preferential treatment, particularly in China's Special Economic Zones. As more people travel across the Taiwan Strait, the number of cross-Strait (PRC-ROC), marriages have increased on the Mainland. Traditional marriage and kinship practices such as patrilocal marriages are often cited as primary factors in influencing women's place in Chinese society (Davin 2008, Johnson 1983, Lu 1997, Watson 1991). However, a Mainland woman who marries a Taiwanese man and sets up a household near her natal home can have a very different experience. This practice, in turn, has in some cases led to more flexibility with regard to gender roles and mutual upward social mobility for both partners on the Mainland.

Finally this dissertation contributes to the academic literature regarding cross-border marriage and “global hypergamy,” which usually refers to women from less developed, poorer regions who attempt to “marry up” by finding husbands in a more developed, richer area (Constable 2005). In this study, I consider a very different situation; men who migrate from a more developed region (Taiwan) to areas that are being developed (SEZ’s). While most did not migrate for the express purpose of marrying, these unions formed as a result of the migration process. Examining these relationships reveal some interesting insights into the ways that recent shifts in the global economic landscape related to China’s economy influence marriage patterns and marital relations.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

“My husband and I are from Hong Kong,” I overheard Mei, a local who was born and raised in Xiamen explain to a potential customer who was looking over the latest Italian fashions that had arrived in her shop earlier in the week. “We live in Xiamen because the environment is nice and the seafood is good” she added. I looked at Ang, her husband, who was preparing a small pot of tea from his hometown in Taiwan for me to sample. He showed no reaction to Mei’s comment and continued to explain why pure tea from Taiwan was so much better than tea from the Mainland that was rife with chemicals. A couple of months later in an upscale nightclub I heard Ang explaining to a friend who was visiting from Japan that he and Mei were going “home” for a few weeks to check on their store in Hong Kong. I soon learned that many of their friends, with the exception of those who were themselves from Taiwan, knew Ang and Mei as successful business owners from Hong Kong. Hong Kong, a cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic, international center, served as a surrogate homeland for the couple, helping them to side step any pre-conceived notions that many people in the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) have regarding

Taiwan-PRC couples.¹ Identifying themselves as Hong Kong people, in other words, was a coping strategy the couple employ in their day-to-day lives on Mainland China so as to avoid negative stereotypes about cross-Strait couples.

Understandings about Taiwanese migrants and cross-Strait couples are related to historical and contemporary issues and experiences at the local, national and global levels.² State ideologies and agendas, and political-economic programs, work to “link personal desires with state goals”(Friedman 2005:312). These issues converge with media representations and public discourse and can have a strong influence on the lives of migrants and their interactions with the local population. The study of cross-Strait marriage is one area that highlights the ways in which these factors enter what many consider to be the most intimate of spaces.

Taiwan and the PRC have differing views pertaining to cross-Strait socio-economic relations, which are reflected in government policies and print media from both sites. While the PRC’s policies work to support its stance of integration with Taiwan, the ROC’s policies reflect its stance of cautious interaction. This study examines the ways these factors play out in the lives of Taiwanese migrants, particularly those involved in cross-Strait intimate relationships. Of primary concern are the ways that individuals involved in cross-Strait relationships and marriage respond to these representations and policies through daily “practice” (Bourdieu 1977). Those involved in intimate cross-Strait relationships can choose to enact or contest local understandings about them which, in essence, allow them to reconfigure their identities in relation to place and

¹ The Peoples Republic of China (PRC) refers to Mainland China. The Republic of China (ROC) refers to Taiwan.

² It is important here to note that in using the designation “Taiwanese” I do not intend to generalize across an entire population nor overlook the rich diversity of Taiwan’s aboriginal and minority groups. Further, my informants are not meant to represent the Taiwanese people as a whole but are the experiences of specific individuals who agreed to share their stories and experiences with me.

social space. The ability to accomplish this however, relies heavily on their individual personalities, their level of creativity and their initiative.

The primary contribution of this dissertation is that it contrasts with studies of cross-border marriage which focus on women who leave their natal home, often crossing regional or national borders to marry. While the bulk of marriage migrants are undoubtedly women, the topic of migrant grooms remains virtually unexplored (Charsley 2005, Han 2009). In those studies that focus particularly on greater China the tendency to focus primarily on women with regard to marriage and migration is particularly pronounced (Adrian 2003, Chen 2004, Davin 2008, Fan 1998, Friedman 2010, Hsia 2006, 2007, 2009, Johnson 1983, Lavelly 1991, Lu 2008, Ping 1993, Piper 2003, Schein 2005, Siu 1993, Tan 2004, Tsai 2006, Tsay 2004, Wang 2004, Watson 1991).³ An exception is Constables (2003) study which addresses the experiences of U.S. men and Chinese women who have married. In addition, Constable's (2005) edited volume which focuses on cross-border marriage in Asia also included the experiences of men and women within the study marriage migration. In each of these studies, however, it was the bride who had migrated to her husband's homeland. One exception is Han's (2009) study which addresses the practice of some bachelors migrating to nearby villages for marriage as a result of the severity of the bride shortage in rural China.

Piper and Roces (2003) in their edited volume have argued that conventional studies of labor migration tend to ignore marriage as a result of labor migration but rather uncritically categorize Asian female migrants as either labor or marriage migrants. In the course of my research I found that marriage as a result of labor migration was also overlooked with regard to Taiwanese men who migrate to the PRC. Rather, these men are viewed simply as workers,

³ Greater China refers to Taiwan, Macau, Singapore, Hong Kong and Mainland China

managers or business owners, when many are also husbands and fathers. This study builds on the work of Piper and Roces (2003) and offers a more nuanced understanding of male migrants as it points to the tendency in migration studies to conflate male migration with economic factors, while often overlooking issues related to family formation which can come about as a result of the *process* of migration.

This study considers the case of men, who cross administrative and/or political borders, marry and settle primarily in their partner's homeland. Exploring this practice can offer a fresh perspective from which to consider the connections between identity and place. More specifically, an important issue I consider involves the interactions between marriage migration and gender. For example, in the case of China in particular, patrilocal post-marital residence patterns are often cited as one of the primary reasons for women's disempowerment (Johnson 1983, Watson 1991). Johnson has argued that traditional Confucian marriage and kinship practices "have defined and shaped women's place in Chinese society more than any other single set of factors"(1983:3). This raises the question, how do these dynamics change when the post-marital residence pattern is neolocal? In some cases, I found that this practice benefited both partners as it resulted in mutual upward social mobility. In contrast to many Mainland brides who leave their natal homes and have less easy access to their natal family for support, Mei, for example settled in her hometown. Her family, who she regularly visited, lived across town, a short drive away. Ang benefited on several levels from preferential economic policies designed to encourage greater social and economic integration between Taiwan and the Mainland China. Mei and Ang also seemed to have more flexibility with regard to gender roles and identity. By documenting the experiences of cross-Strait couples in Mainland China this project offers

comparative data to better understand transnational marriage migration as it relates to social status, policy, discourse and gender.

Secondly this dissertation examines the ability of governments to influence marriage practices by asking why marriages between Taiwanese men and Mainland women have increased despite Taiwan government policies and discourse that discourage cross-Strait (ROC-PRC) marriages (Chao 2004, Friedman 2010, Hsia 2007). Conversely why have the PRC's efforts with regard to these marriages been so successful? I found that the increase in these marriages is closely related to larger global economic issues that foster increasing economic and social integration between the PRC and the ROC, which in turn are tied to government policies and discourses on both sites. The PRC's economic policies effectively draw Taiwanese investment and people to the Mainland. However, the ROC's policies aimed at controlling and limiting these practices have been largely ineffective as Taiwanese businesspeople have found creative ways to circumvent these policies to gain access to the economic opportunities on the Mainland. In addition the ROC's domestic policies which discriminate against Mainland brides and their Taiwanese husbands residing in Taiwan, have resulted in more cross-Strait couples choosing to settle and remain in the PRC rather than returning to Taiwan.

Finally, this dissertation explores to what extent those involved in cross-Strait intimate relationships in the PRC create social spaces, which aid them in reconfiguring their identities in response to local, national, and transnational understandings of cross-Strait couples. Above I alluded to the ability of these couples to reconfigure their identities in relation to place and social space. The ambiguity of their identities as a couple, and their understanding of Minnan culture work to open up social spaces which offer them more flexibility with regard to identity.

1.2 THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.2.1 Globalization

Despite some scholarly disagreement, modern globalization generally refers to the increased movement of people, commodities, ideas and images around the globe as a result of technological advances and the spread of neoliberal capitalism⁴ (Lewellen 2002).⁵ Some theorists of globalization have characterized local areas as passive receivers of the active, powerful influences of globalization often lamenting the homogenization or McDonaldization of culture (Ritzer 2000). The work of James Watson (1997), Ina and Rosaldo (2002) and Ulf Hannertz (1989), however, call attention to the fact that local populations perceive and modify the meanings of cultural imports rather than accept them wholesale. Watson's (1989) study of McDonalds in Hong Kong, for example, revealed the ways that McDonalds has come to be viewed as a local phenomenon that offers teenagers a semi-private space where they can study and relax in a safe environment. Eriksen (2003) further explains that places are "both imbued

⁴ Neoliberal capitalism here refers to a "market ideology that seeks to limit the scope and activity of governing"(Ong 2006:3). The PRC's unique form of neoliberalism is discussed in chapter 4.

⁵ Some have argued that globalization is nothing new but a part of a long historical process (Paterson 1999, Tomlinson 1997),

with local meanings everywhere in the world and connected to pre-existing practices (2003:12).⁶ Inda and Rosaldo (2002) used the term “customization” to describe this phenomenon.

In this study the, “cultural imports” I am concerned with are not things such as restaurants, films or technology, but people. In this dissertation I consider the ways that local populations in the PRC “customize” the way they perceive and talk about Taiwanese migrants who are living in Mainland China. This local discourse is unique with regard to Taiwanese migrants in Xiamen, as Xiamen and Taiwan are both considered a part of the Minnan cultural area. As a result local understandings of Taiwanese migrants simultaneously spur discourses of cultural continuity and difference. This adds another dimension to this study, which is one of my primary interests, that is, the varying ways in which some Taiwanese migrants react (or not) to these perceptions in their day-to-day lives on the Mainland.

Much has been said about the ways in which modern globalization has “radically pulled apart culture from place” (Inda and Rosaldo 2002:11), and the de and re territorialization of culture (Gupta and Ferguson 1997) that has occurred as a result of the increased movement of people around the globe. Grewal and Kaplan have argued that that the global and the local have become “indefinable and indistinct” (1994:11). In the course of my research however, I have found that even though local processes may influence and be influenced by global factors they remain distinct. This is reflected in the unique ways that cultural products are customized at the local level. My point is that while globalization has resulted in the thickening of the already fuzzy borders which delineate the global and the local, these terms are still relevant as each of them point to processes that have a profound influence on the lives of both migrants and sedentary populations. Given this, I hesitate to use the terms “translocal” (Smith 2001) or

⁶ See also Miller and Slater 2003.

“translocality” (Smart 2002) to explain this process as they tend to minimize the impact of larger structures such as laws and policies that are enacted at the national and international level. In this study I will regularly use the terms “local” and “global” with the understanding that they are both permeable constructs. I will also use the term “transnational” which generally refers to the cultural products and capital that move between and across nation states. In applying the term transnational however, I am interested in the theoretical aspects of the term (discussed below) and am not making a statement regarding Taiwan’s political status.

1.2.2 Transnationalism

The term transnationalism, in part, points to the fact that contrary to those who have prophesized that globalization marks the beginning of the downfall of the nation-state (Appadurai 1996), nation-states continue to play an important role in the movement of people, commodities, ideas and images. Glick-Schiller (1992) for example, has argued that government policies greatly affect whether and how transnational communities form.

In this vein, many scholars have demonstrated that the extent to which national governments allow migrants access to the rights of citizenship can have a profound influence on the possible choices available to them (Brennan 2004, Friedman 2010a, b, Hsia 2009, Manalansan 2003, Ong 1999, Piper and Roces 2003). Aihwa Ong suggests that the practice of transnationalism offers clues as to “how nation-states articulate with capitalism” (1993:3). Ong uses the term “flexible citizenship” to call attention to the “cultural logics of capital

accumulation...that induce subjects to respond...to changing political-economic conditions” (1999:6). Ong’s research highlights the connections between government policy, economics and the practice of transnationalism.

Mika Toyota has convincingly argued that issues involving citizenship have become an area of contention between the state and those involved in transnational or international marriages because these unions “by their very existence challenge the state and the boundaries of its sovereignty” (2008:3). Most recently Sarah Friedman’s (2010a) study of immigration interviews carried out with Mainland brides upon arriving in Taiwan, highlights the ways in which issues related to Taiwan’s sovereignty play out during these interviews. Of particular interest to this dissertation is Wang and Belanger’s (2008) study which discusses in part, female immigrant spouses in Taiwan and how ROC government concerns about national security and “population quality” (*renkou suzhi*) influence their access to citizenship and work to situate them as “others”. Gaining access to citizenship is often cited as an important motivation for marrying across national or administrative borders. In the course of my research, however, I found that this was not a significant concern for most of my key informants. For some the benefits of settling on the Mainland seemed to overshadow any thought of moving to Taiwan. Given Taiwan’s policies regarding Mainland brides, economic considerations, and their relatively easy access to support systems on the Mainland, some women had no intention of moving to Taiwan and becoming a citizen. Further, the PRC’s preferential policies aimed at attracting Taiwanese investment and people to the Mainland coupled with Taiwan’s overwhelmingly negative portrayals of Taiwanese men who marry Mainland women influenced men’s decisions to settle in the PRC (Chao 2004, China Times Daily 2005, Friedman 2010b, Hsia 2009, 2007, Lin 1994, Lu 2008, Ministry of the Interior 2004, Taipei Times 2001, Tsay 2004, Wang 2008).

Scholars have long studied the ways in which nation-states influence identity. Harold Isaacs argued in the 1970s that “basic group identity comes into view most often dressed in national colors” (1975:171)⁷. More recently Akhil Gupta argued that nation-states as “hegemonic representations of ...spatial identity” are primary “in an increasingly postmodern world” (1994:75). Begona Aretxaga noted that “invested with a kind of meta-capital the state remains a crucial presence, a screen for political desires and identifications as well as fears” (2003:393). My research demonstrates that certain personality traits such as initiative and flexibility can work to manipulate these “spatial identities” and improve one’s social location.

The ways that gender articulates with transnationalism has also become a rich field of inquiry. One important topic of research has been to examine the ways in which gender roles are reinforced or reconfigured in transnational space. To better understand how gender operates in the context of transnational migration, Doreen Massey (1994) developed the concept of “power geometry”. Massey argues that some groups use their power and influence to initiate transnational flows while others, often those who migrate, are relatively powerless. Sarah Mahler and Patricia Pessar built on Massey’s work in developing the “Gendered Geographies of Power” conceptual model (2001a:445). Within this model, geographic scales, social location and types and degrees of agency are considered to draw attention to the differing ways in which gender operates within transnational space. Geographic scales refer to the idea that “gender operates simultaneously on multiple *spatial* and *social* scales across transnational terrains” (Mahler and Pessar 2001a:445). In using the term “social location” the authors refer to the power hierarchies in which individuals are embedded and how they influence the ways in which people “think and act” (Mahler and Pessar 2001a:446). With regard to agency, Mahler and Pessar acknowledge the

⁷ See also Benedict Anderson 1983.

importance of both individual initiative and imagination in the process of deciding if and how an individual will respond in a particular social location. While Massey's (1994) model might be considered dichotomous in that certain groups "initiate flows and movement" while others are for the most part, "imprisoned by it" (1994:149). Pessar and Mahler's model draws attention to the complexities of transnationalism, power relations on various scales, social spaces, and individual personality and creativity.

To what extent are transnational migrants embedded, as Mahler and Pessar suggest, in the structures of the sending or receiving areas? In many cases transnational migrants ultimately find they do not "fit in" at home or abroad as a result of their experiences (Kelsky 2001, Manalansan 2003). One could argue that this liminal state was influenced by socio-cultural structures in several contexts however, these structures do not ultimately inform how people think and act. This is clear when we consider the differing ways transnational migrants respond to their experiences which are at least in part related to individual characteristics.

In my research, I found there is significant variation in the ways Taiwanese men living in the PRC navigate within the power hierarchies of both Taiwan and the PRC. As Mahler and Pessar (2001a) have argued, social locations are variable and, in some cases, related to individual initiative and personalities. For example, most Taiwanese men I interviewed found their social status elevated in the PRC on some level, while one of my informants, a Taiwanese man (who was economically successful and had lived in the PRC for a little over a year), lived a life of social isolation and fear. Scholars such as Constable (1999), Kondo (1990), and Margold (1995), have argued that a coherent, seamless, bounded and whole sense of identity requires a reconfiguration of one's self-perception in relation to place. This suggests that those more adept at reconfiguring their sense of self, transition among and between spatial and social scales more

smoothly. Crossing national and administrative borders is one issue, but engaging the local culture and working within and across the social boundaries in the receiving area requires flexibility with regard to one's identity. This ability is similar to what Gutmann has referred to as "cultural creativity" that is "the modus operandi through which people mirror, parrot, question, mold, reject, and change both their consciousness and their relationship to the world" (2007:xxvii).

In this dissertation I consider the ways in which cross-Strait relationships and marriages in the PRC, can offer *both* partners the social flexibility to reconfigure or reinforce their gendered identities in relation to the various social settings. As Gutmann has argued, "Ordinary men and women are themselves often acutely aware of and influenced in one way or another by the dominant often 'traditional' stereotypes about men" and I would add, women (2007:14). I found that in some cases the adoption of situational identities is a response to the common stereotypical view of cross-Strait couples, which calls into question the authenticity of their relationships.

Pei-Chia Lan's (2006) study of transnational domestic workers in Taiwan demonstrated the ways in which local populations maintain and enforce social boundaries in relation to transnational migrants from Southeast Asia. In the case of Taiwanese male migrants in Fujian Province however, ethnic and linguistic differences are seldom a factor in relation to Fujian locals, while perceived class differences often work in the migrants' favor.⁸ One of the arguments in this dissertation is that forming close intimate relationships with locals in the receiving area can open up new social spaces. These require the migrant to reinforce *or*

⁸ This is connected to government policies in the PRC which offer Taiwanese migrants preferential treatment, particularly in "special economic zones". This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. Also see Chapter 5 regarding the Minnan Cultural area which includes Fujian province and Taiwan.

reconfigure his or her identity more successfully in relation to the receiving society. This requires cultural creativity which can in turn contribute to their economic success and social status. This can also result in more egalitarian marital relationships.

Cross-Strait couples living in the ROC however, face a very different situation. Friedman has argued that Mainland brides in Taiwan “face a more restrictive set of immigration naturalization policies than any other category of marital immigrant” (2010a:77, 2010b). A recent article in the Taipei Times reported that Mainland brides in Taiwan have organized and carried out several rallies in 2009 demanding that the wait for Taiwanese identification cards be reduced from six to four years, which is the standard for other foreign spouses (Taipei Times Oct. 29, 2009:2). In addition, they demanded that the ROC recognize PRC university degrees and professional licenses because even after gaining Taiwanese citizenship this policy often prevents them from finding suitable employment (Taipei Times 2009:2). In response, Chen Wu of the Taiwan New Inhabitants Association explained that looking down on Mainland brides is a result of years of Taiwanese propaganda which portrays Mainland Chinese people as poor and backward (Taipei Times 2009:2). His advice to Mainland brides however is “to be respected, they have to raise their own level first,” which implies that the problem is not years of propaganda but the low social and educational level of Mainland brides (Taipei Times 2009:2). This is not what one would expect from an agency that is meant to assist migrants in integrating into society. As with many earlier accounts, this newspaper points out that most of the men who marry Mainland brides do so because they are older, poor, often from rural areas and therefore cannot find Taiwanese women to marry (Taipei Times 2009:2, Taipei Times 2003:8, Tsay 2004:15, Yiu 2004:1). Although many of these articles are conciliatory in tone, they nonetheless simultaneously reinforce common stereotypes about these couples.

Such characterizations are a reflection of anxieties that exist with regard to Taiwan's current state of uncertain sovereignty. These anxieties are steeped in history and are tied to the dramatic changes and transformations that have taken place in China and Taiwan since 1949, when Taiwan was widely recognized as the "legitimate government of all of China" (Friedman 2010:168). Since that time Taiwan has gradually lost much of its international recognition with the exception of 23 marginalized countries that still conduct official diplomatic relations with Taiwan (Friedman 2010:168). Meanwhile the PRC still views Taiwan as a renegade province which has always been a part of China. During the course of my fieldwork Xiamen was in a state of high alert because of the "Taiwan problem." Each evening, a large cannon loudly fired in the direction of Taiwan. My contacts in Xiamen told me it was a warning. As the number of missiles aimed at Taiwan increased, and PRC battleships cruised the Straits, Taiwan was conducting its own military exercises to guard against an invasion. Nonetheless, all the while, people continued to migrate across the Strait. As China opened up more (Special Economic Zones) SEZ's to lure more Taiwanese investment and people to the Mainland, Taiwan set up more strict immigration guidelines with regard to Mainland migrants, the majority of whom are Mainland brides (Friedman 2010a,b, Ong 2006). At this particular moment against such a backdrop of political tensions and saber-rattling, cultural difference is more vehemently emphasized in Taiwan, while cultural continuity is often touted on the Mainland. As a result, cross-Strait couples living in Taiwan, as we would expect, have a very different experience than those on the Mainland.

Many studies have addressed the experiences of Mainland brides and in some cases their husbands living in Taiwan (Chao 2004, Friedman 2005, 2006, 2010a, 2010b, Hsia 2006, 2007, Tsai 2006, Tsay 2004, Wang 2008). Little, however, has been written about cross-Strait couples living on the Mainland with the exception of Hsieh (2001) who points to the ways that Mainland

mistresses and second wives are disrupting Taiwanese families, and Shen (2008), who discusses Taiwanese men on the Mainland who “purchase intimacy” from Mainland women. While some of these characterizations may be true, this dissertation aims to subvert stereotypical views of cross-Strait couples in the PRC by documenting their experiences.

1.2.3 Marriage, Migration and Gender

As discussed earlier, binary models and discrete classifications such as core/periphery, global/local and active/passive, have been highly criticized as they fall short of describing the fluidity and permeability of such categories and the lived realities of the post-modern world. In this vein, studies of migration, in which women are portrayed as either marriage or labor migrants have been rethought. As discussed in the introduction, Nicola Piper and Mina Roces (2003) pointed out some of the problems with an either/or scholarly approach and argued that many women migrants fit both of these designations, or move between them. Those studies that focus primarily on economic factors with regard to women’s migration, according to Morokvasic (1984), overlook non-economic or familial factors that influence their migratory decisions. Mary Beth Mills’ (2001) study of Thai women labor migrants for example, shows that, economic necessity was not the sole or primary reason for migrating. Rather, for many young women, migrating to Bangkok became a rite of passage which often resulted in them acquiring social capital upon their return home (Mills 2001). Constable’s (1999) study of migrant Filipina domestic workers found that although many women cited economic obligations for choosing to work in Hong Kong, other factors including marital or family problems were often arguably more important. Hong Kong offered relatively more personal and economic independence for many of these women than the Philippines. Studies such as these problematize the concept of

“labor migration” simply as economically motivated and draw attention to the complexities of analyzing transnationalism and gender.

Many studies concerning women and marriage migration have also been convincingly criticized for portraying these women as disempowered. Some studies describe women as being coerced or duped into leaving their homelands only to find themselves in highly vulnerable situations (Mix 2002, Thai 2003). Others conflate women’s migration with the trafficking of women and describe women as being “commandeered” or “circulated” much like commodities (Tolentino 1999:57-66, Ping 1993). Wang and Chang (2002) in their study of marriage brokers and their role in the formation of Vietnamese-Taiwan marriages refer to the competitiveness of the marriage market in that women are “required to accept reduced prices” for marriage (109). In response to such reductionist studies, that tend to depict women as desperate and their actions as economically determined, scholars such as Melody Chia-wen Lu call attention to the cultural and historic context in which such marriage migrations occur, arguing that marriage brokers in southeast Asia often take on traditional forms that involve “localized social networks in which women play active roles” (2008:126).⁹

Counter to those studies that highlight material or economic interests as the primary motivations to cross borders for marriage (Tsay 2004), scholars have discussed the importance of love and nonmaterial desires in relation to cross-border marriages (Constable 2003, 2005, Jolly and Manderson 1997, Schein 2005) and have called attention to the agency of these women and their efforts to transcend social, economic and class barriers by crossing national borders (Brennan 2004, Constable 2003, 2005, Kelsky 2001).

⁹ See also Constable 2003.

Studies of male migration however, tend to focus primarily and almost exclusively on economic factors and motivations. This brings up the question, why are men who migrate most often perceived of as motivated primarily by economic factors?¹⁰ Those studies that go beyond economic motivations and have focused on men's roles in cross-border marriage tend to focus on men who cross borders in order to find a partner and bring her home (Constable 2003, Schein 2005). The practice of men migrating, marrying and settling in their partners' homeland however, remains virtually unexplored.

Hsui-Hua Shen's compelling study of Taiwanese male migrants in Mainland China, focuses on the "sexual consumption" of Chinese women's bodies by men who, she writes, "exercise their economic power to satisfy their taste for sexual and manly power" (2008:72).¹¹ While the author explains that some of these men form longer-term relationships with Mainland women at times taking "temporary wives," she argues that these relationships are based primarily on economic exchange (Shen 2008:61). Shen also claims that most Chinese women involved in these relationships are *dagongmei* (migrant working daughters).¹² Although some of the people I encountered in the course of my research corresponded with Shen's findings, I argue that such relationships enacted by economic disparity on a temporary basis are only one part of the wider picture of PRC-ROC relationships.

As of 2007, there were over 270,000 legally registered cross-Strait couples living on Mainland China (China Daily 2007:2). The majority of these involved Taiwanese men who had migrated to the PRC, however Taiwanese male migrants in China continue to be overwhelmingly

¹⁰ Jeffery Cohen's (1999) study in Oaxaca, revealed that male migration was connected to "life-cycle rituals" which included marriage and holding public office, but his study involves male migrants returning home with the social and economic clout to allow them to find a bride in the local area (55).

¹¹ The term "consumption" is somewhat problematic in that it gives the impression that women are passive and have little or no agency in this practice.

¹² In urban areas this is a derogatory term that implies these women are uneducated country bumpkins and casts them as purely as economically motivated.

characterized as wage earners and sexual consumers, but seldom if ever, as husbands. This oversight, it could be argued, points to a stereotypical view of the gendered identities of men in transnational space as primarily wage earners and/or sexual consumers. In addition, Mainland women who marry Taiwanese men are often portrayed as either uneducated country bumpkins or scheming vixens that enter into these relationships primarily for economic gain, but this is not the whole picture. While in the course of my research I did interview men and women who on some level fit into these categories, there were also those that clearly did not. Ang and Mei, introduced at the opening of this chapter are both successful business owners. Mei considers herself an international business woman. She regularly travels to Italy and France to buy the latest fashions for her clothing stores. Ang, who has business associates and friends who do engage in the “sexual consumption of women’s bodies”, does not take part in this practice because, as he explained he would never do that to Mei (Shen 2008:72). Clearly, not all cross-Strait intimate relationships are based on economic exchange devoid of emotion. . As Gutmann stated in his important study, “If we look closely, we might just glimpse the creative efforts of people coping with the gender relations they have inherited from past generations while simultaneously striving to fashion new approaches as best they can” (2006:10).

In this dissertation I explore this issue by highlighting the variability of PRC-ROC marriages on the Mainland and in turn challenging common representations of these marriages, which tend to portray them as cold, calculating, emotionless transactions, rather than legitimate relationships. More specifically I examine interactions between these couples and men and women at the local level, as well as other Taiwanese migrants currently living in the PRC. This

study addresses the ways in which cross-Strait couples respond to these representations that are connected to political, economic, historical, and cultural factors at the global, national and local level.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

This dissertation is based on ethnographic field research primarily conducted in Xiamen, Shanghai and Zhenjiang. The bulk of my data was collected in Xiamen, from February 2007 to March 2008. I also conducted interviews among men and women in Shanghai and Zhenjiang from May to August in 2004 and 2005. I chose Xiamen as my primary field site because of its close proximity to Taiwan and because of the large number of Taiwanese businesses and manufacturing plants that were drawn to the areas special economic zones. In addition, as mentioned above both Xiamen and Taiwan are considered a part of the Minnan cultural area which added another interesting dimension to this study. I chose Shanghai as a secondary site because of the large number of Taiwanese businesspeople living there and because its reputation as a cosmopolitan city might offer me a different perspective with regard to local discourse involving Taiwanese businesspeople. I visited Beijing on several occasions to get some varying perspectives on this issue. For the sake of comparison I also interviewed cross-border couples comprised of men from western countries who had migrated, married and settled in Mainland China, and their Mainland wives.

Throughout my research I employed a number of research techniques. In the summers of 2004 and 2005, in order to gain insight into local understandings about Taiwanese men, I

conducted interviews¹³ and participant observation with local residents in Shanghai and Zhenjiang, some of whom had worked for or knew someone who had worked for Taiwanese owned companies. For one month in 2005, I lived with the family of a mid-level manager of a Taiwanese manufacturing company in Zhenjiang and did follow up interviews in 2007 and 2008. In Xiamen, I spent a great deal of my time with my primary informants Ang and Mei, who patiently answered my questions and introduced me to other cross-Strait couples and Taiwanese businesspeople living in and visiting the area. After gaining Ang's trust and agreeing not to share the information with his wife regarding "secrets between men" he regularly brought me along when entertaining other businessmen from Taiwan and the Mainland.¹⁴ These events took place in a variety of settings including karaoke bars, restaurants, massage parlors and coffee shops.

Another of my key informants was Chin-Lung, a Taiwanese manager currently living in Xiamen. These interviews offered me a different perspective with regard to the day-to-day lives of Taiwanese managers in Xiamen. As his wife and family lived in Taiwan and his personality was less than outgoing, he lived a life of isolation constantly aware that he was an outsider, and often considered himself a target of both the local population and China's Central Government. While Chin-Lung was not involved in a cross-Strait marriage his constant articulations about the differences between himself and the local people were a great source of information and worked to emphasize the anxieties experienced by some Taiwanese migrants on the Mainland. Chin-Lung's experiences and perspectives contrasted greatly with Taiwanese men who were more integrated into the local community. His inclusion in this dissertation serves to emphasize the importance of individual personality, cultural creativity and flexibility in the migrant experience

¹³ The majority of my interviews were carried out in Mandarin unless noted otherwise.

¹⁴ Both Ang and Mei however, had no problem with me using this information in my dissertation. As Ang put it, "no one I know has the time or the interest in reading dissertations, let alone those written in English".

particularly amidst the geo-political backdrop I briefly described above. Finally, my experiences with Chin-Lung offered a different perspective of what it means to be a Taiwanese male living on the Mainland.

I interviewed locals in Xiamen, including a television producer who established a local television channel geared towards Taiwanese people living in Xiamen. Some of the most fruitful of my interviews took place in “The Way”; a local home converted into a bar that was frequented by local residents. I spoke weekly with the owner, his uncle and his cousin, about my research and they were instrumental in providing me an entry point for speaking with their customers in an environment where many local men and women felt more at ease to voice their critical views about relationships between Taiwanese men and local women.

My interviewees are not representative of China as a country, Fujian as a province or Xiamen as a city. Nor are they meant to be. In the course of my research I came to realize that it is often our informants who chose us rather than the other way around. I am indebted to those who took the time to share their perspectives and experiences with me during such a tense political and social period. I do not intend to generalize my findings to a wider population but rather offer a different viewpoint than that which is commonly published.

In the course of my research I also collected local and national newspaper and magazine articles that were related to the topic of cross-border marriages. While in the field I continued to collect on-line media sources (a project I began in 2005) from both Taiwan and the Mainland, both in Chinese and English, that broached the subject of cross-Strait marriages and government policies and programs that are related to this practice. I also monitored an internet support site for Mainland brides in Taiwan, and chat rooms based in the PRC that broached the subject of cross-Strait intimate relationships and marriage.

Throughout my field research I tried to remain fully aware of my positionality as a male researcher from the United States. Most often my informants introduced me as “my American friend, *Qiao Deng*” (my Chinese name). The local residents I interviewed in Xiamen and Zhenjiang (relatively small cities by Chinese standards) were often visibly proud to introduce me as such. In many cases this worked to my advantage in recruiting interviewees. However, my Americanness also influenced the ways many interviewees responded to my questions. I was clearly an outsider and my subject matter, cross-Strait marriage and social relationships, often resulted in standard party-line responses regarding Taiwanese men living in the PRC. The most common of these was “they are just like us” or “we are all Chinese”. This was understandable, given that throughout the course of my fieldwork the PRC was promoting new programs to enhance educational and cultural integration with Taiwan, which highlighted cohesion and sameness rather than difference. As mentioned above, during the same period however, its military base was on high alert because of the “Taiwan problem.” I often wondered if the local population was also on “high alert” or at least very careful about how they responded to my questions. My connections at The Way were integral in getting past these initial responses.

When I interacted with Taiwanese businesspeople in Xiamen they also made it a point to introduce me as their American friend perhaps in part, to enhance their images, as worldly businesspeople with international contacts. One of my informants would often “speak English”, although he only knew a couple of words. He would utter incomprehensible phrases to me followed by a smile or laugh to impress his business contacts. Another, realizing that I was a student began introducing me as “Dr. Qiao from America” which, given that I was older than most Chinese students, would not have made sense to his contacts in their 30’s and 40’s who were roughly my age. Many of these men were often in the company of *meimeis* (young

women) which worked to bolster or accessorize their images as successful desirable men. I found it rather ironic that I too was an accessory, often used to increase their social status. Like the young women that regularly accompanied them, I was also working, and my access to “work” was often contingent on my informants deciding to contact me (often on short notice) when they wanted to spend time together or attend a social event. At times it felt much like an exchange, which while sometimes making me feel uncomfortable, did also offer me the opportunity to collect useful data.

While my being American often seemed to contribute to the brevity of some of my interviews with local Mainland people my position as a middle-aged male outsider who is married to a Mainland woman, did much to put my Taiwanese informants at ease. First, I was an outsider, a *laowai* (foreigner) a group to which many also considered themselves to belong at some level. “We are all *laowai* here” one informant commented somewhat tongue in cheek. However, it is important not to overstate the extent of this commonality. Among other things, I was clearly not ethnic Chinese, and my linguistic skills while strong, are not on par with a native speaker. The fact I was a foreign man married to a Mainland woman (my wife Qian is from Shanghai) often worked to deepen conversations regarding Mainland women as many of these men had relationships of some sort, with PRC women. In some way this assured my key informant (Ang) that I wouldn’t reveal his secrets to his wife about “men’s places.” The reputation of middle-aged Western men regularly having sexual encounters with Mainland women also led many to assume that I related to local women in the same way that many of them did. I was also roughly the same age as many of these men, which usually worked in my favor. As one of my informants explained “We are in our forties. We don’t need any problems. We should enjoy life.” Finally, there is a sort of camaraderie between men which made me privy to

issues related to “empty talk between men” a term one of my informants used to refer to male bravado when in the company of other men. For example, one informant explained that while he might want to give the appearance of a man who regularly has many sexual encounters with young women, he has always been true to his wife. This led me to question the results of earlier surveys that concluded that over 70% of married Taiwanese men living on the Mainland have sexual relations with Mainland women (Chiu and Lin 1994), and subsequent articles that claim this number is too conservative (Hsieh 2001, Shen 2008). I would not be surprised if many Taiwanese men living on the Mainland, when asked this question by another Taiwanese man or woman would exaggerate this fact to bolster their status as successful desirable businessmen. While I contend that these numbers may be inflated, sexual relationships between ROC men and PRC women are prevalent on the Mainland.

1.4 ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT

The following chapter entitled “Chinese Marriage: Tradition and Change,” is an overview of Chinese marriage law since the Qing Dynasty and the ways in which these laws were enforced (or not). This Chapter’s purpose is to put current marriage laws and practices in a historical context and to point out the uneasy relationship between government policies and marriage practices. One of the primary contributions of this chapter is that it highlights the ways in which marriage policy reforms are interpreted and enforced at the *local* level, and are therefore often skewed towards “traditional” ideas and practices. This form of localized interpretation and enforcement is clearly gendered as it is most often carried out by men. I argue that this is one of the primary reasons that many “traditional” expectations with regard to marriage and gender

relations continue to be so influential despite the numerous marriage law reforms that have been enacted since the Republican period (1911-1949). This coupled with the long tradition of patrilocal post-marital residence practices wherein the bride marries into her husband's family has effectively normalized the practice of women migrating for marriage. Mainland men however, who migrate for marriage are overwhelmingly understood as social outcasts.

Chapter 3, "Marriage migration and Gender in China," is comprised of two parts. The first, "crossing borders" focuses on the experiences of brides in the PRC and the ways that patrilocal post-marital residence patterns influence their day-to-day lives. This section also addresses the *hukou* (household registration) and the *danwei* (work unit) systems and their influence on domestic marriage migration in China. The second part of this chapter focuses on migrant grooms and local brides, their stories and the ways in which this form of marriage is viewed in the PRC. I argue that while Mainland men who migrate, marry and settle in or near their wife's natal home are often considered outcasts, husbands who migrate from abroad are not as they are not held to the same standard. In this chapter I introduce three "marriage-scapes" to illustrate my main points.

Chapter 4 "Cross-Strait Socio-economic Relations: Policies, Practice and Change," begins with a historical overview of cross-Strait economic policies and marriage law both in Taiwan and in the PRC. Their differing agendas with regard to cross-Strait interactions are reflected in both policies and media representations which offer a glimpse into the ways that each government works to police marriage practices. I also consider the ways that individual practices can influence larger structures, highlighting recent changes in government policies that have come about as a result of these practices. Finally, I examine the ways in which government

policies related to cross-Strait interactions and marriage have resulted in such a disparity in local understandings of cross-Strait couples.

Chapter 5 “Transnational Business Class: Taiwanese Migrants and Social Locations,” is divided into 2 major themes. First I draw on Mahler and Passar’s concept of “social location” and focus on Taiwanese migrants living in the PRC and the social locations they occupy by considering the different ways that *local* people perceive and talk about these migrants in Shanghai, and Zhenjiang, pointing to the ways in which these representations are embedded in historical experiences and cultural factors. I also include comments from a chat room based in the PRC in which primarily Mainland women discuss their experiences and impressions of Taiwanese men. This section points to customization and the importance of local processes within the practice of transnationalism.

In the second part of this chapter I focus specifically on Xiamen’s unique situation as an integral part of the Minnan cultural area, and the ways that this simultaneously produces discourses of inclusion and exclusion with regard to Taiwanese migrants. I briefly discuss a recent media campaign in the PRC which aims at improving the local perceptions of Taiwanese businessmen by highlighting the experiences of Huang Jinshan a Taiwanese “model” businessman who migrated to Xiamen. I explore the variability of social locations Taiwanese migrants occupy in Xiamen and highlight the importance of individual personality, creativity and initiative in influencing these locations. This section is based on interviews and my experiences interacting with Taiwanese migrants and is concerned with how they view themselves in relation to the local population and how this influences their day-to-day lives. I examine how social locations shift in relation to place and social space, focusing on how they respond to these shifts

which points to their ability or inability to reconfigure their identities in relation to changing social and spatial contexts.

In Chapter 6 “A Cross-Strait Couple in Xiamen: Ang and Mei,” I focus on the coping strategies this couple in particular employs in their day-to-day lives to subvert or in some cases enforce local discourses about cross-Strait couples in Xiamen. I examine the different ways they create, maintain and manipulate social boundaries in relation to various social and spatial environments. In this chapter I argue that the practice of cross-Strait marriage can offer *both* partners the social space in which to manipulate these boundaries more smoothly and can result in upward social mobility for each of them. This however, depends heavily upon individual personality and cultural creativity.

2.0 MARRIAGE IN MAINLAND CHINA: CUSTOMS, LAW AND COMPROMISE

“In the fifty years since the founding of the New China, there has not been any law that has caused such a widespread concern from ordinary people” (Ding Lu of the All China Women’s Federation Jan 2001, commenting on China’s marriage law debates).

“Legal moralists do not understand how important the existence of private space is to a modern society”.

(Qiu Renzhong of The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences commenting on the revisions to China’s 1980 Marriage law).

To fully appreciate the uniqueness of transnational and cross-Strait marriages in Mainland China, it is important to look at Chinese marriage and marriage regulation within a wider historical and cultural context. To this end, this chapter is an overview of Chinese marriage law since the Qing Dynasty. This section highlights the intersections of customary practices, marriage law and the compromises that have ensued. The aims of this chapter are 1) to point out the ongoing uneasy relationship between the state and issues related to marriage and family regulation, 2) to discuss some of the compromises that have followed these laws and the unforeseen often gendered consequences that followed and 3) to put current marriage practices in a wider historical context.

Given the ongoing debates in the United States with regard to what forms of marriage the state recognizes as “legitimate” it should come as no surprise that states have a keen interest in

regulating marriage and family formation. Michael Warner (1999) has argued that marriage is an institution which works through regulation to connect personal desires to state goals (see also Friedman 2005). One of the primary considerations of this section is to tease out the connections between state building and marriage regulation by discussing the enactment and major revisions of marriage law and civil codes related to marriage and family that have taken place in China since the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). A popular proverb “*fa bu ze zhong*,” loosely translated states that once a practice has become commonplace, laws are unable to control this practice. In this vein, I will highlight the ways in which some marriage customs and practices have influenced marriage laws and the enforcement of these laws by reviewing some of the key compromises that have taken place as a result of local practices. This section also provides a historical context from which current practices and ideas regarding marriage in China have emerged.

Scholars have long argued that China’s social reforms including the 1950 Marriage Law and women’s rights policies that emerged during the Cultural Revolution, rather than improving women’s status in China, “have done more to restore the traditional role and structure of the family than to fundamentally reform it” (Johnson 1983:215). Honig and Hershatter, in their study of how the social and economic changes of the 1980’s affected the status of women, found that while the situation has improved for women since 1949, gender hierarchy in China is “not withering away” as many families would still prefer to have sons rather than daughters (1988:340). In a later study, based on observations made in the early 1990’s, Cecilia Milwertz (1997) found that many pre-revolutionary assumptions about gender relations and marriage and family had reemerged. One clear example is the ideal of the “virtuous wife and good mother” in which the mother plays out her traditional role by expending countless hours and resources on

the education of her child (Davis and Sensenbrenner 2000). Given the continual revision of China's Marriage laws aimed at improving the rights of women, how can we explain this re-surgence of "traditional" gender roles? Part of the answer is related to the historical intersections of marriage law and local practices.

In the course of researching this topic it became clear that one of the ongoing challenges with regard to the establishment of civil codes and marriage law was how to reconcile state or national policies with local customs and practices. For example, in the early 1800's a Qing magistrate in Guanxi province became aware of the practice of natolocality, in which the bride, following the marriage ceremony returned to her natal home where she was allowed intercourse with one or more lovers, only returning to her husband's home to give birth to her first child (David 2001:64). Regardless of the child's biological father, the child was considered to be that of the husband and wife, and was integrated into the father's lineage (David 2001:64). However when the magistrate attempted to prohibit this practice referring to it as "illicit intercourse," he was opposed by local notables who claimed that this was no threat to civil law and merely delayed the effects of marriage (Bourgon 2004:103). Ultimately, the magistrate was told to "mind his official duty" (Bourgon 2004:103). The Qing Dynasty was known for its strict code of moral conduct and the harsh penalties it imposed on those who failed to comply, including delayed strangulation and beheading (Ebrey 2004:420). The following excerpt however, from a Qing code proclamation addresses the local customs in Zhangzhou (Fujian province) and urges locals to reform these practices.¹⁵

¹⁵ The wording in this proclamation is uncharacteristically softer than was the standard for Qing proclamations that generally listed the crime followed by the required punishment (Huang 2001).

It should be understood that the marital relationship between husband and wife is chief among the human moral relationships. The rites and laws regarding betrothal and engagements are very strict. However, the customs of this region include what is called “looking after someone,” that is, living openly with a woman who is neither a wife nor a concubine. Another is called “elopement,” when two people who are not betrothed seduce each other and flee in secrecy. No violating of the rites and breaking of the law is more serious. The offenders should urgently reform so as to avoid punishment (Bary 1999:749).

This passage points to one of the basic characteristics of the Qing code which upheld the ideology of the state but also (often through a sub-statute) recognized local practices (Huang 2001:157). The primary reason for this was that in the Qing dynasty civil codes related to marriage, family and inheritance were categorized as “minor matters” that were “supposed to be dealt with by society itself” (Huang 1998:6). When such disputes failed to be resolved at the community level and were brought to the court, magistrates preferred to defer to “kin mediation” rather than rule on these cases (Huang 1998:12). When they did rule on issues concerning marriage and family, however, more often than not the ruling came at the expense of the rights of women and children. For example during the Qing dynasty the selling of wives and daughters was illegal, but the practice was so widespread in some areas that the courts considered it a “plight of the poor” which needed to be “treated with sympathy, not punished by law” (Huang 2001:161). The practice of ignoring or reconciling local practices with overarching laws relating to marriage and family is not a recent phenomenon in China (See also Ebrey 2004). Nor is it uncommon for the results of such compromises to be gendered.

While issues related to marriage were generally considered minor matters there are exceptions. What has been termed the “Qing Imperial Chastity Cult” refers, in part, to the obsession with upholding the chastity or purity of daughters and wives during the late Qing (Sommers 2000:10). One example is a sub-statute (945) passed in 1725 that protects married servants (but not unwed ones) from unwanted intercourse with the master of the household (Sommers 2000:48). The punishment for this infraction was 40 blows with a light bamboo, the lightest penalty in the Qing code (Sommers 2000:48).¹⁶ Should a husband catch his wife having sexual relations with another he was justified under law to kill both her and her partner if he acted out of righteous anger (Sommers 2000:42). Some have suggested that the increased obsession with chastity during this period was influenced by a severe shortage of brides and the large number of bachelors (*guang gun*) who were unable to find brides (Telford 1992:924, Sommers 2000:13). The purpose of these laws seems to be to protect the husband’s right to exclusive sexual access to his wife, rather than to protect the rights of women.

2.1 REPUBLICAN PERIOD MARRIAGE LAW

Following the fall of the Qing dynasty, legal reformers of the Republican period (1911-1949) drafted new legislation with regard to marriage and family matters. Local surveys were undertaken by government “investigators of customs” aimed at “reforming evil popular habits” resulting in a revamped civil code (Bourgon 2004:103). While early republican lawmakers had

¹⁶ If another servant or outsider, on the other hand, had intercourse with a female servant the punishment was 100 blows with a heavy bambo (Sommers 2000:48).

drafted these codes they did not publish or enact them for twenty years in order to “allow for a period of transition and because they thought the old codes closer to Chinese realities” during that period (Huang 1998:9). Finally in 1931 when these codes were implemented, for the first time in China, civil rights were “guaranteed to any person, in full equality, without distinction of race, sex, or age” (Bourgon 2004:107). In the last two parts of the code which dealt with familial relationships and inheritance, “marriage was defined as a union formed by the express will of both the groom and the bride” (Bourgon 2004:107). Therefore, forced marriages arranged by parents were forbidden (Bourgon 2004:107).¹⁷ The law also stated that both wife and husband owned and managed family wealth, and both had the right to initiate divorce (article 1049).¹⁸

While the establishment of these new codes offered new rights and individual freedoms, they came at a price as they were tied to the establishment of a new moral order. This new moral order combined with surveys that documented local practices, allowed the state to more accurately distinguish what practices were to be “disciplined” (Foucault 1995). The acculturation of the local elite via these new legal standards and moral principles coupled with ongoing surveys, allowed state power to “permeate local society” (Bourgon 2004:103-104). The result was somewhat of a catch-22. While many of these reforms may sound quite reasonable, many of them conflicted with established practices therefore those who lived more “traditional” lives had suffered a loss of personal freedoms or were, in some cases completely overlooked in the drafting of these codes.

¹⁷ This is contrary to the Qing code which considered marriage an agreement between two families (rather than two individuals) which was presided over by the heads of the families (Huang 2001:163).

¹⁸ A major change was the addition of equal property inheritance rights for all children, which until this time only included male heirs (article 1138).

As early republican lawmakers had feared, these new laws conflicted with some of the well established Qing codes which were deeply entrenched in Chinese society. It is estimated that 30 to 40 percent of the Qing codes had been enforced since the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE) over nine hundred years before the Qing came to power (Jones 2004:49). Arguably, over such a long period of time these codes had become well established customs. As a result, the republican civil codes, like the Qing codes, would also be subject to compromise. For example, while the Qing codes guaranteed rights to secondary wives or concubines, under the new code concubines and their children were considered “illegitimate” and had no rights of inheritance (Bourgon 2004:108). In an interesting compromise the Supreme Court appended article 985 which affirmed monogamy, while also granting concubines and their children the same rights offered by Qing law (Bourgon 2004:108).

With regard to equal rights of inheritance, although the new code guaranteed equality of inheritance to sons and daughters, an article in the code allowed for “pre-mortem gifts” which provided a “legal way for fathers and brothers to cut daughters off completely” (Bourgon 2004:109). Compromises and loopholes such as these, point to the fact that the old Qing laws continued to not only persist but in some cases overruled the new codes. Bourgon (2004) explains that “in the countryside family wealth was still transmitted according to old rules” and “even urbanized young men who paid lip service to gender equality went on marrying secondary wives” (Bourgon 2004:109). As more compromises were made and more articles added to the code, it lost its teeth. But this would change with the founding of the PRC in 1949 and the subsequent creation of the *hukou* and *danwei* systems.

2.2 MARRIAGE LAW OF 1950

As Alford and Shen have argued “it was not coincidental that the first major law promulgated by the PRC was the Marriage Law of 1950” as the reconception of family is closely connected to making broad political changes (2004:237). Given China’s long history of powerful families competing for political and military control this was a primary concern of the newly founded PRC. The self-described goal of this legislation was to eliminate “the feudalistic marriage and family system in Mainland China” (Chen 2004:169) by “uprooting traditional hierarchies and freeing women from oppressive marriages” (Alford and Shen 2004:249). When this law was originally put into effect, granting women the right to marry the person of their choosing, millions of rural marriages were dissolved “often at the initiative of women” (Alford and Shen 2004:238, Chen 2004:160).¹⁹ The law also explicitly “prohibited all forms of polygamy” including concubinage (Santos 2009:134). It was during this period that the PRC established the *danwei* (work unit) and *hukou* (household registration) systems which allowed government to permeate the day-to-day lives of its citizens through surveillance and enforcement at the local level.

¹⁹ The 1953 Marriage law campaign sought to limit the number of divorces that were granted and spurred a long running debate about whether divorce and for that matter, marriage should be understood in material or more personal terms (Alford and Shen 2004:249-250). This debate culminated with the 1980 Marriage Law.

2.3 THE *DANWEI* SYSTEM

The *danwei*²⁰ system in the cities and the commune system in the countryside emerged as the basic organizational form as it arranged housing, work, entertainment, pensions and gave “considerable definition to marriage and other dimensions of family life” (Alford and Shen 2004:239). The *danwei* and *hukou* (household registration) systems proved to be a powerful means through which government could permeate society (Bray 2005:2). While the *hukou* system²¹ controlled population movement, the *danwei* system focused on the workplace, which “supplanted the family and clan as the central unit of social organization” (2005:196). One result of this is that this system “produced a different form of subjectivity...a collective subjectivity focused around production and political participation” (2005:197). Marriage was more than a union of two people, or for that matter, two families. Rather marriage was a political statement. Marriage was a vehicle through which the government could increase production and control reproduction. One’s *danwei* circumscribed the “social space within one was likely to find a spouse” where the couple would reside, and provided a means through which “marital or other familial disputes might be addressed” (Bray 2005:239, see Marriage-scape 1 below).

The Great Famine of the early 1960s followed by the social upheaval of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) marked the beginning of the end of the *danwei* system.²² Given the slow demise of the *danwei* system, coupled with the market reforms that were put in place since

²⁰ The term *danwei* often translated as “unit” or “work unit” encompasses much more than the name implies. Bray has argued that the term denotes, “a specific form of social organization that came to dominate socialist China’s cities” (2005:3).

²¹ While the *danwei* system is in decline, the *hukou* system remains a primary vehicle for the CCP to monitor and control population movements and differentiate between rural and urban citizens. This important issue will be discussed in the following section.

²² Bray argues that while the *danwei* is in a state of “terminal decline” its features “will affect urban China for many years to come” (2005:201).

1978 many have argued that the family unit has re-emerged as the “principal unit of economic organization”(Alford and Shen 2004:239). While this may on some level be the case the *danwei* system has not completely disappeared. Many families take advantage of the benefits of the *danwei* while also engaging in private business. This practice is cleverly referred to as the “one family two systems” (*yijia liangzhi*) model in which one spouse remains in a state-run enterprise, which provides a link to the security of the *danwei*, while the other becomes an entrepreneur (Bray 2005:169).²³

Others have claimed that the ongoing demise of the *danwei* marks a shift in subjectivity from *danwei ren* (person of the work unit) to (the social person) *shehui ren* (Bray 2005:158).²⁴ However, many aspects of the *danwei* system are still prevalent today albeit in different forms. For example, the government established the *shequ jianshe* (community building) system to fill the gaps left by the *danwei* (Bray 2005:187-188).²⁵ The *shequ* provides a “comprehensive network for ensuring that all aspects of *shequ* life are kept under close scrutiny” (Bray 2005:188). To sum up, while the gradual demise of the *danwei* coupled with the transition to a market economy has resulted in more economic and social mobility for some, government programs such as the *shequ jianshe* and the *hukou* system have a profound influence in shaping the choices available to its citizens through surveillance and regulation.

²³ This is a play on “one country two systems” (*yiguo liangzhi*) with regard to the governance of Mainland China and Hong Kong.

²⁴ *Shehui ren* refers to individualized forms of identity in which “identity is created through individual agency within the social realm—unmediated by the constraints of any collective groupings” (Bray 2005:157).

²⁵ The *shequ* covers a wide range of responsibilities including, welfare services, disseminating socialist education and solving disputes among residents. For a more detailed discussion of the responsibilities of the *shequ* see Bray 2005.

2.4 THE HUKOU SYSTEM

While the *danwei* and commune systems shaped Chinese citizen's work, housing and social environment, the *hukou* (household registration) system insured that these citizens "stay in their place" both geographically and socially (Sun 2009:8). Unlike the *danwei* system however, the *hukou* system, implemented in 1958, rather than withering away is still in full effect albeit with several reforms²⁶. In fact, the *hukou* book, which records household characteristics, has been referred to as "China's No. 1 document" because it can "determine many important aspects of life, if not the fate of the majority of China's people" (Chan 2009:198, Tian 2003). Coupled initially with the rural commune system and later to include the urban *danwei*, the *hukou* system requires every citizen to register through their local *hukou* office (Chan 2009, Yang and Cai 2003). Based in part, on the Russian *propiska* (internal passport) this system works to monitor and control urban growth in part, by regulating rural to urban migration (109th Congress 2005:29). In doing so however, this system also created a "legal and practical distinction between peasants (who have rural *hukou*) and non-peasants (who have urban *hukou*)" (Chan 2009, Dutton 1992, Sun 2009:7). While those with urban *hukou* enjoy a host of entitlements such as subsidized housing, public education and medical care those with rural *hukou* do not. The disparity of Benefits and entitlements between those holding a rural *hukou* and those holding an urban *hukou* is so pronounced that those with rural *hukou* have been referred to as second-class

²⁶ The reforms of 1978 and 1979 worked to more tightly control the migration of workers from the countryside to urban areas (Chan 2009:204). In 1984 a new *hukou* category was introduced; "*hukou* with self-supplied food grain" which referred to migrants that are not offered welfare benefits from the state (Chan and Zhang 1999, Chan 2009:204). In 1985 a new national policy was implemented which allowed citizens to apply for temporary residence status, but without a local *hukou* the state offered them no benefits (Solinger 1999). In 1997 and 2001 measures were introduced to ease *hukou* conversions to small towns (Chan 2009:205). A reform measure in 1998 allowed for *hukou* conversions of children or elderly parents and those who had the money or skills stipulated by the government at the local level (Chan 2009:205).

citizens (Sun 2009:7, Wang 2005, Solinger 1999.) Smart and Lin have referred to this phenomenon as “local citizenship” wherein “processes of entitlement and exclusion are accomplished locally rather than through national frameworks” (2007:280). The *hukou* system is so pervasive in the lives of Chinese citizens that one’s *hukou* type has become a form of social capital, elevating the status of those with urban *hukou* often well above those with rural *hukou*.

Recently the PRC press has criticized the *hukou* system and its effects on society (Chen 2010:1). One week before the yearly meeting of Chinese legislators over a dozen newspapers published editorials calling for an end to the residence permits (Chen 2010:1). These effects have been so highly publicized that in Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao’s opening address to China’s parliamentary session in 2010 he declared that China needed to reform the *hukou* system which categorizes citizens as either rural or urban dwellers in order to “reverse the income gap” (Bristow 2010:1).

2.5 THE 1980 MARRIAGE LAW

As the Cultural Revolution had destroyed China’s marriage and family laws the 1980 Marriage Law restored the rule of law into the realm of marriage and family (Chen 2004:169).²⁷ It was in this context that the Marriage Law of 1980 was drafted. In many ways this law reaffirmed the rights guaranteed in the laws of 1950 including the affirmation of the equality of men and women and confirmed the principle of freedom of divorce (Chen 2004:169).²⁸ In addition rights

²⁷ During the Cultural Revolution many marriages were terminated on political grounds (Alford and Shen 2004:250).

of inheritance were reaffirmed. However, as in the past, the implementation of these laws resulted in a fierce debate.

One of the primary issues that were heavily debated concerned article 25 of 1980 Marriage Law which states that the courts should “grant a divorce upon finding that a marriage had broken down emotionally [*ganqing que yi polie*]” (Alford and Shen 2004:250, Chen 2004:170). Initially, many argued that the court needed to define what constitutes a breakdown of emotion. In response in 1989 the court identified fourteen situations which constituted a breakdown of emotions. These however, also proved to be problematic as these fourteen points included “physical inability to consummate the marriage” and a “prolonged unexplained absence of one’s spouse” which some argued could have little to do with a breakdown of emotions (Alford and Shen 2005:251). Others argued that using the term “emotion” was inappropriate given the “relative unimportance of emotional considerations in the decisions of many Chinese to marry” (Alford and Shen 2005:251). Xia Zhen of the People’s Congress Standing Committee, however while admitting that only three out of ten Chinese marriages were “love unions”, argued that this was the very reason article 25 was adopted, citing the “breakdown of emotion standard” as a way for women who had been coerced into marriage a legal avenue for divorce (Alford and Shen 2004:252).

Another “feudal” practice that had become more commonplace during this period was the practice of being involved in extramarital affairs or husbands taking unofficial “second wives” [*bao er nai*](Alford and Shen 2004:246). In some cases husbands used this practice as a loophole in response to the one-child policy usually when their first child was a daughter (Chinese Woman’s News 1999:2). While bigamy was forbidden under criminal law,²⁹ the 1980 Marriage

²⁹ In Chinese criminal law bigamy could only be prosecuted if both marriages were registered with the state.

Law, unlike the 1950 Law did not bar concubinage or bigamy (Alford and Shen 2004:246). In addition the 1980 Marriage Law did not directly address the issue of domestic violence, which was a principle concern of the All China Women's Federation (Alford and Shen 2004:253). The debates over these issues culminated with the creation of the 2001 Marriage Law.

2.6 THE 2001 MARRIAGE LAW

The 2001 Marriage Law was the first to address the issue of domestic violence or “bad habits” and allowed the victims of abuse the ability to seek compensation (Alford and Shen 2005:255). However, the law does not define “domestic violence” or “bad habits” (Alford and Shen 2005:254). With language such as, “husband and wife shall be faithful to and respect each other” much was left to interpretation (Alford and Shen 2005:254). With regard to compensation upon divorce, the law is no less vague. One section states for example that the “greater duties that [a spouse] has fulfilled in the past in bringing up children, waiting on elders may result in compensation” (Alford and Shen 2005:255). The law also cites other possible payments such as “appropriate assistance if one party meets difficulties in life” (Alford and Shen 2005:25). Some claim that the vague language and lack of concrete definitions within these laws are somewhat of a compromise, to allow those interpreting the law more room for local customs and practices (Alford and Shen 2005:371). Chen Mingxia makes a strong point in arguing that the law needs further revisions as in its current state it “relies wholly on the good will of judges” making it difficult to enforce (2004:168).

This short history of Marriage law in China highlights the difficulties in reconciling local customs and practices with marriage law. Deeply entrenched customs such as arranged marriages

have been illegal since the Republican period (1911-1949) but continue to persist today. A survey carried out by the All-China Women's Federation in 2000 found that over 16 percent of rural women were involved in arranged marriages (Chen 2004:162).³⁰ Given that under the law arranged marriages are "invalid", one would assume that divorce would be a viable option for those involved in a marriage against their will. However, given that few lawyers outside of major cities are involved in cases related to marriage litigation, and that local judges who hear such cases are predominantly men who have had little training regarding issues of marriage, divorce is often not a viable option (Alford and Shen 204:259).

The practice of what has been referred to as "buying a bride" has been illegal in China since the adoption of the 1950 Marriage Law (Davin 2008:71). Since economic reform and China's increasing prosperity, however, it has made a comeback resulting in what some refer to as the commodification or "commercialisation of marriage" (Davin 2008:71, Lu 2008:125). In some cases, unscrupulous marriage brokers and matchmakers deceive potential brides with bogus information about their prospective husbands or are reputed to sell them to prostitution rings after promising them a husband in a wealthy area (Ping 1993). Prospective husbands and their families have also been taken advantage of as many pay at least part of their fee up front, but the bride-to-be may never arrive (Han and Eades 1995: 861-65).

It is important to note that while these practices do exist, those who use the services of a broker or matchmaker should not necessarily be considered being involved in the "trafficking of women," nor should these women be thought of as powerless victims in this process (Constable 2006). Despite some problems, commercially introduced or arranged marriages have become increasingly more common in China. While matchmaking services have recently been put under

³⁰ This figure had dropped considerably since 1994 when 28.98 percent of rural women stated that their marriages had been arranged by their parents (Chen 2004:162). There is no data regarding men and arranged marriages.

stricter control by the Chinese government, the industry in general is encouraged by the government. For example, the General Secretary of the China Social Work Association claimed that “the growing industry has made great contributions toward building a more harmonious society” (Xie 2007:10).

2.7 CONCLUSION

The tradition of reconciling local practices with China’s Marriage Laws and civil codes has resulted in the law being interpreted in relation to local understandings of marriage and gender roles, often reinforcing rather than reconfiguring these ideas at the local level. Local interpretations of China’s marriage law coupled with patrilocal post-marital residence patterns have played a large part in upholding traditional views regarding the social location of women in China. Further, the long tradition of women marrying out has resulted in women being thought of as appropriate marriage migrants, while Mainland men who migrate, marry and settle in their wives natal home are considered social outcasts.

While under the law, Chinese women have gained equality with men, in practice this is clearly not the case. Harrell has argued that “there is a general agreement that there is a recovery in the villages of patriarchal domination, expressed in patrilocal arranged marriage, in expected household roles, and in the subordination of women” (2001:8 see also Andors 1983, Stacey 1983, Wolf 1985). While the reasons for this are complex, this discussion points to some of the problems in reconciling marriage law with, customary ideas and practices. Vague laws lacking strict definitions leave much to the interpretation of, primarily male, local judges with little or no training in issues related to marriage. Rulings therefore are often gendered and work to shore up

local practices, even those that might be considered “feudal”. Issues such as these have undoubtedly contributed to the fact that China is the “*only* country in the world that reports higher rates of suicide in women than in men” (Lee and Kleinman 2003:224, italics in the original).

3.0 MARRIAGE MIGRATION AND GENDER IN CHINA

This chapter is comprised of two parts, “Crossing Borders” and “Migrant Husbands”. Since the overwhelming majority of marriage migrants in China are women, the primary aim of the first section, “Crossing Borders” is to discuss the gendered experiences of these women and how post-marital residence patterns in China effect social location. In particular, this section focuses on the recent pattern of long distance marriage migration highlighting administrative and cultural factors that are a part of this process. These factors include the household registration system (*hukou*) and local understandings of migrant brides.

The second part of this chapter, “Migrant Husbands” I discuss *diao cha men* (marrying in son-in laws) and the social stigma attached to this practice. Next, I discuss “western” men who marry Mainland women and settle in China. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate some of the experiences of couples involved in various forms of marriage in order to show how ideas and expectations about marriage are in part, a product of Chinese marriage history, law and customs. I will discuss stereotypical views about those involved in these marriages and the different ways that some couples react to these views. Finally, this discussion points to patterns of marriage on the Mainland that are beginning to emerge as a result of larger, global shifts. I am referring here to China’s emerging position as a global economic power which offers migrants,

particularly those that PRC regards as a person of “quality,” (*suzhi*) the prospect of economic and social upward social mobility.³¹

Throughout this chapter I have included several vignettes or “marriage scapes” to illustrate my points. Constable (2005) uses the term marriage-scapes drawing on Appadurai’s (1996) notion of global ethnoscares. The suffix *scape* points to both the “fluid irregular shapes of these landscapes” and the importance of historical, cultural and economic differences which influence the ways in which these *scapes* are viewed (Appadurai 1996:33). These vignettes offer a personal glimpse into the lives of those involved in various forms of marriage in Mainland China and are based on interviews and observations carried out in Xiamen, Beijing and Shanghai.

3.1 CROSSING BORDERS

In this section I use the term “crossing-borders” to highlight particular aspects of contemporary marriage migration patterns. Building on the work of Constable (2005) I use this term to highlight the fact that within the process of marriage there are borders (in addition to administrative or political factors) that play a significant role in the lives and opportunities of those who marry. These borders are related to issues of gender, social and economic class, *hukou*, and ethnicity to name a few. Whether one migrates to another province, village or even household for the purpose of marriage these all involve some form of border crossing. Having discussed the historical influence that marriage laws, policies and moral codes have had on

³¹ The term “population quality” (*renkou suzhi*), is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

marriage practices in the previous section, in this section the focus turns to trends in marriage migration in contemporary China. Of particular interest are patrilocal post-marital residence patterns and how they influence the social location of women in China.

Given China's long tradition of patrilocal post-marital resident patterns, it comes as no surprise that the majority of marriage migrants in China are women. The terms used to describe the marriage of a daughter or son, reflect this fact. When a daughter marries it is commonly referred to as marrying a daughter out or losing a daughter (*jia chu qu*). While when a son marries it is referred to as bringing in a daughter (*chu jin lai*). Village exogamy, the practice of brides moving from their natal village for marriage, has remained the most common form of marriage in China (Davin 2008:65). According to the 1990 census, marriage is the primary reason women migrate in China (Fan 2008:141). The practice of men moving from their natal village or hometown for purposes of marriage however, remains quite rare.

As discussed earlier, scholars have long argued that patrilocal post-marital residence patterns are one of the primary reasons for women's disempowerment in China (Johnson 1983, Watson 1991). Kay Ann Johnson has argued that traditional Confucian marriage and kinship practices "have defined and shaped women's place in Chinese society more than any other set of factors"(1983:3). In, part this is because natal families tend to invest less in the education of a daughter as they anticipate that she will be "lost" to marriage (Lu 1997). In addition, as women leave their natal homes they have less easy access to their natal family for support to help them negotiate marital problems with their husbands or in-laws (Davin 2008:72).

While out-marriage has a long history in China and is overwhelmingly the most common form of marriage we should not conclude that women have little or no agency in this process. Many brides prefer to marry-out, particularly when moving from a poor area to one that is more

economically prosperous (Fan 2008:17, Lively 1991, Potter and Potter 1990,). Brides from more prosperous areas often either refuse to marry-out, or marry-out to areas that are even better off economically (Lively 1991). Fan (2008) has argued that given women's "marginalization in the labor market, women may find marriage, and specifically hypergamy...an attractive vehicle toward economic betterment"(137). Constable (2005) on a wider scale, labels this movement primarily of brides from less developed poor areas to more modern richer areas "global hypergamy" (2005:10).³²

One of the most striking changes in marriage migration in China in recent years is "a new long-distance inter-provincial marriage market" in which "richer coastal areas tend to draw brides in, while the poorer inland areas suffer a net loss in women (Davin 2008:67). In December 2007, the Xinhua news reported that "the country is facing a social time bomb as the number of young singles –mostly men—continues to rise" (Xinhua 2007, December, 12:3). In 2005, singles aged 15 to 35 accounted for percent of the population, which the article claimed could cause more "violent acts against women"(Xinhua 2007, December, 12:3). The concern over the growing number of rural bachelors who are unable to find brides can be traced back to the Qing dynasty as discussed in chapter two. During this period, these men were considered rogues and/or outlaws and were marginalized as they were considered a threat to the chastity of wives and daughters of humble families (Sommer 2000:14).³³ In contemporary times, as during the Qing they are also regularly referred to as *guang gun* (bare branches) and are looked down upon (Hua 2009:51). This highly publicized "bride shortage" in rural areas is the result of a combination of factors including, the influence of the *hukou* system, state mandatory birth-

³² See also Oxfeld 2005.

³³ Recall that some have suggested that the Qing Imperial Chastity Cult was in part a reaction to the ongoing bride shortage (Telford 1992:924).

control policies, “traditional values” which emphasize the importance of sons, sex selective abortions and female infanticides as well as migration (Banister 2004, Cai and Lavelly 2003, Hua 2009, Zeng *et al.* 1993).³⁴

One issue that Hua suggests is often overlooked and contributes to this trend, is that while both men and women migrate to the cities, men generally work in gender-segregated jobs while women often work in service industries in which they are more likely to interact with the opposite sex, increasing their chances of finding a suitable marriage partner (2009:60). But the fact that many women migrants take jobs as maids and both men and women work in factories cut hair or drive taxis for living, reveals that gender segregated jobs while they do play a part, may not be a primary factor in this phenomenon.

The 2000 census revealed that 1.6 million women had migrated to another province for the purpose of marriage (Fan 2008:141). The highest percentage of females who migrate for the purpose of marriage migrated to the provinces of Hebei (63%), Anhui (59.1%), Jiangsu (54.5%) and Fujian (50.6%) (Fan and Huang 1998:241). Davin has argued that this trend reflects the fact that women are using marriage migration to move up the “spatial hierarchy” and is a form of upward mobility for women (2008:68). But as more brides now migrate over longer distances the term “marrying up” becomes more complicated.

Brides-to-be that migrate from economically poor areas to those that are more prosperous (spatial hypergamy), may experience lower social status both in public and private spheres. Migrants are often treated as second-class citizens and looked down upon when relocating from a rural area to an affluent city. Post-marital residence patterns, as discussed earlier, are already considered a major factor for women’s disempowerment, therefore one would expect the greater

³⁴ The resurgence in traditional values in rural areas I argue is, in part, related to the ambiguity of civil law codes coupled with localized interpretation and enforcement of these codes. See Chapter 2.

distance they are from their natal home coupled with the economic disparity they realize when migrating to their new home would exacerbate the problem. Women who migrate further from their natal homes, argues Davin, are more isolated and therefore more dependent on her husbands' family and as such is considered easier to control (2008:72). In addition, migrants from the countryside are often looked down upon in major cities. For example, in Shanghai migrants from the rural area are referred to as *xiang xia ren* (country bumpkins) a derogatory term that clearly places them in the category of "other." In Tan and Short's study of female marriage migrants who had moved from poor regions to more prosperous areas, these women refer to themselves as "double outsiders" (2004:152). This term refers to the fact that they are looked upon as outsiders both in the community as well as in the household (Tan and Short 2004:153). Local stereotypes abound regarding these women, casting them as "lazy," or "swindlers" and they have been blamed for "destroy[ing] local peoples marriages and family relations" (Tan and Short 2004:167). In addition there can also be linguistic barriers, which mark them as outsiders and limit their ability to express themselves in the local dialect. One bride in Tan and Short's study who had migrated from Sichuan province to Zhangjiagang explained that because of her accent "the locals looked down on me...I was cheated many times because I couldn't speak like a local woman...my husband and mother-in-law thought I was stupid "(Tan and Short 2004:166-67). Clearly, while many of these women may be relatively better off economically marrying into a more urban setting, that is only a small part of a larger picture. In order to improve their situation many of these women have successfully expanded their social networks by recruiting other women from their natal villages to join them in their new location (Tan and Short 2004:171). Interestingly, while many still spoke of isolation, and their relatively lower status in both the village and the household, all of those interviewed in Tan and Short's

study agreed that their lives were better than if they had remained in their natal village (2004:172).³⁵

Another recent marriage form to emerge is the neolocal practice of newly married couples setting up their household a great distance from both the husband's and the wife's hometowns (Zhang 2009). Zhang's (2009) study of migrants in Dongguan found that in many cases this form of post-marital residence resulted in a shift in gender roles in part because brides were able to continue with factory work after marriage and childbirth (Zhang 2009:639). Also within this form of marriage many brides experienced more egalitarian marital relations (Zhang 2009:652). The author however, laments that these types of marriages may not be sustainable due to in large part the exclusionary policies of the *hukou* system (Zhang 2009).

Given the entitlements available to those with urban *hukou*, upgrading one's *hukou* is a clear way to improve one's economic and social status. *Hukou* conversion while much desired is only possible for a select segment of the population. The most common means to change one's *hukou* is through state employment (Wang 2004:122). Those who are cadres or officials at the level of section chief (*kezhang*) or above or military officers of at least the level of platoon leader are automatically granted urban *hukou* (Wang 2004:122). Those below these ranks do not qualify for urban *hukou*, but rather rural non-agriculture *hukou* which offers them state benefits regardless of their place of residence (Chan 2009:201,205). Within this system, rank and mobility have a complimentary relationship (Wang 2004).

Hukou conversion is also available to those who have the economic means to qualify for a "blue seal" *hukou* which can be obtained by purchasing expensive real estate or investing in job creation (Chan 2009, Sun 2009, Wang 2004:122). Those who are highly educated or are

³⁵ Tan and Short conducted 120 interviews with married women and men in Zhangjiagang, Gangqu, Zhongxing and Nansha.

considered talented are also granted more mobility depending on their level of education or talent (Chan and Buckingham 2008, Chan 2002:202, Wang 2004).³⁶ Of specific interest to this dissertation is a reform implemented in 1998 which allows rural-urban or cross-regional couples to choose whether their child inherits the mother's or father's *hukou* (Wang 2004:123).³⁷ Not only did this entitle the next generation, it also opened the door for the rural *hukou* holding spouse to apply for urban *hukou* upon reaching old age (Chan 2009, Wang 2004).

Since 1992, the shift to more local level control regarding *hukou* and *hukou* conversions have resulted in a wide variety of localized *hukou* reform measures and requirements (Wang 2004, Solinger 1999). In some cases spouses of existing residents with local *hukou* are eligible for *hukou* conversion depending on their level of "talent" or economic status (Chan 2009:205). Given these reforms, *hukou* type has become an increasingly important consideration in matters related to marriage and marriage migration (Lu 2004).

In recent years the inequalities that the *hukou* system propagates have come under attack both in the United States and domestically, in the PRC (Congress, BBC news). In March 2010 the BBC news reported that "more than a dozen Chinese newspapers in the PRC have published a joint editorial calling for the abolition of the household registration system" and the Chinese government appears to be paying heed (Chen:1). A recent article in the China Daily reported that "Premier Wen Jiabao announced that Beijing would gradually relax its restrictions on the *hukou* household registration system for migrant workers moving to small- and medium-sized cities, enabling them to eventually receive the same benefits and social services as city residents" (Chinoy 2010). In the meantime however, this system of differential citizenship continues to

³⁶ A graduate of any accredited college is guaranteed a urban *hukou* either where his or her job is or to city nearest her home town. Those who hold a PhD can relocate their *hukou* to the city of their choice. Skilled workers can change their *hukou* if their employer sponsors them (Wang 2004:122).

³⁷ Previously a newborn's *hukou* classification was inherited from the mother (Chan 2009:200).

draw more people to the urban areas. Many come for work but the possibility of converting ones *hukou* is also a powerful lure. Aside from working for the government or striking it rich, migrating for marriage is the most viable way to upgrade ones *hukou*.

The following Marriage-scape illustrates the experiences of two friends both from Nanjing who have migrated, married and found themselves in enviable yet unsatisfied positions.

3.2 MARRIAGESCAPE 1: A MILITARY MARRIAGE AND A KEPT WOMAN

At a local gymnasium in Xiamen I became acquainted with a yoga teacher (Xui Li) from Nanjing who is currently living in Xiamen with her husband who was also born and raised in Nanjing. Her husband is a military officer who trains fighter pilots. He comes home about once a month for a few days but is required to live on the military base (to which Xui Li is not allowed entry) because of security concerns. She explained that the military bases in Fujian province are on high alert because of the “Taiwan issue” and keep close tabs on all of their soldiers. Most soldiers can only watch television a few minutes a day and are allowed off the base only for a limited time to buy groceries and necessities. She has heard that the suicide rate for soldiers in Fujian is quite high.

As the wife of an officer, her movements are also strictly controlled. She has a “sponsor” (the wife of a high-ranking officer) who must accompany her when she goes out. This includes when she teaches yoga class at the local gym. All of her trips must be approved in advance. Each morning as she hikes up to the temple nearby, she is accompanied by several soldiers. She explained that she loves her husband but is unhappy with her situation and sees no way out. In fact she has a friend who wanted to divorce her military husband and Xui Li was asked to speak

to her to talk her out of the divorce. No less than five different women tried to convince the woman to stay married. I was told that Xui Li's husband was also called upon to speak to the woman's husband about the importance of staying married.³⁸ In order to get divorced, the woman's sponsor must first approve it. Then her husband's commanding officer must sign off on it. If the divorce quotas are too high that year the divorce is not approved and they are told to reapply the following year. Suffice it to say divorce is hard to come by in the military. Xui Li explained that when she was younger, marrying an officer in the military was a dream many girls shared. But now when single friends ask her to introduce them to potential military husbands she refuses and talks them out of it.

When Xui Li was younger (she was 30 when we spoke) she studied at one of China's most prestigious dance schools and did quite well until she sustained an injury. She explained that many dancers become yoga teachers when they get older. Others get rich by dancing at expensive gentleman's clubs making upwards of 10,000 RMB (approximately \$1500 US) a night. Some become mistresses, wives, or second wives to wealthy businessmen.

On a recent trip to Beijing she looked up an old classmate who she had heard was doing well for herself having married a wealthy Taiwanese businessman. Her classmate, Miahua, who had worked as a dancer, was living in a very luxurious apartment in an expensive part of Beijing. Xui Li said she had found Miahua to be dramatically changed. She had become obsessed with the cost of all of her possessions, often pointing out various pieces of furniture or art works asking Xui Li to guess how much they were worth. Miahua talked about how lonely she was most of the time living alone in such a big place. If she wanted to go anywhere, her driver, her husband's employee accompanied her. Her husband was seldom at home and spent most of his

³⁸ This demonstrates that while the *damwei* system may be dying out, in some settings marriage, and divorce are considered community matters rather than individual decisions.

time away on business. Miahua asked Xui Li to spend the night with her because her husband would be in Taiwan for the next month or so. However as Xui Li's whereabouts and movements were so closely monitored, she had to turn down the invitation. Miahua was furious, and started to criticize Xui Li for choosing the life she had. "You are stupid. You have nothing." Xui Li returned to the car awaiting her outside.

While Xui Li and Miahua had chosen very different paths to marriage both found themselves fairly isolated and a long distance from their natal homes. While Miahua does not seem to have any support system (outside of financial support) Xui Li's support system has been chosen for her and is more concerned with control and surveillance, in part, to insure she remain a faithful and dutiful wife. Both Miahua and Xui Li's lives are strictly controlled with regard to where they go and with whom they interact. In some sense however, in the public view both of these women were in enviable positions. While marrying a common soldier is usually not considered an ideal choice, marrying an officer is for the most part is looked upon as a positive thing. While some frown on women taking up with foreign businessmen, those who live a life of luxury and need not work to support this lifestyle are admired for their attractiveness and cunning. Miahua's situation is captured by the common phrase *jinwu cangjiao* (a beauty hidden in a golden house) which refers in part, to the way in which these women are isolated. However it would be a stretch to say that either of these women felt satisfied with their situation.

3.3 MIGRANT HUSBANDS IN CHINA

As stated earlier, today and in the past, men are rarely the ones who migrate for marriage. Some have convincingly argued that such marriage patterns at some level reflect and intensify gender inequality (Massy 1994, Watson 1991, Wolf 1968). Caren Freeman's (2005) study of Chosonjok brides who migrated from China to South Korea, however, revealed that women are often "poised to use cross-border marriage to their own advantage" while in some cases men, due to their economic or social positions may be the least mobile (Freeman 2005:99). This sentiment is also reflected in Constable's (2005) study of so called "mail order brides" in which men from China, the Philippines and the United States expressed their frustrations regarding gender inequality with regard to mobility (Constable 2005:185). In some cases rather than being unwilling to migrate for marriage, cultural understandings about marriage and gender, government policies and economic circumstances make marriage migration unthinkable, impossible or at best extremely difficult. Such is the case on Mainland China.

In the PRC, the practice of men "marrying out" usually occurs when a family has no sons and searches for a "marrying-in son-in-law" (*diao cha men*), to carry on the family name (Davin 2008:64). In so doing the man often forsakes the continuation of his own family line. The practice of uxori-local marriage usually results in lower social status for the husband as many consider this a humiliating arrangement (Davin 2008:64).³⁹ This practice is rarely reported in the Chinese media, but when it is, the message is clear. An article in the China Daily in March 2007 entitled "Doom and Groom" describes the story of one of these men, Mr. Song, who claims

³⁹ However, Judd argues that women involved in uxori-local marital residence patterns are disadvantaged "because the practice leaves women unfavorably situated within their own network of kin, in sharp contrast to the situation their male cousins enjoy" (2009:30).

marrying out was “the worst decision of my life” (Fang 2007:19). Song is dying of lung cancer and plans to be buried in his hometown with a blank gravestone because “Song feels he has failed in his filial duty” to his own kinship line (Fang 2007:19). A similar article entitled, “A Wedding for What it’s Worth” depicts an angry groom dressed in a wedding gown being laughed at by his bride who is wearing a tuxedo (Fang 2007:19). In a recent article Han describes how she attended one of these weddings wherein the groom was escorted to his “sedan chair” and was “symbolically ‘veiled’ under a red umbrella...as he wept quietly just as a bride in a virilocal marriage would normally do” (2009:56). Given such negative descriptions of Mainland men involved in uxorilocal marriages in both the media (China Daily March 6, 2007) and in academic studies (Han 2009) coupled with the long “tradition” on brides migrating for marriage, it is not surprising that men would feel emasculated in this situation. However, I found that characterizations such as these do not seem to apply to men who migrate from abroad, marry and settle in Mainland China. In fact, for men from abroad, such as Taiwan, there can be a distinct sense—from their own perspective and that of others—of upward mobility.

3.4 FOREIGN MALE MARRIAGE MIGRANTS IN CHINA

Here I will discuss PRC-foreigner marriages that occur on the Mainland in which a western man and a Mainland woman marry and set up a household on the Mainland. This subject has received remarkably little attention in anthropological studies but is particularly interesting given that matrilineal post-marital residence patterns are a rarity in China and include much negative commentary when they involve a Mainland man. As discussed above, this practice is considered a humiliating experience for a Mainland husband often resulting in disempowerment and public

ridicule. Men who migrate from abroad however, are not held to the same standards as PRC men, and are treated--at least on the surface—quite differently. Through a series of “marriage-scapes” I will highlight the experiences of two of these couples, and the various ways they contest or enforce stereo-typical views about these relationships. These examples serve as a point of contrast with Taiwan-PRC marriages discussed later in this dissertation. In addition these examples point to emerging marriage patters related to China’s improved economic status.

Transnational marriages are becoming more commonplace in China. From 2004 through 2007, an average of over 22,000 transnational couples registered for marriage on the Mainland (see Table 1). While it is difficult to quantify the origin of these foreign spouses as the Department of Population and Employment National Bureau of Statistics groups all of those who are not from Hong Kong, Macao, or Taiwan as simply *wai gou ren* (foreigners), we do know that most of these marriages occur in Guangdong, Guilin, Fujian, and Shanghai where economic zones draw foreigners to the area (China 2004:101, China 2005:119, China 2006:110, China 2007: x).⁴⁰ The first set of interviews took place in one of these economic zones in Fujian province. I have included them to demonstrate the ways in which some cross-border couples appropriate common stereotypical views with regard to their relationships into the stories they tell about their courtship and marriage. Interestingly this can work to shore up their social locations and legitimize, rather than belittle these unions.

⁴⁰ Special economic zones draw foreign businesses to the Mainland through preferential policies. These policies and the role of Special Economic Zones play in building social relationships will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Table 1. Transnational marriage registrations within the PRC*

Year	Transnational Marriage registrations
2004	26,406
2005	24,133
2006	20,424
2007	21,227

***This does not include marriages that took place in Hong Kong, Macao, or Taiwan.**

Based on the China Population Statistical Yearbook, 2004-2007.

3.5 MARRIAGESCAPE 2: THE WILEY BUSINESSMAN AND THE SEDUCTRESS

The following marriage-scape serves as one example of what might be considered a stereotypical marriage between a rich western businessman (Bouka) and his crafty Mainland wife (Lin).

I first met Bouka at an outdoor pub frequented by foreigners in Xiamen's Haiwan Park. He is a Dutch shipbuilder who has lived in Xiamen for over 20 years. He married a local woman shortly after arriving. He is 63 and his wife is 40. He is a Saturday night regular at the pub and knows all of the staff and many of the customers. He often refers to his wife as "the boss" and jokes about how little money she gives him, but makes a point of regularly flashing his wallet and the oversized stack of bills within it. Usually this is accompanied by a sly glance and a wry smile. He is considered quite wealthy, owns two apartments in Xiamen, a house in Denmark, and a yacht in which he and his wife have traveled the world extensively. When I asked him how he met his wife he told the following story.

One of my captains was harassed by the local shipping authorities and ended up signing an agreement that he didn't understand. It was all in Chinese and he couldn't read any of it. A local translator told him that it required all of my boats to pay a small extra fee to enter the port. The fee was no big deal to me as I was making a good profit. The next time he returned, however, the fee increased ten-fold. It turned out that the contract included a clause that for every time my boats returned the fee would increase by ten. I decided to find my own translator and after asking some friends they referred me to Lin. She was the daughter of a high ranking local official and eventually agreed to help me. She went with me to the office and told them in no uncertain terms that the contract was voided. She then made them tear up the contract and throw it away. After we walked out the door she suddenly turned around and ran back into the office and caught the men digging the pieces of the contract out of the garbage can. Upon seeing this she ordered them to burn the contract which they did in the ashtray. I knew then I should hold onto her.

Bouka went on to explain that his wife's connections in the government had made him a small fortune and he seldom had to pay import fees for his cargo. During "the SARS scare", as he referred to it, he smuggled tons of products into and out of China. If a patrol boat wanted to search his cargo he simply called his wife and put them on the phone with her. After that they always left him alone.

Later that evening Lin arrived and Bouka introduced me as an "American doctor in training." I greeted her in Chinese, which prompted her to criticize Bouka for never wanting to learn the language. As she continued to press the point, Bouka leaned towards me and said with a smile on his face, "I guess I still have time for another drink" and signaled the bartender.

Soon after, Lin began to tell me about the houses they owned, their yacht and their current project, building a traditional Chinese fishing boat. Soon the topic turned to how they met and their courtship. Lin explained that the first time they met; Bouka couldn't keep his eyes off her. She decided to help him because she felt sorry for him, he couldn't speak Chinese and he kept slamming his big fist on the table, which was frightening everyone in the room. She helped him out to calm the situation, never expecting to see him again. Several months later, he returned unexpectedly and contacted her. He said he had not been unable to get her off of his mind and had ordered his ship to change course from Hong Kong so he could see her again. This decision cost him thousands of dollars. During the next year he frequently returned each time trying to convince her to marry him. He met with her family and always brought them expensive gifts. Finally, she accepted, but she clearly made it sound like her decision was based on pity—she felt sorry for him because she was affecting his ability to do his job. Then she turned to Bouka and told him she wanted to go have dinner with friends and needed some money. He handed her a stack of bills and she kissed him on the cheek and said she would be back in a few hours.

Several weeks later, my wife and I were invited to Bouka's home for dinner. Upon arrival he offered us drinks and led us to a covered outdoor patio where we would be eating. He said he loves to cook and had made a "traditional" Dutch dish. He joked that his wife didn't know how to cook well and makes a mess of the kitchen, therefore they had arranged for a cook to come and prepare the Chinese part of the meal. Lin made his drinks for him throughout the evening and set a limit of ½ a bottle of rum for him that evening.

Bouka told us a story about one of their trips, shortly after they started dating. They took a trip to Hong Kong and while waiting for the plane it was announced that there would be a short delay. So he gave her some money to go shopping. She returned a short time later and asked for

more money as she had already spent what he gave her. She barely made it back before the plane was boarding. Once on the plane she handed him a large gold nugget and said it was his birthday gift. He had previously explained to her that in the past sailors often had a golden earring so that if they died far from home the earring could pay for their funeral. So Lin thought he should have something gold to wear and that he could take the nugget to a jeweler. Several months later Lin came home with a new gold necklace and earrings for herself. When Bouka asked how she could afford it she explained that she had borrowed his gold nugget. “I thought it was my birthday gift” he said. “It’s still yours, I’m just borrowing it” she retorted.

Soon Lin and Qian (my wife) began a conversation about their marriages. Lin harshly criticized my wife for making such a poor decision primarily because I was not wealthy and did not have a stable job. At one point I heard her say “you could have done much better than this. You made a bad deal.”

Similarly, as Bouka finished his rum and switched to scotch, he commented that Lin was much better than Qian because she had helped him increase his wealth and looked out for him. The fact that Qian and I were supporting each other through graduate school held little weight for either of them. As the scotch continued to flow, Bouka made it clear that he married Lin, in part, to get around paying extra fees and have access to her family’s connections and social capital. He also talked about how capable she is in protecting him from local schemes that target foreigners. Lin had started to get up to serve tea and glanced at Bouka having overheard him. He slapped her on the behind and she giggled. For the rest of the evening he scarcely kept his hands off her as she averted her eyes and feigned embarrassment.

Bouka and Lin both describe their marriage as a success, but in different ways. Lin, painted a picture of her husband becoming infatuated with her beauty, often making unnecessary

trips to Xiamen in his boat just to see her, and showering her and her family with gifts in order to win her hand. She implies that she married him in part because she felt badly for unknowingly seducing him with her beauty. Her references to the “expensive gifts” that eventually led to her family’s approval of the marriage are clearly related to the concept of bride price and work to both increase her status and legitimize their marriage. Bouka describes their marriage as a good business decision. When they are together in public, Bouka often plays the part of a rich businessman whose wife freely spends his money while unsuccessfully attempting to restrict his expenditures. Lin plays her role as well—the role of a desirable woman who unknowingly mesmerized a rich foreigner with her beauty, and now lives a life of luxury. In this sense, both of them got a “good deal.”

3.6 MARRIAGESCAPE 3: ERIC AND YUE

Eric and Yue, a cross-border couple, have been married for four years. Eric is 28 years old and moved from the United States to China shortly after earning his B.A degree at a U.S. university. He works as an English teacher for one of most prestigious English schools in Beijing. He makes the bulk of his income however, tutoring the children of well-to-do parents during the evenings and occasionally on weekends. Yue is 24 and works in the Beijing office of an U.S. oil company where she spends most of her day talking to Chinese clients on the phone and answering her U.S. manager’s questions about Chinese culture and language. They live in a neighborhood in which Eric is the only foreigner and they speak Chinese at home.

When I asked them how they first met, Yue explained, “We were on a group camping trip and I saw Eric passed out under some trees. No one was helping him so I went over to see if he

was okay.” “She gave me water” Eric said smiling. Yue continued “since then we have been together.” “Yeah” Eric said as he put his arm around Yue, “that was a great trip.”

I once asked Eric if they planned to stay in China or eventually move to the United States. “We’ll probably stay here. We have it pretty good here although sometimes I miss speaking English. I couldn’t afford to live like this in the States. One of my student’s parents pay my rent, and I make more than most PhDs in China. We travel a lot, sometimes to see Yue’s Mom...she’s cool, we drink together during the holidays.”

Eric is a functioning alcoholic. In fact, when I first arrived at their apartment a large beer truck was parked out front, as the deliveryman carried cases of beer to their third floor flat. Most nights he drinks beer until he passes out on his couch. If he works early the next day he adjusts his drinking schedule in order to pass out earlier. He is proud to say he has never missed a day of work. He explained that this is why he gets paid so well. “Most foreign teachers only last a few months. They party every night and show up to work with a hangover. One day they just stop coming to work. I’m dependable.”

Yue told me that on the Fourth of July Eric called her at two in the morning. “He was so drunk he didn’t know where he was. Then he started singing and I could hear him from my window. He was lying outside in the parking lot.” She laughed. “He does that kind of thing a lot. Americans love to drink.”

Once I accompanied Eric to a darts tournament at a local bar. We were the only foreigners in attendance and everyone was overjoyed to see Eric walk in the door. Throughout the night people would come over to our table and challenged Eric to a *baijiu* drinking contest. He never lost, while those who challenged him usually had to be helped out of the bar. At midnight Yue arrived to coax Eric back home. He left shortly after. The next day over breakfast

he told me, “I couldn’t live like this in the States. I party every day and no one bothers me about it. They think all westerners drink every day. And the beer is really cheap.”

Yue, who never finished high school, used a forged college diploma to secure a job with a U.S. company. “No one questioned me about it. Americans think all Chinese girls do is study all the time.” Yue told me that she takes the bus home from work because she doesn’t want her co-workers to see Eric. “If they knew I was married to a foreigner I would not have gotten the job. Western companies like to hire young single Chinese girls, not married women.” she explained. “Once Eric came by unexpectedly and was waiting outside the building to give me a ride home. I don’t think anyone saw us though.”

I asked Eric about his relationship with Yue and he explained “we fight occasionally and if she really gets upset, she gets back at me by spending all my money. She will sit at the computer and order things she doesn’t need until the money is gone. It doesn’t make sense to me, but I adjusted. Now I keep some cash stashed away just in case.” “Once she was convinced that I was having an affair and got violent with me. I don’t know how she got the idea that I was cheating on her. I never have. She spent the next few weeks telling her family and friends how horrible I was. I was talking with her mother a few months later and she told me that Yue knew I didn’t have an affair but she was upset because we don’t have a baby yet. Chinese girls can be very weird sometimes.”

I found it interesting that both Eric and Yue used stereotypes to benefit themselves. Eric is free from anyone questioning his drinking habit because most of the people he interacts with believe that all or most Americans do the same. Yue, on the other hand, made use of western

stereotypes about young Chinese women to secure a job in a foreign company. She continues to conceal her marriage from her employers for fear that this could negatively impact her status on the job.

3.7 CONCLUSION

A combination of factors including a resurgence of traditional practices in rural areas, recent changes to the *hukou* system, cultural understandings about women, marriage and migration, and the substantial economic disparity between rural and urban areas have resulted in more women migrating over longer distances from their natal home for work and/or marriage. This practice however, distances them even further from the support systems of their natal home. Once in their new home many are looked down upon both in the household and in public as they are “double outsiders” (Tan and Short 2004:152). Some migrant brides however, contend that while they are ridiculed in their husband’s hometown, they are better off than they were before migrating (Tan and Short 2004:172).

On the other hand, the practice of husbands “marrying out” to the wife’s family is frowned upon and considered a humiliating situation for Mainland Chinese men, their families and their ancestors. As a result few men participate in this form of marriage. Meanwhile, the number of male bachelors who are unable to find wives in rural areas continues to grow. While some do migrate for marriage it is clearly an embarrassing, emasculating experience based on Hua’s (2009) study.

While I hesitate to generalize or oversimplify contemporary marriage migration in Mainland China, it does seem clear that in many cases whether it is the groom or bride who

migrate, the migrating spouse is often at a disadvantage. These issues however, do not seem to apply to foreigners who migrate to the PRC and marry Mainland women. As described in marriage-scapes 2 and 3 some couples use local understandings about them to their advantage. For example, Eric's drinking was considered more a Western trait than an alcohol problem. This offered him more leeway than would normally be given a Mainland man. Perhaps because foreigners are not expected to conform to traditional Chinese practices they are also given more latitude regarding gender and marriage migration. This raises the question; are Taiwanese men also granted this margin of flexibility. Ethnically they are considered Chinese and many have ancestral families on the Mainland. If they were truly considered "just like us" as many Mainlanders claimed, then one would assume that they would be held to the same standard as Mainland men with regard to marriage practices. I will also consider why some Taiwanese men marry and settle on the Mainland rather than returning home to Taiwan. In order to take up these issues we must first consider the influence of larger structures such as government policies related to cross-Strait economic and social relations and the ways in which individuals have reacted to and influenced these policies.

4.0 CROSS-STRAIT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RELATIONS: POLICIES, PRACTICE AND CHANGE

Although geopolitical-economic issues are an important factor to examine when considering marriage migration, it is important not to overstate the influence of such factors and portray them as overly deterministic in the decision making process of individuals and families. This is particularly important when it comes to issues related to family formation. Michael Warner (1999) asserts that “marriage regulation and sexual normalization converge to link personal desires with state goals” (Friedman 2005:312). Building on Warner’s (1999) work, Sara Friedman’s (2005) study of distinctive marriage customs⁴¹ in southeastern China found that government policies and initiatives aimed at “reforming” these customs particularly with regard to post-marital residence practices, were for the most part, unsuccessful until economic *and* social changes at the local level made these initiatives more viable. Friedman’s study highlights the fact that “different configurations of state and economy have had different capacities to define desires and subjectivities at once intimate and political” (2005:313).

In the case of Cross-Strait economic and social interactions however, there are two governments, often with very different agendas that have established policies (in many cases

⁴¹ In Huidong county extended postmarital natal residence (*chang zhu niangjia*) practices were commonly practiced wherein after marriage the bride would continue to reside in her natal home until they bore a child. This resulted in many brides “shunning conjugal visits to avoid sexual relations and the pregnancy that might result” (Friedman 2005:314).

conflicting policies) aimed at supporting their own goals. In essence these governments are competing to influence the desires of citizens on both sides of the Taiwan Straits. My use of the term “desire” in the broad sense as Rofel has defined it “to gloss a wide range of aspirations, needs and longings” (2007:3). While the PRC’s policies work to support its stance of integration with Taiwan, the ROC’s policies reflect their agenda of cautious interaction. In recent years Taiwan, has found itself in a precarious position in that it has had to change several key policies meant to control the level of socio-economic interaction with the Mainland in part to appease those desiring to travel to the Mainland economic, social and ritualistic reasons (Sangren 2000, Steinfeld 2005, Wang and Belanger 2008). As a result, some have argued that Taiwan’s democratization is its Achilles heel as “social interests’ play a more important role since democratization began” (Leng 1996:137). This pressure by the citizenry to allow more economic and social interaction points to the ability of individuals and groups to influence larger geo-political and social structures. In this vein, the ways in which cross-Strait economic and social interactions have been handled by both governments coupled with the ways in which individuals have circumvented and influenced these policies have had a profound influence on the level and frequency of both economic and social interactions.

Whether the increase in economic interaction across the Taiwan Straits fostered more social connections or vice-versa is not important to this study. What is important is that both of these sorts of relationships have clearly deepened and increased. What I find interesting is how both the PRC and ROC responded to these deepening social and economic relationships with new policies and media representations to support their political agendas, and the ways that individuals have circumvented some of these policies to affect change.

It is noteworthy that the ways in which the issue of economic interaction was handled by both governments is similar to the ways both responded to deepening social interactions, particularly with regard to cross-Strait marriage. Openly promoting or restricting economic trade across borders is often understood as a tolerable if not acceptable function of government. But when these restrictions and incentives are geared towards influencing whom one chooses to marry, the results can be quite unsettling to those who are involved in these relationships particularly when these unions are in conflict with the government agenda in their place of residence. On the other hand, when their relationships run parallel with government policies and agendas, as in the case of cross-Strait couples living in the PRC, both partners may benefit economically and socially. Further, the ways that individuals affected change in these policies also strikes a familiar chord. To substantiate this point, in the first section of this chapter I briefly discuss cross-Strait trade, primarily Taiwanese investment in the Mainland, and its development in recent years. I then review the key policies that were implemented by both governments to support their economic agendas. Next I examine the ways in which cross-Strait economic interaction has been portrayed in newspapers in the PRC and ROC. In the subsequent section I review these same issues as they relate to cross-Strait marriage. Finally, I make some key comparisons with regard to government policy, media portrayals, individual practice, and policy changes that were implemented as a response to these practices.

4.1 CONTEMPORARY CROSS-STRAITS ECONOMIC INTERACTION

When economists discuss the development of contemporary cross-Strait economic trade they often refer to two distinct periods, the early period, (1980s to the early 1990s) and the “second wave” which began in 1992 (Leng 1996:89-91).

During the early period “the ROC explicitly banned Taiwanese investment on the Mainland” (Steinfeld 2005:232). As a result until the early 1990s, most Taiwanese economic transactions with China “were conducted through smuggling or investments by small enterprises” (Leng 1996:89). One common practice to circumvent these restrictions was to direct funds to the Mainland via shell companies based in third-party countries or territories, Hong Kong being the most common of these (Steinfeld 2005:232). As many of these operations flew under the radar of the ROC and/or PRC there are no reliable economic statistics for this period (Park 1997:187).

The “second wave” began as a result of Deng Xiaoping’s call for economic reform in 1992, which opened the PRC’s domestic markets to foreign firms, coupled with Taiwan’s legalization of economic *interaction* across the Taiwan Strait (Chiu 2000:133, Leng 1996:91). The goal of Taiwan’s new policy, “The roots remain in Taiwan, the leaves stretch over China” (Chiu 2000:133) and the use of the word “interaction” rather than the PRC’s commonly used term “integration” clearly highlight the ROC’s concerns.

These ROC government concerns became more pronounced as many groups, such as the President Group with sales of over US\$3 billion, were comprised of several small Taiwanese firms which were linked together through interlocking shareholders and bloodlines on both sides of the Taiwan straits (Leng 1996:90). In 1991 Evergreen Group, a Taiwanese shipping company won a controversial bid to build large container depots and regional offices in Shanghai and

Xiamen (Leng 1996:91-92). The controversy revolved around the company president's political networks on both sides of the Taiwan Straits which many claimed, resulted in preferential treatment (Leng 1996:92). Significant cross-Strait investments such as these prompted the Taiwanese government in 1993 to establish the Mainland Affairs Committee to oversee and evaluate economic policy with Mainland China (Leng 1996:93). While it was legal for ROC owned businesses to invest in the Mainland, the ROC suggested firms exercise caution and "go slow" (Chiu 2000:133). John Deng, vice chairman of the Taiwan government's Mainland Affairs Committee explains "we don't want to stop them but we urge them to be more careful, to be more restrained...China is China and Taiwan is Taiwan"(Cheng 2001:4). More profits may translate into more economic prosperity for the state, whereas more social integration with the Mainland might pose a challenge to Taiwan's claims of exclusivity.

For some ROC business owners, Taiwan's concerns regarding too much investment on the Mainland coupled with the PRC's desire to encourage these investments through preferential economic policies and the establishment of "economic zones" (discussed below) were a boon for business. Such was the case for Y.C. Yang, the president of Formosa Group who played both governments against each other to secure a lucrative 9.5\$US billion dollar project complete with a five year tax break, to build his factory in Taiwan rather than on the Mainland (Leng 1996:96).⁴²

The establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) on the Mainland was a major factor in attracting foreign investment. Ong explains that the SEZ's were established "to meet the crisis of centralized socialist production and to launch market reforms that produced spaces and conditions radically at odds with those of the rest of the country"(2006:19). Deng Xiaoping saw

⁴² Several years later Yang did open another factory on the Mainland in a "special economic zone" near Shanghai.

these zones as both an “economic bridge” and a “political window” to the outside world (Ong 2006:104). Through the 1980’s and 1990’s these zones were strategically established in coastal cities, for example, “Shenzhen adjacent to Hong Kong, Zhuhai across from Macau, Xiamen across the Strait from Taiwan, and Shantou and Hainan, which have strong communities in Southeast Asia” (Ong 2006:104).

The appeal of the PRC’s SEZs is clear in that it allowed the use of foreign capital, gave priority to corporations entering these zones in the form of permits and other business related processing, and it "gave autonomy to the management council of each economic zone” (Park 1997:195). According to Ong this resulted in “freewheeling entrepreneurial activities and labor exploitation to a degree not allowed in the rest of China” (2006:106). One important consequence of these policies is that migrant workers in these zones are discriminated against and treated like foreigners as they are required to obtain a “border pass, a work permit, and a temporary residence pass to work in the SEZ’s”(Ong 2006:106).

In return, the Central Government expected these zones to “foster closer relations with Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan” (Park 1997:198). Jung-Dong Park (1997), an economist who studies the impact of these zones, concludes that the economic integration these zones achieved with Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao are “the most important result of the special economic zones” (187,198).

Economists argue that while the opportunity for economic gain continues to draw Taiwanese investment to the Mainland, there are also political risks to be considered, “The most serious risks are political and have to do with the unsettled and potentially explosive relations between Mainland China and Taiwan” (Berger 2005:17). Berger explains that, “sometimes anxieties about these risks take the form of urban legends...for example a current one about the

impending collapse of China after the 2008 Olympics” (2005:18). In addition, Berger continues, “there are greater and lesser degrees of Taiwanese pride and nationalism and admiration for, or antagonism to, the PRC” which have a very “significant influence on decisions about locating in China” (2005:18). Other concerns include, intellectual property violations, and “the need for bribes as a regular part of doing business” (Berger 2005:20). In fact, some managers Berger interviewed suggested that “when the costs of bribes are added in, the apparent benefits of low-wage labor are significantly reduced” (2005:20). While in many instances this may be the case, I would argue that the Xiamen area in particular is different in several respects. First, the Xiamen SEZ’s were established with the express intent of drawing *Taiwanese* people and investments to the Mainland. The political stakes are much higher than those SEZ’s adjacent to Hong Kong or Macau. Second, both Xiamen and Taiwan are considered part of the Minnan cultural area⁴³ and there are kinship and cultural ties here that facilitate the practice of establishing and operating a Taiwanese business in the Xiamen area. As Ong describes it, “the formation of the Xiamen centered coastal belt” resulted in a “frenzy of cross-strait economic activity” as “Taiwanese investors, capitalizing on ethnic and linguistic ties forged interpersonal relations (*guanxi*) with local officials who further eased bureaucratic rules on tariffs”(2006:107).⁴⁴

The level of Taiwanese investment on the Mainland in general continues to be difficult to quantify. Smuggling and investment via shell companies did not cease when the ROC legalized trade with the PRC (Steinfeld 2005:232). The level of Taiwanese investment reported by the ROC Ministry of Economic Affairs is significantly lower than that reported by the PRC (Chiu 2000:134, Steinfeld 2005:233). For example, between 1991 and 1998 the PRC reported levels that were 52.64% higher than those reported by the ROC (Chiu 2000:134). Since 1998

⁴³ This will be discussed in detail in the chapter 5.

⁴⁴ Also see Hsing 1998.

finding reliable data has become even more difficult, as the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the United Nations no longer consider Taiwanese investment as foreign investment and rely solely on domestic data provided by the PRC.⁴⁵

On the Mainland, as one would expect, newspapers often lauded the increase in cross-Strait trade and Taiwanese investment in the PRC. Taiwan was the fourth leading investor in Mainland China with Taiwanese capital crossing the \$100 billion mark in 2001 (Cheng 2001:1).⁴⁶ This has prompted some to refer to this phenomenon as the “Taiwan invasion” (Cheng 2001:1). This “invasion”, however is encouraged by the PRC media. In June of 2004, Li Weiyi, a spokesman for the PRC’s Taiwan Affairs Office explained that, “ the central government will continue to encourage Taiwan compatriots to invest in the Chinese Mainland, provide support and service for them, and protect their legitimate rights”(China Daily 2004:1). In March 2007, the China Daily reported that the West Straits Economic Area (est. 2004) in Fujian Province, reported dramatic growth in 2006 in part because of “close relations with Taiwan in geography, blood, culture, and business” (China Daily 2007:2). Huang Xiaojing, the governor of Fujian Province stated that “closer ties with Taiwan” are among the principle goals of this economic area (China Daily 2008:2).

Another factor that plays an important part in encouraging deeper integration between Taiwan and Fujian province in particular are the number of temples on both sides of the Straits dedicated to Mazu, a sea goddess who was reportedly born in Fujian province (Strathern and Stewart 2007). Mazu is said to protect fishermen and their families in addition to those who

⁴⁵ In addition to business investment many Taiwanese tourists visit Mazu (sea goddess) temples in Fujian province and make substantial contributions to the temples which are impossible to quantify (Strathern and Stewart 2004, 2007, Yang 2004).

⁴⁶ This number is questionable because the PC Ministry of Commerce announced that it would no longer report the value of contracted foreign investment deals because their figures were unreliable given that local officials had been inflating these numbers (The US-China business council 2007).

travel on or over (by plane) the sea (Strathern and Stewart 2007:4). Pilgrimages from Taiwan to Mazu temples in Fujian have increased in recent years and are encouraged by the PRC government (Sangren 2000). In fact, a new temple, the Mazu Cultural Park has been established on Meizhou Island to further support these pilgrimages to the PRC (Strathern and Stewart 2007:7). These pilgrimages however, are not simply unidirectional but also flow from the Mainland to Taiwan. For example in April 2010 more than 2000 people from approximately 40 Mazu temples primarily in Fujian province converged on Dajia, Taiwan to witness the beginning of the Mazu tour (Sui 2010:1). As Strathern and Stewart (2007) have noted “ideas about Mazu provide a sensitive barometer of Taiwanese-Mainlander relationships” (8).⁴⁷

Given the economic benefits available particularly to Taiwanese business people who invest in Xiamen it is no mystery why Taiwanese investment has increased so dramatically. Local government officials as discussed above receive bribes and are praised publically by their superiors for facilitating this process. In the course of my fieldwork however, I was struck by how often my Taiwanese informants were approached by Mainland entrepreneurs who wanted to do business with them. The following is one experience I had one evening in Xiamen that illustrates the point.

I accompanied one of my informants to dinner one night for a “business meeting.” A young man of about 24 year-old joined us and ordered some beers (*da baisha*) a local beer made in Xiamen, and several dishes he claimed were the specialty.⁴⁸ After speaking to me in Mandarin for a few minutes he quickly switched to Minnan hua for the remainder of the meal. After dinner he shook hands with the both of us and hurried off with a wide smile on his face. My informant

⁴⁷ See Strathern and Stewart 2003, 2007, and Sangren 2000 for a more detailed analysis of Mazu ritual practices.

⁴⁸ I found it interesting that *Da Baisha* translates to great white shark. Powerful businesspeople are also referred to as sharks.

apologized and explained that some Mainlanders wanted so badly to do business with Taiwanese people that they tend to be rude and pushy. When I asked if the proposal was interesting he shook his head and said “I don’t trust him yet. This happens all the time.”

The opportunity for economic gain is obviously one primary reason for the frequency of these occurrences. Another often overlooked factor is China’s form of neoliberal logic. Neoliberalism is often described as a principle that calls for limited government involvement in the area of economic markets (Ong 2006:3). Within this system individualism and creativity are often lauded as positive traits which can work to improve the economic and social position of the individual (Anagnost 2004, Gordon 1991, Ong 2006, Yan 2003). Gordon has described this as the “entrepreneurialization of the self” (1991:44).

Since Deng Xiaopeng’s call for “market reforms” (*shichang gaige*) and China’s move towards “privatization” (*siyouthua*) profound social and economic changes have followed including the expectation that individuals be self-enterprising rather than rely on government support (Anagnost 2004, Hoffman 2006, Ong 2006:6). The term “population quality” (*renkou suzhi*) which in the 1980’s referred to raising the quality of the masses has shifted to “encompass the minute social distinctions defining a ‘person of quality’”(suzhi) (Anagnost 2004:190).⁴⁹ Successful entrepreneurs then are lauded as being a person of quality, while migrant domestic workers are expected to improve their *suzhi* (quality) by learning from their new environment (Yan 2003:494). College graduates, who in the past could count on government positions, are now expected to attend job fairs, market themselves and plan their own careers (Hoffman 2006). However, China’s form of neoliberal governing is unique in that is strongly linked to “Maoist era

⁴⁹ Yan (2003) has argued that throughout China’s reforms the term (*suzhi di*) low population quality has been regularly invoked in the press and official and public discourse to blame peasants for impeding China’s modernization efforts.

norms and values of serving the country” (Hoffman 2006:552, Ong 2006, 2008, Yan 2003). Hoffman coined the term “patriotic professionalism” to refer to the “a self-enterprising subject who is also decidedly concerned with and has an affinity for, the nation” (Hoffman 2006:552). Therefore while young entrepreneurs regularly approach Taiwanese businesspeople to form partnerships or corporations the reasons go deeper than simply profits. They are also being patriotic entrepreneurs as they contribute to supporting the PRC’s goal of further integrating Taiwan and the PRC.

4.2 CROSS-STRAIT MARRIAGE POLICIES AND DISCOURSE

Just as cross-Strait trade and Taiwanese investment in the PRC has increased in recent years so has the practice of cross-Strait marriage. In June of 2003 the China Daily reported that overseas marriages in Shanghai had increased almost seven fold since 1980, and that of these marriages, 38% are to partners from Taiwan. It was also becoming more commonplace for Mainland women to marry Taiwanese men and immigrate to Taiwan (See Table 2). In November 2007, the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council reported there were approximately 270,000 cross-Strait marriages (Wu 2007:3). This issue quickly became a major cause for concern for the Taiwanese government.

Table 2. Statistics of foreign migrant partners in Taiwan according to household registrations

Year	Marriage Registrations (Couples)	Non-Chinese Foreign Spouses* (Persons)	Chinese Spouses (Persons)
1998	145,976	10,413	15,041
1999	173,209	14,670	21,165
2000	181,642	21,338	26,474
2001	170,515	19,405	32,719
2002	172,655	20,107	33,840
2003	171,483	19,643	34,426
2004	131,453	20,338	10,972
2005	141,140	13,808	14,619
2006	142,669	9,524	13,964
2007	135,041	9,554	14,721
2008	154,866	8,957	12,274

Sources: Data 1998 to 2002 is from the Directorate General of Budget Accounting and Statistics, *Guoqing tongji tongbao* Reports on National Development], 26 August 2003. Data 2003 to 2005 is from the Ministry of the Interior, *Neizheng tongji tongbao* [Reports of Internal Affairs], week 3 2006. Available from:http://www.moi.gov.tw/moi2004/upload/m_38736_6618287037.doc.

*The majority of non-Chinese spouses in Taiwan are from Southeast Asia.

In order to restrict or better control the number of Mainland brides entering Taiwan, in 1996 the government established a limit of 1,080 Mainland brides a year who could legally enter the ROC (A. Huang 1996). But this policy did little to stem the tide of incoming brides, as PRC women entered Taiwan before being married, so two years after the limit was established, in 1998, 15,041 cross-Strait couples were married in Taiwan (Wang 2008:94). By marrying in Taiwan they circumvented the 1,080 restriction which applied to the number of PRC wives who would be granted visas to enter the country.

Another response by the ROC to limit this practice has been to better educate Taiwanese businessmen who travel and work in the PRC, warning them to avoid entering into serious

relationships with Mainland women. In Shih Shu-mei's study she explains that in order to limit the influence of Mainland Chinese women on Taiwanese men the Taiwan media "calls for a controlled exercise of financial power to better manipulate the women" (Shih 1999:289). This discourse is further demonstrated by the popularity of Chen Pin's book, *Emigrating to Shanghai* in which he warns Taiwanese businessmen about these dangerous women, and advises them to be careful in their dealings with them as he describes how these women and their families prey on Taiwanese businessmen primarily for financial gain (Pin 2000).

As the number of Mainland and foreign brides increased, in 2002, the Taiwan government officially changed its policy regarding foreign spouses from one of exclusion, to one of inclusion (Toyota 2008:6, Wang 2008:97). While this did grant marriage migrants access to public health coverage and easier access to the job market, subsequent government studies continued to reinforce the idea that "these immigrants will bring social problems" (Wang 2008:97-98).⁵⁰ For example, in 2003 the Ministry of the Interior conducted a survey and concluded the following,

Many problems arise when the nationals marry foreigners and Mainlanders. For instance, it could produce many problems because of fragile love marriage, disadvantaged economic situation, weak support networks and low social status. These problems result in poor adaptation and family problems. Fertility and health problems affect population quality. Low education problems make it hard to cultivate children. When there is domestic violence, there are no social support networks. Other problems include falsified marriages and illegal migration (MOI 2004:40).

⁵⁰ Chinese spouses can only apply for residency after being married for two years or having children. They cannot work without residency status (Toyota 2008:6).

According to Wang and Belanger however, most of these conclusions lack the evidence to back them up as the survey did not ask about domestic violence, falsified marriages, illegal migration or social networks (2008:98). It did however, manage to portray foreign and Mainland brides as deficiently educated women of low social status who are a threat to Taiwan's "population quality" (*renkou suzhi*).

The term "population quality" has a somewhat different meaning than in the PRC, and is a key component of Taiwan's immigration policy (Wang 2008:96). In 1992 the Population Policy Committee passed a document entitled "population Policy Guiding Principles" (*Zhonghuaminguo Renkou Zhengce Gangling*) which in Chapter 3 defines those that threaten Taiwan's population quality (Executive Yuan 1992). Those of "low quality" were described as "genetically deficient, infected and mentally ill people and elderly disabled and low income people" (Article 15). Although in 2006 the "population quality" chapter was deleted, the term "population quality" was retained in the preface and is still an important factor with regard to immigration (Wang 2008:96).

It is important here to clarify that in Taiwan both Mainland brides and foreign brides are considered a threat to Taiwan but often in different ways. The term "foreign bride" in Taiwan is ideologically charged as it refers to brides from less developed countries and "reflects the discrimination against Third World women (Hsia 2009:27).⁵¹ Foreign brides and their children are considered a threat to Taiwan's "population quality" (Hsia 2009:31). Such discrimination is often reflected through government policy and rhetoric. For example, in July 2004 the Taiwanese

⁵¹ Foreign brides refer primarily to brides from Southeast Asia, In 2008 the Ministry of the Interior reported the following percentages: Vietnam (64.1%), Indonesia (20.7%), Thailand (6.7%), the Philippines (5%) and Cambodia (3.5%), (Ministry of the Interior, 2008).

Deputy Minister of Education made an appeal to foreign brides to “not give birth to so many babies”, because of their “low quality” while referring to their Taiwanese spouses in extremely negative terms stating that “everyone knows well who marries foreign brides”(China Times Daily 2004). These views are even mirrored by Professor Lin Wan-I a member of National Taiwan University’s Social Work Department who explained;

A third of all foreign brides under the age of 20 tend to be physically, emotionally and socially immature. They are on average three to five years behind their Taiwan counterparts educationally. Not only is their own competitive advantage low, it adversely affects the rearing of their children and creates the problem of continued weak competitiveness for the next generation (Chang 2003:7).

In 2006 a Taiwanese legislator claimed that the United States’ use of Agent Orange in Vietnam had infected many Vietnamese women (United Daily 2006). As a result, “they give birth to a lot of handicapped babies” (United Daily 2006). Therefore Vietnamese brides in Taiwan “could negatively affect Taiwan’s next generation” (United Daily 2006).

In 2003 there was “a clear rising trend in the number of domestic violence cases reported by foreign brides” (Chang 2003:2). Further, “even foreign brides who have legal residence must return home if they get divorced, without the possibility of taking their children with them” (Chang 2003:4). Within this system, foreign women who attempted to escape spousal abuse often ended up losing their children. Chang explains that “although many foreign brides found themselves in unhappy marriages, they would grin and bear it for the sake of the children and become one of the hidden number of battered women” (2003:4).

4.3 WIFE.ORG

While Chang referred specifically to foreign brides with regard to domestic abuse, Mainland brides are also subject to similar treatment. A valuable resource for those in this situation is the “New Mainland Bride Spouse Forum” (www.wife.org.tw) an online support site based in Taiwan for Mainland brides. To access the site new users must agree to three primary rules.

- 1) Talk about your impressions after arriving in Taiwan
- 2) This site is in no way to question or damage the unity of the Nation.
- 3) This site is not to be used to share state secrets, or damage the security of the Nation.

Many of the postings on the site are from Mainland brides in Taiwan who are looking for *Lao Xiang* (people from their hometown or province) with whom they can connect. Many exchange QQ⁵² addresses or phone numbers. For example, one user from Fuzhou asked if there was anyone from her hometown in Taiwan. She received several contact numbers/e-mail addresses, QQ addresses.

Others are from Mainland women who plan to marry and move to Taiwan and are concerned about the treatment of Mainland brides primarily by their in-laws. One posting by Mrs. Wang asks “Why do Taiwanese mother-in laws usually treat Mainland brides poorly and have dirty homes. They remind me of my former mother-in law. How come when I visit my

⁵² QQ is a popular networking site in China and Taiwan that is similar to Facebook.

mother she cooks for me and takes care of me but my old Taiwanese mother-in law didn't do anything?"

The responses to this post are below.

Ming: It has to do with economic status.

Cheng: My mother-in-law is very nice to me and treats me well. Before we married my husband told her to treat me well or he would fight with her.

Xie: My mother-in-law treats me well. When my husband and I fight she always takes my side. My first husband refused to get air conditioning in the summer when I was pregnant. He said "my mother doesn't even have air conditioning in her room". I divorced him.

Ting: You are lucky to have a good Mother in law there aren't that many in Taiwan

Xie: If you are weak people will take advantage of you. You should be strong.

Ting: She will see how strong I can be.

Xiu: My mother-in-law treats me well. She buys me clothes and snacks. I talked with her before moving to Taiwan.

This site works as a conduit in which Mainland brides can create a virtual support network upon which many women rely for companionship and advice. Many exchange addresses, phone numbers and e-mails which allow these connections to develop further as some later meet in person. A bride from Guanxi province who had been living in Taiwan for six years commented on how happy she was to have recently located the site. Most commented on how helpful the site was and were very excited to make such connections. Many shared information about resources that were available in Taiwan. One posting explained the Foreign Spouse Center

in Xingzhu was very helpful as it offers free classes in parenting and many Mainland brides volunteer their time to help out at the center. Clearly this site is a valuable resource for Mainland brides, particularly those that find themselves in isolated violent situations.

A clear example is an internet posting, from May 2010 entitled, “My Four Years of Pain” which appeared on the site. The poster, Mrs. Ma explained that her husband spends a great deal of time gambling and recently grabbed her by the hair and threw her out of the house telling her to leave Taiwan. She is worried that if she calls the police they might send her back to the Mainland without her children. She also explains that her in-laws won’t allow her to make friends or for that matter speak to anyone outside of the family, including her neighbors. She feels trapped and explains that she can’t go home because her parents on the Mainland do not have the means to support her two children. She is considering suicide.

The first few responses from those on the site were as follows.

- 1) Call the police immediately

- 2) Don’t do stupid things. My first year in Taiwan was hard and I considered suicide but found that if I communicated with my husband things improved. I used to cry at night while my husband was asleep. Finally I woke him up and told him how I felt and things have improved.

- 3) Don’t commit suicide because that would make your husband happy.

- 4) You should leave your gambling, violent husband.

- 5) Call 113 the women and children protection hotline.
- 6) Call the police. Don't die.
- 7) Buy a plane ticket and bring your children to the Mainland with you. Once you arrive Apply for a visa it is very easy to get. Think of your children. Don't leave them with a gambling father. At the very worst we can help you smuggle your children back to the Mainland.
- 8) Leave if you don't love him. Take the children with you.
- 9) Be strong for the sake of the children.
- 10) If your husband hurts you go to the police.

Many of the responders also offered their contact information. Sites like these are invaluable to Mainland brides whether they are in such dire straits as Mrs. Ma or those who just want to connect with a *Liao Xiang*.

While most responders implored Mrs. Ma to take her children with her if she leaves, in many cases this is simply not possible, resulting in some Mainland women leaving their children behind. These women are commonly referred to as "runaway brides" in Taiwan, a moniker that

is still commonly used today.⁵³ The following quote from a conversation I had with a Taiwanese professor of sociology demonstrates that such discourse involving PRC women becoming runaway brides is also prevalent in academic circles.

“They (Mainland brides) just run away and disappear. They leave their children behind and go back to the Mainland. They just don’t care.”

Many scholars however have addressed the issue more critically and in recent years the Mainland or foreign bride phenomenon in Taiwan has been the subject of many scholarly works. Hsiao-Chuan Hsia has been a strong advocate for the rights of foreign brides in Taiwan. Her academic publications challenge the overwhelmingly negative portrayal of brides from Southeast Asia in the Taiwan media by demonstrating how “narrative strategies...fabricated statistics...and collaboration with governmental agencies” work to construct “the foreign bride phenomenon as a social problem”(Hsia 2007:55).⁵⁴ In this vein, the work of Wang and Belanger points out the ways in which the Taiwanese state in pursuing the integration of foreign brides simultaneously works to “further stigmatize these women, discriminate against them, and therefore create an ‘Other’”(2008:91). They argue that “differential legal and social citizenship” places foreign brides at the “bottom of the social hierarchy in Taiwanese society” (Wang and Belanger 2008:91).⁵⁵

⁵³ Lieba Faier (2008) has examined the common usage of this term to describe Filipina brides who had married Japanese men and eventually “run away.”

⁵⁴ In addition Hsia has worked at the community level establishing language and cultural programs for foreign brides and worked to establish a national TransAsiaSisters Association (TASAT) which works to reform immigration policies and change the public perception of foreign brides. (See Hsia 2005, 2006)

⁵⁵ For a detailed discussion of this type of cultural racism which works to erase social differences while simultaneously highlighting and maintaining these differences to justify the current social hierarchy. see Larson 2003.

Toyota has described how cross-border marriages by their very “existence challenge the state and the boundaries of its sovereignty” (2008:3). In the case of Taiwan, wherein its sovereignty is not recognized by much of the international community the issue of cross-Strait marriage is often regarded as a threat to the legitimacy of Taiwan’s independence. In a recent study of the interview process that Mainland brides and their husbands must undergo at the airport after arriving in Taiwan, Sara Friedman demonstrates how these interviews “perform Taiwan’s desired status as a modern sovereign state” (2010:180). This interview process which is meant to determine which marriages are authentic argues Friedman, “disciplines cross-Strait intimacy through imposing specific truth demands on cross-Strait couples” and also “(re)produces Taiwanese sovereignty” (2010:176).

4.4 MAINLAND BRIDES AND DESPERATE HUSBANDS

While both foreign (non PRC) and Mainland brides are considered a threat to Taiwan’s population quality, state building processes and issues of sovereignty have resulted in Mainland brides being portrayed as posing a somewhat of a different kind of threat to Taiwan than foreign brides. Such differences are reflected in ROC government policies and discourse. In November of 2004 the Taiwan Ministry of the Interior began enforcing a new law that made advertisements involving cross-strait matchmaking illegal (Yiu 2004:2). The law states that anyone engaged in “the ad broadcast or publication or any other promotion activity that is contrary to the public order or good morals will face a fine of on less than NT\$100,000” (Yiu 2004:1-2). While matchmaking agencies in general are legal, the promotion of these activities specifically in regards to the Mainland is a crime. The article reiterates that “matchmaking ads for people from

countries other than the PRC however are not illegal” (Yiu 2004:2). The use of the phrases “public order” and “good morals” clearly devalues any relationships that might result from this practice and questions the patriotism of Taiwan citizens who take part in it.

One year later, however, in 2005, one in five newlywed couples in Taiwan involved a foreign spouse; the overwhelming majority of women were Mainland brides (Wang 2008:94). During that year 14,619 cross-Strait couples were married in Taiwan (Ministry of the Interior 2006). In fact the only year that showed a marked decline in these marriages was in 2004 when a more strict interview process was implemented at the airport, and the majority of brides and brides to be were prevented from entering Taiwan (Wang 2008:104). This airport deterrent too was only temporarily successful as the following year the number of cross-Strait marriages in Taiwan increased by almost 4000. As of 2008 there were 411,315 registered foreign spouses in Taiwan, 63.32% (260,445), were Mainland brides (Ministry of the Interior, 2008). More recently, in October 2009 the ROC’s Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) reported that there were over 170,000 Mainland brides living on Taiwan. During the same period the Taipei Times claimed the unofficial total was closer to 270,000, alluding to the fact that many of these marriages are not recognized by the ROC government.

Given the amount of negative press that Mainland brides receive in the Taiwanese media throughout this period, the growing number of these marriages seems even more striking. For example, an article entitled “A Match Made in Hell” which appeared in the Taipei Times warns that “there may be spies among these Chinese women” who “may engage in sabotage and instigation” (Taipei Times 2003:8). Further, the article claims that Mainland women who have moved to Taiwan bring with them “numerous social and law enforcement problems such as drug trafficking, drug abuse, contagious diseases and kidnappings” (Taipei Times 2003:8). Another

article, “Marriage for Love or Money?” claims that “Chinese women, who come to Taiwan legally via marrying a Taiwanese man, are found to be making money through prostitution” (Lin 2002:1).

In 2003 Taiwan’s Council of Labor Affairs eased its regulations regarding the employment of “foreign” spouses, but these new regulations did not include Mainland brides (Wang 2008:98). In recent years Mainland brides have begun staging rallies in Taipei to demand better treatment (BBC Oct. 29, 2009:2). Their primary demands included reducing the wait time for a Taiwanese identification card from six to four years (the same as for foreign brides), and recognition of PRC degrees and licenses (BBC Oct, 29 2009:2). Although the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) is considering amending the law with regard to degrees and licenses, it maintains that the six year waiting period is not discriminatory (BBC Oct, 29, 2009:2). At the time of this writing the policy remains unchanged.

Although foreign brides and Mainland brides are often considered threats to Taiwan albeit for different reasons, the Taiwanese men who marry them tend to be portrayed in a more generalized way. Although Hsia states that Taiwanese men who marry foreign brides are “not viewed or imagined as a threat to population quality,” they are most often referred to in quite negative terms (2009:31). For example, while Hsia’s article focuses on discrimination against foreign brides who are often portrayed as undereducated and desperate, she refers to their Taiwanese husbands as “lower class Taiwanese men”, “peasants” “low-skilled” and “extremely disadvantaged in Taiwan’s domestic marriage market”(Hsia 2009:27, 28, 31). Further, while Hsia’s article reports that “forty percent of the Taiwanese husbands are working class”, the sentence that follows begins, “since the Taiwanese husbands are mostly working class” (Hsia 2009:28). I point this out not to criticize Hsia, as her work in improving public awareness about

discriminatory policies and rhetoric with regard to foreign brides is has done much to improve their lives in Taiwan. Rather, I want to emphasize the fact that the rhetoric regarding Taiwanese men who marry foreign and for that matter Mainland brides is so pervasive that even those who are sensitive to such broad characterizations can find themselves perpetuating certain stereotypes. Wang and Belanger (2008) on the other hand, rightly state that discussions about the quality of Taiwan's population often refer to migrant brides *and* their Taiwanese husbands as low class (Wang 2008:92).

Jones and Shen's (2008) study of the factors that have contributed to the increase in transnational marriage in East Asian offers further evidence as to why such characterizations persist. They divide such marriages into two primary types. The first involves men from more prosperous regions who are "less marketable" as potential husbands in the local area because they are "poorer less educated, and/or reside in rural areas" and therefore seek out brides from less prosperous regions (Jones and Shen 2008:15). The second type is related to increased mobility of people across borders but is less targeted (Jones and Shen 2008). This includes those who cross borders for business, tourism, international study or to find work and do so without the express purpose of finding a marriage partner (Jones and Shen 2008:15).

As the first type is responsible for much of the increase in cross-border marriage in East Asia much of the academic literature regarding transnational, international or cross-border marriage focuses on the commodification, or commercialization of marriage in which men who have been unsuccessful in domestic marriage markets seek out brides from poorer regions, who cannot afford to be as "choosy" as local women (Jones and Shen 2008:15). Many of these men use some type of mediating agency such as marriage brokers, introduction agencies.

Local and national media outlets in Taiwan however, as discussed earlier, tend to lump these two marriage patterns into one generalized model which broadly defines cross-Strait couples in Taiwan as comprised of desperate unmarriageable men and poor, economically motivated women. I argue that although marriages that come about as a result of tourism, business or international study are not the dominant form of marriage they are grossly underrepresented in both the media and in academic studies. This tendency to equate cross-Strait marriage and for that matter cross-border marriage as a result of an active targeted search for a suitable marriage partner, overemphasizes economic factors while ignoring or glossing over emotional attachments. While such characterizations exist in many parts of the globe, Taiwan's uncertain status as a sovereign state exacerbates the issue as such couples are perceived as a threat to Taiwan itself.

On the Mainland side however, cross-Strait couples are treated quite differently. For those women who stay on the Mainland and marry Taiwanese men the representation and experience appears to be markedly different. Having a husband from Taiwan can be a source of social capital that can improve women's status rather than diminish it. Taiwan businessmen who move to the Mainland and marry Mainland women are supported by the PRC's government policy and are seldom mentioned in negative terms in the media. Taiwanese managers and business owners are in a stronger economic position on the Mainland in part, because of the influence of the Special Economic Zones and because Taiwan currency is worth considerably more in the PRC (Shen 2008:61). Many enjoy "a lifestyle and prestige that they would often be unable to afford in Taiwan" (Shen 2008:61). Also in part because of the influence of Taiwan popular culture in China many are considered by many to be more forward minded than

Mainland Chinese men. This is reflected in a comment from Mei regarding local married couples in Xiamen, her hometown.

Women in Xiamen are too easily controlled. The men are in charge here. Women don't argue with their husbands. They do whatever the man wants to do. The men here yell at their wives and beat them if they don't listen. At home the woman has to cook, but usually doesn't eat with her husband. She eats in the kitchen. Ang and I are not like that.

Clearly marrying a Taiwanese businessman can lead to upward social mobility, but it also has its share of problems, a topic that will be examined more deeply in the following chapter. For those who are not openly "separatists" the PRC grants them access to a profitable market, while those who openly support Taiwan's independence from the PRC are denied this opportunity (China Daily 2004 June 18:1). PRC policies facilitate economic and social relationships with Taiwan and highlight sameness rather than difference to draw businessmen and women to the Mainland promoting greater social and economic interaction and resulting in more cross-Strait marriages.

As discussed above, political relations between the Mainland and Taiwan have a profound effect on the lives of those involved in cross-Strait intimate relationships. Marriage, as Warner (1999) claims is clearly not benign but works to connect intimate desires with state agendas. The governments of both the PRC and ROC employ policy and media discourses to cajole citizens to support their oft conflicting government agendas, in part, by influencing the

desires of those on both sides of the Taiwan straits. Such policies and discourses however, can in some cases result in unintended practices which can, in turn, influence government policies.

4.5 CONCLUSION

It seems clear that Taiwan's shifts in economic and social policies were, in part, a reaction to the creative ways in which companies and individuals circumvented these restrictions. In the case of cross-Strait trade, smuggling and the use of third-party countries or territories to direct funds to the Mainland made these restrictions so porous that they became almost obsolete. The PRC's special economic zones granted Taiwanese businesses access to a cheap labor force, less government oversight, and access to the huge Mainland market effectively drawing Taiwanese investment and people to the Mainland, despite pervasive media discourse in Taiwan warning of the dangers of this practice. After the ROC legalized trade with the Mainland, entrepreneurs had gained the leverage they needed to play each government against each other to secure more lucrative deals and government subsidies. Eventually, as was the case with Y.C. Yang, some opened factories and businesses in both sites.

Similarly, the ROC's policies meant to limit the number of cross-Strait marriages through strict immigration policies and negative portrayals of Mainland women and their Taiwanese husbands, were in some cases circumvented through smuggling (Mainland women into Taiwan), forged travel documents, and other means. As a result of such practices, just as the level of Taiwanese investment in the Mainland is impossible to quantify so are the number of cross-Strait couples both in Taiwan and on the Mainland. In trying to limit the amount of interaction across the Taiwan Straits through the establishment of new policies Taiwanese businesspeople found a

way to circumvent these regulations. So too have cross-Strait couples. Arguably, one of the unforeseen outcomes of these policies is the practice of Taiwanese men migrating to the PRC and setting up households with their Mainland wives.

In November 2007 the China Daily reported that there are currently “about 270,000 cross-Strait marriages” and that “nearly 400,000 Taiwanese people currently live on the Mainland” (China Daily 2007:2). The issue of why some cross-Strait couples choose to reside on the Mainland came up in my interviews with a cross-Strait couple currently living in the PRC. I asked if they would ever consider living in Taiwan. The PRC wife answered:

Why would I want to do that (laughing)? We have a good life here. Women from the Mainland are treated so poorly there. Even women from Hong Kong aren't treated well. We visit each year, to see my husband's parents. The environment is nice. But we would never live there.

If her comments are any indication, Taiwan's policies with regard to cross-Strait economic and social interaction may have created an environment that encourages more Taiwanese men to migrate to the PRC and set up businesses and form families (both officially and unofficially) on the Mainland.

In 2003, 34,426 cross-Strait couples registered for marriage in Taiwan (see table 2). The following year that number dropped significantly to 10,972 as a result of establishment of the interview system discussed above (Friedman 2010:171). During this same period, the number of registered cross-Strait marriages on the Mainland was 32,300 in 2003, and rose to 37,178 in 2004. The same year, 90.9% of those who underwent the interview process at Taoyuan airport

were granted visas (Friedman 2010:178).⁵⁶ If the overwhelming majority of those interviewed were granted visas how then can we account for the significant drop in the number of cross-Strait marriage registrations in Taiwan in 2004? Perhaps anxieties regarding the interview process prompted more couples to reconsider registering for marriage in Taiwan. The increase in such marriage registrations during the same period on the Mainland could be the result of some of these couples choosing to settle on the Mainland rather than in Taiwan. Perhaps more cross-Strait couples had decided that given the ROC's immigration policies coupled with the negative discourses about them in Taiwan, they were better served staying on the Mainland. If so, Taiwan's protective policies may have had unintended consequences.

Table 3. Cross-Strait Marriage Registrations in Taiwan and the PRC

Year	Cross-Strait Marriage Registrations, Taiwan*	Cross-Strait Marriage Registrations, PRC**
2003	34,426	32,300
2004	10,972	37,178
2005	14,619	22,315 ⁵⁷
2006	13,968	19,629
2007	14,721	15,801
2008	12,274 ⁵⁸	13,902

*Data from the Ministry of the Interior (*Neizheng tonji tongbao*) [reports on international affairs], (2009).

**Data from China Statistical Yearbook 2003-2009.

⁵⁶ Taoyuan airport is Taiwan's primary international airport.

⁵⁷ Part of the reason for this drop in marriages on the Mainland could be attributed to the fact that 2005, the year of the rooster" is also considered a "widow year" and is known as a very unlucky year to get married. See "Chinese avoid weddings in Year of Rooster" in China Daily, January 5th 2005.

⁵⁸ Friedman argues that the decrease in cross-Strait marriages in Taiwan in 2008 points to the "marital consequences of Taiwan's economic decline" (Friedman 2010:171). This may also account for the decline in cross-Strait marriages in the PRC during the same period.

Given the PRC's policies with regard to Taiwanese businesspeople investing and residing on the Mainland it comes as no surprise that many experience upward economic status. Further, those that marry and settle on the Mainland do not fit into the category of *diao cha men*. Rather than leaving their natal families and homes they are thought of as *returning* to the motherland, the home of their ancestors—a practice that arguably does not conflict with the tenants of filial piety. Given this, we would expect their social location to improve in the PRC just as their economic situation does in many cases. But the situation is much more complex as it relates to a variety of factors including local histories and perceptions, individual personality and initiative, and the scale of analysis.

5.0 TRANSNATIONAL BUSINESS CLASS: TAIWANESE MIGRANTS AND SOCIAL LOCATIONS

“Class is not a thing or set of characteristics to be defined but a matter of practice and process. Class is not prior to or outside of discourse and performance but an emergent cultural project wherein people attempt to speak and act themselves—and their new socioeconomic existence—into cultural reality or coherence”

Mark Liechty (2005:3)

In this chapter I discuss the various social locations (Mahler and Pessar 2001) that Taiwanese men occupy in the PRC. I draw on interviews carried out in Xiamen, Shanghai and Zhenjiang, with local residents and Taiwanese businessmen living on the Mainland. The Taiwanese businessmen I interviewed were economically privileged. Given this, I found considerable variation with regard to their social locations. I also monitored a chat room based in the PRC (onlylady.com) in which there was a discussion about their impressions of Taiwanese men living on the Mainland. This chapter points to non-economic factors that influence migrants' social locations. These include public perceptions and discourse and individual initiative, imagination and personality.

The first half of this chapter focuses on Mainland Chinese public discourses about Taiwanese migrants. I begin with some PRC women's comments about Taiwanese men on an internet chat room. Then I focus on the various ways that local residents of Shanghai, Zhenjiang, and Xiamen talk about Taiwanese migrants. While there are some common themes, there are also marked differences which are related to historical and contemporary lived experiences in each locality. As the bulk of this dissertation is based on research carried out in Xiamen, I emphasize Xiamen residents' unique discourses with regard to Taiwanese people and culture which simultaneously speaks to local cultural cohesiveness and individual difference.

Next I discuss local and national media characterizations of Huang Jinshan, the founder of the Taiwan Folk Culture Park in Xiamen, as a model Taiwanese businessman. Such characterizations work to recast the image of Taiwanese businessmen as loyal, hardworking, honest employers who hold their employees in high regard. This also works to re-enforce the party line I so often heard in the course of my fieldwork, that is, "They [Taiwanese] are just like us".

The second part of this chapter examines these issues from the perspective of Taiwanese migrants I interviewed in Xiamen. The focus is on how they view themselves in relation to the local population, and their lived experiences in Xiamen. Preferential policies enacted by the PRC, coupled with the fact that many Taiwanese people (like foreigners) are paid at a "special expatriate rate" clearly give many Taiwanese businesspeople a distinct economic advantage in the PRC (Shen 2008:61). However, economic advantage does not always result in upward mobility with regard to their social location.⁵⁹ I argue that despite their economic advantages my

⁵⁹ Ong's 1999 study of wealthy Chinese migrants in California found that their economic advantage did not necessarily translate to high social status. This was primarily because of discourse involving citizenship and ethnic

primary informants occupied varying social locations in the PRC, which were partly related to their personality traits. Those who had the ability to develop social relationships at the local level adapted to life on the Mainland more easily than those who isolated themselves or tended to only interact with other Taiwanese migrants. Those Taiwanese and other foreign men who marry a Mainland woman and set up a household in her hometown can (depending upon their personalities) build social relationships more easily. These social relationships at the local level are of primary importance in that they allow the migrant better access to the host society, which can have a profound effect on the migrants' experiences abroad. In some cases, these relationships offer migrants the social space in which to reconfigure or shift their identities, which in turn influence their social location. My approach is multi-scaled, meaning that I examine how these social locations shift in relation to place and social space. Of primary importance are the migrants' responses to these shifts, which highlight their willingness and ability to reconfigure their sense of self in relation to place. Further, the differing ways that they reinforce or contest local stereotypes about themselves highlight the importance of individual personality and practice and how these factors intersect with their social locations.

5.1 ONLYLADY.COM

This section is based on an internet chat room site (<http://bbs.onlylady.com/thread-345534-1-1.html>) in which respondents from various areas on the Mainland responded to the question

stratification in the United States. Ethnicity however, is not a distinguishing factor for Taiwanese migrants in the PRC, specifically within the Minnan cultural area. See also Bourdieu 1984.

“What do you ladies think about marrying a Taiwanese man?” which was posted in 2008. The comments are listed below.

Comment 1: I have been dating a Taiwanese man for half a year. To be honest with you, I feel that sometimes a Taiwanese has very weird ideas. I don't know if you share the same feelings with me.

Comment 2: I have two mistresses [er nai] living next to me. Their boyfriends are from Taiwan. There are many cases like that in Xiamen.

Comment 3: As seen from the only one I interacted with, Taiwanese men are male chauvinists. It is hard to get along with the mother-in-law. I recommend that you should consider the relationship from all perspectives.

Comment 4: I watched a TV program, which says: if a Taiwanese woman marries a Taiwanese man, both of their families are happy. The man's family will treat the woman as a daughter. If the woman is not from Taiwan, she and mother-in-law are adversaries.

Comment 5: Different regions will have cultural differences.

Comment 6: Fewer women married Taiwanese men, more women were kept as mistresses.

Comment 7: I know one Taiwanese man. He is weird.

Comment 8: I have a good friend who is Taiwanese. His girlfriend is from my hometown. He is conscientious, responsible, and male chauvinistic. They are about to get married in two months. The man's parents will pay for their new house. He is very gentleman-like, well-educated. We often have discussions about Confucianism, Li Bai and Du Fu, and we became good friends.

Comment 9: They are bumpkins, they all have bias against the China Mainland.

Comment 10: I have known several Taiwanese men. They are biased against the China Mainland.

Comment 11: It varies with people.

Comment 12: I know quite a few friends from Taiwan and Macau. I once interacted with a Taiwanese guy. We are now still friends and contact each other sometimes. Talking about my impression of Taiwanese men around me, they talk gently, relatively modest, and also pay attention to their image. They are strong individuals and they are independent. They are heavily influenced by Western culture, which was different from people from the Mainland. Their pressure of lives in their hometown are much bigger than ours, therefore, students from Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan take money seriously. They have much stronger consciousness to make money than people from the Mainland.

Comment 13: They are scheming too much. They will not do anything out of line. They will not talk much profanity. But they are not profound either. I just do not think they are what they appear to be.

The variability of these comments reflects some of the differing opinions about Taiwanese men on the Mainland. The bulk of comments however, seem to agree that Taiwanese men are for various reasons considered “different”, whether it because they are perceived as “biased against the China Mainland,” “weird,” “scheming,” “bumpkins,” or “male chauvinists.” While most of these comments seem to be based on personal experiences these perceptions of Taiwanese men may also be influenced by group identity at the local level, a subject discussed below.

5.2 LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

Harold Isaacs has argued that basic group identity is usually “dressed in national colors” (1975:171). Appadurai, on the other hand, predicts the demise of the nation-state, in part because “communities of sentiment” are formed through the “collective experiences of the mass media” which are not grounded in a particular geographic place (1996:8). Scholars have also lamented that in the case of modern globalization, or “hypermodernity” (Foster 1999)⁶⁰ “the local and the global are often indefinable and indistinct” (Grewal and Kaplan 1994:11) and that “the spatial dimensions of social life are...no longer dominated by presence” (Giddens 1990:18). They are arguing, in other words, that geographic places and social life at the local level may not be as important as in the past, given the influence of modern globalization and the relative ease in which images, information, people and goods move around the world. In the course of my research, however, I found that group identity at the local level is grounded in unique local histories, lived experiences and discourse. While local identity is influenced by global and national factors it should not be viewed as necessarily subsumed or dominated by national *or* global influences. Further, local identities in some settings may become more cohesive in response to global influences. One way that these local identities are manifested in everyday practice is in the ways that individuals interact and talk about “others.” Of chief concern in this section are the differing ways various local populations, in Shanghai and Zhenjiang, talk about Taiwanese migrants and how these discourses influence these migrants’ social locations.

I begin with an introduction to Shanghai and Zhenjiang followed by examples of how residents talk about Taiwanese migrants who reside in these cities. In the next section I focus

⁶⁰ Foster argues that hypermodernity brings about significantly accelerates time and space and works to dissolve traditional boundaries.

specifically on Xiamen, highlighting its unique historical and contemporary interactions with Taiwan, and how these factors frame the ways that local residents talk about Taiwanese men who have migrated to the area.

5.2.1 SHANGHAI BAZI: WEALTHY BUMPKINS

Shanghai is known as China's most cosmopolitan city. It has long been considered China's financial hub and one of China's most fashionable cities. Some refer to Shanghai as the elder brother of Beijing, which is meant to imply that without Shanghai's support Beijing could not prosper. Most Shanghainese speak Shanghai dialect, which is incomprehensible to most from other areas of China.⁶¹ Among other things this dialect is known for its colorful language, particularly when pointing out the faults of others. The locals I spoke to in Shanghai were fiercely proud of their city and local culture.

Mrs. Shi is a retired textile worker. She is 65 and lives in Shanghai with her daughter (Ming), Ming's husband, and their daughter. She once explained to me that her elder daughter (Chengcheng) was offered a substantial promotion in a major newspaper that hinged on her relocating to the main office in Beijing. Mrs. Shi advised her to turn down the offer in spite of the significant salary increase because "Shanghai is the best place to live in the world. Beijing can't compete." Her daughter concurred and still lives in Shanghai.

While in Shanghai I asked Ms. Lee, a well-dressed outspoken businesswoman who grew up in the city, if she had any experiences with Taiwanese businessmen. When Ms. Lee was attending graduate school she worked for a Taiwanese businessman in a small office typing up

⁶¹ One exception is the Suzhou area where the local dialect is somewhat similar to Shanghainese.

memos and answering phones. She said that her boss acted like he had just migrated from the country. “He had money but no manners and no taste,” she said. He had a lot of girlfriends but they all just wanted his money. She explained that in Shanghai, Taiwanese men like this were most often referred to as *bazi* (a term in Shanghai dialect meaning country bumpkins). She had a very low opinion of her previous employer explaining that he would often lose his temper and throw things (phones and teacups) around the room when upset. She said a large part of her time was spent cleaning up after his tantrums. I asked her if she had any other experiences with Taiwanese men and she said that she had not. “They live in their own little communities.” She later commented on how ridiculous they all look, walking proudly through the malls buying whatever their mistresses want. “Usually the girls are taller than them and very well dressed” she said laughing, “and these guys wear clothes that are so ugly.” In this case, Ms. Lee’s opinion didn’t seem to be tied to nationality but rather urban and rural differences associated with class. In fact, the term *bazi* is most often used to describe migrants who move from rural areas in China to Shanghai.

5.2.2 ZHENJIANG: A SITE OF ABANDONMENT

Zhenjiang a city situated just south of the Yangzi River in Jiangsu province is a relatively small city. Zhenjiang has long been famous for the quality of its vinegar, and Jin Shan Temple, where many Chinese come to pay their respects to the gods and ask for good fortune in the upcoming year. In recent years it has also become known by some, as a site of abandonment.

The establishment of special economic zones in and near Zhenjiang resulted in business people from primarily Hong Kong and Taiwan establishing manufacturing plants in the area, which drew workers from the surrounding areas. One of these workers was Shao Li, who quickly

found a promising job in a Taiwanese owned plant. Li's new job included the use of a two bedroom apartment, free transportation to work each day and the possibility of a promotion to a management position. Five years later because of his dedication and hard work he was promoted to a low-level management position. The first time I visited Li in 2006 things were no longer looking so rosy.

As my taxi entered Li's neighborhood the asphalt street turned onto an unpaved pothole covered road. Empty unfinished dust covered buildings lined the streets. The street was filled with people making their way to hawkers selling legs of pork, fried bread and other foodstuffs covered with flies. The noise was deafening as motorcycles sped down the street leaving a cloud of blue exhaust behind them adding to the constant layer of dust that hung over the neighborhood. My initial impression was that this resembled a rural village situated within a city. Li's apartment was in a housing complex in which the employees of the plant lived with their families. While it was only a few years old it looked much older and was in need of repair. A small play area was situated in between two rectangular apartment buildings where mothers and grandmothers played with children. Across the road was a second complex, where there was a preschool had been built for the employee's children. Li's apartment, like many in this part of China was in a cement building with no heat. The apartment was large by Chinese standards, but most of the appliances did not work. He had running water, but no hot water. He had a kitchen, but no working stove.

During my month long stay with Li, his wife, and their four-year-old daughter, they often spoke of their frustrations. Each morning, a company bus arrived to take Li to the factory outside of town. It was not uncommon for Li to be gone for days at a time. When his shift was over the bus would take him home. If his boss required him to stay at work for several days at a time, he

would not be allowed to board the bus. During these periods he slept at his desk and ate what he could. There was no overtime pay, only a vague promise of a possible promotion. Li was considering finding another job, but if he left, the company would take his apartment and his family would have nowhere to live. His irregular hours also made it difficult for him to search for another job. Li's wife, Jin, worked at a department store in the downtown area to help them make ends meet. To help the couple out, Jin's mother and father sold their apartment in Shanghai and bought one nearby so they could help care for their granddaughter. While Li was not happy with his situation, he was reluctant to talk about his employer. This changed the following year.

On my follow up visit in 2007, Li and his family were living with Jin's parents. Li had left his job and was preparing to go to Shanghai and stay with his brother while looking for work. Thus unencumbered he spoke more openly about his previous job. "They don't treat us as human beings." "My boss made all these promises and in the end the owner sold the company to another Taiwanese businessman and moved back to Taiwan. My pay went down and my hours went up because of the new owner's greed. They come here, treat us like slaves, make huge profits then run back to Taiwan. I will not work for a Taiwanese company ever again. They don't treat us like people."

Another factor that influenced Li's decision was the fact that the previous year his wife had to have an abortion because they could not afford a birth permit for a second child. Li was unhappy, and his wife was angry. They have a daughter who is four, and Jin claims the aborted child was a son. Li was taking quite a chance leaving his job, with a family that depended on his income to survive. Jin still worked at the department store. Times were tough and they had come to depend heavily on Jin's mother and father.

A year later, in 2008, I called Li, who still spent most of his time in Shanghai looking for work. He had several interviews but no offers. His family lived in Zhenjiang, and he was still staying with his brother in Shanghai. He was frustrated but still optimistic. He planned to move his family to Shanghai as soon as he found work. But with the post-Olympic economic slowdown his dream seemed at least temporarily out of reach.

5.2.3 XIAMEN: THE MINNAN CULTURAL AREA

In Xiamen, one of the easiest parts of my fieldwork was recruiting members of the local community to answer my questions regarding Taiwanese men on the Mainland. One of the most difficult aspects of conducting these interviews was getting people to tell me what they really thought—particularly when their thoughts strayed from the party line. To complicate matters, before I arrived in Xiamen, China's President Hu appeared on CCTV to promote cross-Strait economic, educational and cultural exchange. In his speech he announced that “compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Straits belong to one family” and that the Taiwan people are “our flesh-and-blood brothers” (China Daily March 4, 2005). As a result, in the early stages of my research when I asked the question, “what is your impression of Taiwanese migrants” the most common answer I received was “they are just like us.” When I attempted to encourage them to elaborate, most replied “we are all Chinese.” Any attempts on my part for further elaboration usually meant either the end of the interview or a swift change of subject.

Later, anticipating their response, I rephrased the question to highlight the local area, and sameness, rather than that of the national level and difference. “In what ways are Taiwanese people and Xiamen people the same?” In addition to “we are all Chinese,” many spoke about Minnan culture. Minnan culture was in a sense the common cloth from which Taiwanese and

Xiamen people were supposedly cut. When I asked them to explain what they meant by Minnan culture, most would first refer to language (Minnan hua) followed by the ability to brew and appreciate tea in the Minnan way.

5.2.3.1 TEA: A PUBLIC PRACTICE

Tea is an important cultural symbol within Minnan culture. Tea is not served in the same fashion in Xiamen, as it usually is in Beijing or Shanghai. In Xiamen, tea is served in very small porcelain cups, to better judge its color and aroma. Tea is prepared, as one of my informants explained “in the Minnan way” in which the brewer follows set procedures. While tea is being prepared, those at the table seldom speak, but watch closely to insure the procedures are correct.

First the cups, a small mesh screen, and a pair of tweezers, are immersed in hot water. Next scalding hot water is poured in and over the teapot and the lid. Once the pot is deemed warm enough the pot is emptied and a small vacuum-sealed packet of tea is opened and poured inside. The pot is filled with hot water and covered. Quickly, the teacups are taken out of the hot water and placed on the tea table. The tea, which has been steeping for less than one minute, is poured into the cups with the remainder of the first brew poured onto the tea table. Water is again added to the teapot and the lid replaced. After it has brewed long enough (usually about two minutes), the teacups are emptied of the first brew (which was to season the cups while keeping them warm), and refilled with the second brew. The cups are then placed in front of those at the table for tasting, while the lid of the teapot is passed around the table for everyone to smell. I’m told that usually the third brew is the best, and that a good tea maker can get at least six brews from one packet of tea. After the last of the tea is served, the leaves are inspected to determine their quality and if they were machine or handpicked. I’m told that good tea should only include whole leaves, not pieces of leaves.

In Xiamen, it is not unusual to see small tables placed on the sidewalks outside of storefronts and apartment buildings around which residents are crowded enjoying their tea. Having traveled extensively throughout China I have never witnessed so many people drinking and preparing tea outdoors, nor have I seen so many teashops crowded into such a small area. There were six within one block of my apartment, and this was by no means the tea district. The local residents openly spoke proudly about their tea, its preparation and consumption, often differentiating themselves from those from other areas. One elderly man explained that “In the northeast they drink tea...but here we taste tea.”

A local bar owner kept a complete tea set behind his bar so he could make a favorable impression by showing off his tea brewing skills. It was not uncommon for his regular customers to bring tea samples into the bar which would prompt long discussions about who had the highest quality of tea at the time. If a young woman entered the bar, the tea set would be on the bar in short order to try to impress her. To sum up, tea appreciation and preparation is an important cultural marker of Minnan culture, which may explain why it is often a public rather than private practice.⁶²

5.2.4 CONVERSATIONS AT “THE WAY”: THE PARTY LINE AND LOCAL OPINIONS

My search for a discourse of difference had been preempted by one of sameness. While I regularly was witness to conversations by Taiwanese men that revolved around, for example how Taiwanese women differ from Mainland women (discussed later in this chapter), I had yet to be

⁶² This is not to say that tea appreciation is practiced or for that matter important to every individual. Later in this chapter I introduce a Taiwanese manager who drinks Lipton tea which he identifies as a valued Taiwanese product.

privity to Xiamen locals differentiating themselves from Taiwanese men or women. Several weeks later however, marked a turning point in this endeavor, which occurred in the most unlikely of places.

“The Way” is a very small bar in Xiamen that few people frequent. On the sidewalk there is one small sign that reads “The Way” with a small menu printed below, although I never witnessed anyone eating there. “The Way” is in a converted small old-style Chinese house that sits well below street level. In fact from the street one can only make out the red shingled roof. To locate the entrance you must take an unmarked stairway that leads into the darkness seemingly to nowhere.

The bar is constructed of dark wood and mirrors. Directly in front of it sit five bar stools with barely enough room between the opposing walls for one to maneuver to the restroom, which is situated in a small back room. In the back room there is also a surprisingly high quality dartboard with the rules and regulations posted on the wall and a regulation foul line painted on the floor. On the walls are photos of the most famous dart players primarily from Europe, and a list of the most recent winners in the local tournament. Apparently darts are popular here. Behind the bar there are an assortment of various mixers and liquor, some authentic prestigious brands and some clearly fake.

My primary contacts here were Zhi Peng, his cousin Ting, and her Uncle Liu. Zhi Peng, the owner is 25, an ex-soccer player (who retired after a leg injury), and considers himself an entrepreneur and quite the ladies man. His cousin Ting, the bartender, is 30, and is desperately on the lookout for a husband. Ting’s Uncle Liu, who is in his 60’s, spends his evenings doing repairs at the bar, primarily so he can keep a close eye on Ting.

During my weekly visits, more often than not I was the only person in the bar and spent my time playing darts and talking to Uncle Liu about everything from world history to the Iraq war. He grew up on a small island (Gulang Yu) just off the coast of Xiamen. Gulang Yu was a foreign concession, and during Uncle Liu's childhood was dominated by westerners. In order to find a good job, as a boy he converted to Christianity, studied western history and some English (Ting considers herself Christian by extension). While he no longer remembers English he still has a great understanding of world history, specifically American history.

On the few occasions there were others at the bar, I was usually the only non-local. Most locals stop in out of curiosity, order warm water, bring in their own snacks, and gossip with Zhi Peng or Uncle Liu. Occasionally Ting had a friend stop by (always female) and share a snack and some fresh gossip, usually about currently available bachelors. On some occasions Zhi Peng posted himself behind the bar with his girlfriend of five years—of whom Uncle Liu strongly disapproves--who usually by 8:00 begged to go home because she was bored. Zhi Peng gladly accommodated her and shortly after, as if by magic, another of his girlfriends usually appeared at the bar. Once every few months the bar hosted a dart tournament, which was standing room only. If not for these infrequent events, Zhi Peng would have been hard pressed to pay his bills.

When I began stopping by I asked anyone who would listen what were, in their view, the differences between Xiamen (I tried the local approach) and Taiwanese people. On one occasion I was talking to a local doctor who had stopped in after his shift. He insisted on speaking English when he responded to my question, in part, so that no one nearby could understand his response. Before he finished his first sentence, however, a middle-aged woman angrily rushed downstairs claiming (in broken English) that she knew what we were talking about and that he shouldn't talk about such things to foreigners. The doctor told her to be quiet and go back upstairs, which she

did. As a result, however, the doctor failed to continue the conversation and left in short order. Consequently, the answer to my question remained that same, often word for word. “Xiamen and Taiwanese people are the same” after which most would talk about Minnan culture as discussed earlier. It wasn’t until I brought my Taiwanese friend Ang into the bar that I finally received some different perspectives.

One evening Ang picked me up at me apartment, and as usual had a woman sitting in the back seat of the car. I sat in front with Ang and he introduced her as Tammy. Tammy was close to 6 feet tall, thin, about 25, and had a constant smile on her face. Ang started the evening, as he usually did, by asking the woman who accompanied him who was better looking, he or I. The response was also the same. Tammy laughed and said that of course Ang was the best looking. Ang was always more than a little pleased with this response. We drove around for an hour or so with Ang and Tammy constantly flirting and laughing. I suggested to Ang that we go check out a small bar near my apartment. When I told him where it was, he was surprised he had never heard of it.

As we approached the stairway leading into the darkness, Ang began to get a bit uneasy. He later told me he was concerned that Tammy might fall. After entering, Tammy seemed to like the place but Ang was clearly shocked. He pulled me aside and told me I should never take anyone to this bar because it’s too small and dirty and there is nothing going on. He was clearly embarrassed to bring Tammy to this place. He did his best however and--as I had become accustomed—began telling story after story to Uncle Liu, Tammy, Ting and myself for the better part of one hour. Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves and it appeared that Uncle Liu and Ting liked Ang. Soon after, Ang said he and Tammy had to go, so I left with them and walked across the street to my apartment.

The following week when I showed up for my weekly dart game, Uncle Liu had some sharp words to say about Ang. He made it clear to me that most Xiamen people do not like Taiwanese people at all. “They always think that they are better than us and talk down to us” he said. I explained that I thought everyone had gotten along fine but he shook his head and said, “You don’t know,” as he walked towards the door. That comment drove me to redouble my efforts.

A week later, Uncle Liu broached the subject again. Even though we were the only people there that night, he leaned over the bar and spoke quietly into my ear, “Taiwanese people are not like Xiamen people because the way they think is not the same. The Japanese controlled them for so long they are now like a mixture of Chinese and Japanese. Not good.” I was warned to be very careful with Taiwanese people lest they influence me.

5.2.5 WIDOW VILLAGES AND STORIES OF ABANDONMENT

The following week I spoke to Ting about my conversation with Uncle Liu regarding Ang and his visit. She explained that many people don’t trust Taiwanese men in the Xiamen area. “They are not good,” was the mantra she often revisited. When I asked her for an example she told me about Widow Village.

According to Ting, there is an entire village outside of Xiamen (I could not get an exact location) composed of grandmothers and their grown children who had been abandoned by their Taiwanese husbands and fathers. Ting explained that most of the men had been members of the GMD (Nationalist) army that had fled to Taiwan as the Communist forces gained control of the area in the early 1950s. She said that since that time, the wives had dutifully waited for their husbands’ return, never remarrying and raising the children on their own. The husbands,

however, never did return. Most, according to Ting, had remarried and started new families in Taiwan. She said that even today the village is full of old grandmothers who are still waiting for their husbands to come home. “Once they arrived in Taiwan, they forgot about their families here as they remarried and started families in Taiwan. That’s what Taiwanese men are like,” she explained. Although Ting desperately wanted to find a husband, she said she would never consider a Taiwanese man suitable.

In the next few months I followed up on this story. Every local person in Xiamen I asked about “widow village” said they had heard of it, but had little to add. When I expressed a desire to visit this village no one seemed to know where it was. One man in his fifties told me that in Fujian province there are many widow villages in the rural areas.

Stories of abandonment, whether pertaining to business and/or family, seemed to be a common theme regarding Taiwanese migrants. According to my interviews in Shanghai and Zhenjiang, Taiwanese men are clearly considered outsiders. In Shanghai these differences were related to issues of class. The designation *bazi* relegates these men to the category of uncultured, country bumpkins. In Zhenjiang the focus was on stories of employer abuse and abandonment by outsiders from Taiwan. In Xiamen however, local discourses highlighted cultural cohesion on the surface while there was clearly an underlying sentiment of difference.

5.3 THE LURE OF THE MAINLAND AND THE MODEL TAIWANESE BUSINESSMAN

Such discourse describing Taiwanese men as greedy untrustworthy employers and disloyal husbands and fathers has been highly contested by the government controlled media on the

Mainland. One of the most striking examples related specifically to Xiamen, is the story of Huang Jinshan, a Taiwanese businessman who is portrayed as the model Taiwanese businessman. His story has been widely circulated in the Mainland press and he has been featured in television interviews on CCTV 1, Fujian Television and South East China television. The following synopsis of his story is based on a two part special that is regularly aired on CCTV.

In the first part of the series entitled “Father’s Xiamen Golden Mountain Dream” (爸爸的厦门金山梦), Huang’s story is initially told from the perspective of his eldest son who explains that only ten days after his father left to visit the Mainland he called home and said he had invested in a business and would not be coming home for some time. From that time on, he said, his mother had to shoulder the burden of raising both himself and his brother in Taiwan. The son laments that his father later sold the family land in Taiwan that he had inherited from his grandfather and even hocked an expensive watch his wife had given him all to keep his “Golden Mountain dream alive.” Finally the son asks, “What magical power does the Mainland’s landscape have over my father?” (Wang 2008).

In the second part of the series entitled “The Enterprising Spirit”, Huang Jinshan (the father) describes his first visit to the Mainland in 1989 as “love at first sight” (Wang 2008). His first impression was that he had been here before, perhaps in a dream. Upon seeing Golden Mountain Huang says that he made what he repeatedly refers to as his “ten second decision” (Wang 2008).⁶³ At that moment he decided to make the Golden Mountain area his life’s work no matter what the cost. His goal was to “match the landscape to the environment” (Wang 2008).

⁶³ Golden Mountain is located on the Xiamen coast 1 nautical mile from Taiwan’s Jinmen Island.

The result was the Xiamen-Taiwan Folk Culture Park, which is a combination, museum, nature reserve, and amusement park.

The overall message of the park is clear as it was designed to highlight historical cultural continuity across the Taiwan Straits. This message, which echoes the PRC government line “we are the same,” is one of the reasons that Huang and the park are so highly promoted. The message is clear in the “Common Root Hall” where some of Taiwan’s minority groups are represented in historical photographs, and are described as sub-groups of the *Gaoshan zu* (high mountain tribe).⁶⁴ The *Gaoshan zu* however, rather than being relegated to historical photographs perform on the main stage for the park’s guests. At the culture park, the *Gaoshan zu* are portrayed as a common “other” which both support the party line and call into question any claims of cultural difference across the Taiwan Straits.⁶⁵

Huang admits that he chose a difficult path but he has no regrets. On one occasion in 2001, for example, he was unable to pay his employees because he was six million RMB short. He promised to pay them in full with interest as soon as he could. He also made a deal with them that he would not return to Taiwan until the debt was paid in full. Finally, in July 2006 he made good on his promise and paid his employees the full amount plus thirty percent interest (Wang 2008). He spends a great amount of time in this part of the series praising his employees for their dedication and hard work. In the past twenty years he has invested the bulk of his time and his family’s assets in the park. Throughout most of this period, aside from visits over the holidays, Huang and his wife and children have lived on opposite sides of the Taiwan Straits.

The effect of Huang’s story is three-fold. First, Huang’s well circulated story of self-sacrifice adds a strong dose of authenticity to the Culture Park, and the party line. Second, it

⁶⁴ Taiwan currently recognizes 14 individual ethnic minority groups.

⁶⁵ The PRC classifies nine Taiwanese ethnic groups as sub-groups of the *Gaoshan Zhu*.

emphasizes the powerful allure the Mainland has on Taiwanese visitors. In Huang's case this attraction is not related simply to economic gain. On the contrary, Huang nearly lost everything in the process. Rather, this pull is characterized as an innate sense of belonging and identification with the place. Finally, his story contests discourses which portray Taiwanese businessmen as untrustworthy employers who abandon their Mainland employee's without warning.

5.4 MIGRANT VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES: ANG, FENG AND CHIN-LUNG

To demonstrate the variability of social locations Taiwanese migrants occupy in Xiamen and the importance of personality in influencing these locations, I will focus on my experiences with three very different Taiwanese migrants, all of whom are economically well off. Following is a short introduction to Ang and Feng and a more in depth description of Chin-Lung. As Ang and Feng are involved in cross-Strait marriage, they will be revisited in Chapter 5, "Cross-Strait Couples and Social Spaces." Other informants will be introduced in later sections; however it is important here to offer some background information on these three men as I will draw on my observations and experiences with them directly.

5.4.1 ANG: SURROUNDED BY BEAUTY

Ang is in his early 40s and has been living on the Mainland for twelve years, five in Guangzhou, five in Shanghai, and two in Xiamen. He is very clear as to why he migrated to the PRC--- "because labor was cheap" and he "could make a lot of money"---which he did. He owns a factory outside of Shanghai, a retail business with his wife (who is from Xiamen), and spends

much of his time entertaining friends. He and his wife Mei own apartments in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Xiamen. Ang spends most of his time in Xiamen, while Mei, is often out of town on business. During Mei's frequent business trips Ang often has a *meimei* by his side to keep him company.⁶⁶ One evening while driving me home he explained it to me this way,

Women as they get older always want more. They never have enough. They always want to accumulate more things, buy another house or another car. Men, on the other hand, want a very stable, comfortable life without complications. We are over 40, so when we can, we should go out and have fun with *meimeis* because when we are 70 we will have to stay at home. We don't have much time left to enjoy life.

Ang is very clear about his relationships with *meimeis*. First he never tells them where he lives so they cannot "make trouble" for him. Second, these relations are not sexual, as he claims he would never do that to Mei. He put it this way, "it's okay to have fun with *meimeis* but not in the physical sense." He said for his friends, that's fine, but not him. In fact I have never seen him so much as touch one of them. He likes to buy them coffee, meals and drinks (usually non-alcoholic), and tell amusing stories to entertain and to be entertained by them. He later told me that life without *meimeis* has no flavor (*meiyou weidao*), it's boring. He often commented that it was important to "surround himself with beauty."

On one occasion, he explained that I should not tell my wife about all of the places he takes me, because some of them are off limits to wives. For example, some coffee shops,

⁶⁶ I use the term *meimei* (little sister) here to reflect the fact that Ang referred to them as such. In this setting this was not considered a derogatory term but was used to differentiate them from *xiaojie* (young women or literally little sister) which has come to carry meanings associated with prostitution.

restaurants and bars are *meimei* places. “You have to be careful in China because people like to make trouble” he explained. For example, if someone who knows his wife were to see him driving with another woman in the front seat they would call her immediately. Or they might just follow him and ask him “is this your wife” even if they know she isn’t. That’s why he explained, he always has his *meimei*’s ride in the back seat. He warned that this could happen if my wife were to see him somewhere with a *meimei*. So I had better be careful about what I tell her, he said.

Meimeis are relegated to specific spaces that for the most part do not overlap with those that include family or work. The one exception to this rule is *Lao Fangzi*, a Taiwanese owned, massage parlor, where the specialty is foot massage, herbal soaks and pedicures.

On my first trip to *Lao Fangzi*, Ang picked me up at my apartment and drove me to the four-storied building with a sculpture of a foot in the entryway. Everyone seemed to know Ang and one of the managers asked if his wife would be joining him today. “No” he replied and said he was going to the fourth floor today. He requested a particular room, which was private with identical chairs, a massage table and a bathroom complete with shower. He ordered some snacks and coffee for us and two young women came in each dragging a tub of hot water with herbs for us to soak our feet in. In this setting Ang seldom spoke and spent the next hour smoking cigarettes silently with his eyes closed.

Several weeks later Ang and I were at a Taiwanese ice cream parlor, where as usual I was introduced as his American friend. Taiwanese ice cream is, “much better than Chinese ice cream” he explained. Suddenly, he checked his watch and made a phone call. “When are you going to work?” he asked, and quickly hung up. Then we rushed to his car and he drove to a bus stop where two young women were waiting. They jumped into the car and were immediately

asked, what had become the standard question, “Who is more handsome me or my American friend?” Then standard question number two, “Aren’t they beautiful?” “Sure.” I said. These two however, didn’t seem like the kind of women I had seen him with before. They were young and thin but didn’t have the perfect posture, expensive clothes and the polite manner of the others. After fifteen minutes I asked where we were going. “To their house for a massage” Ang said smiling from ear to ear. He could see I was more than a little uncomfortable with this situation. To my relief, we stopped at *Lao Fangzi* and the young women got out and ran to the door. Ang drove around back and walked in the front door barking orders to the help, “private room, two coffees, we want numbers 265 and 278, foot massage. The help began rushing around as we were escorted to our private room. The two young women came in laughing and Ang was laughing so hard he was holding his stomach. The joke was on me. During this session Ang spoke casually to the young women, but didn’t exhibit the kind of “non-sexual play” he did in other settings with other *meimeis*.

A week later we returned to *Lao Fangzi* for a foot massage. I noticed that this time he entered through the back door and took the elevator to the third floor rather than the fourth floor. When we arrived, he quietly (which was unusual) asked for a particular young woman to massage his feet. During this session in the private room he asked for a full body massage from her. She was more his type. Soft spoken, perfect posture and she had an easy smile. She seemed to know him and teased him for gaining weight. They openly flirted with each other throughout the session. When we left, Ang promised to call her sometime in the future. I later found out that he went well out of his way to visit this particular *Lao Fangzi* (there are several in Xiamen). There was one right across the street from the restaurant where we had dinner earlier that evening, but instead we drove for about 20 minutes to this particular location.

Lao Fangzi, was the only space where Ang seemed to make some sort of exception to his first rule, to separate family/work spaces from *meimei* spaces. But on closer examination perhaps he was holding fast to his principles. When we visited the fourth floor, where several employees asked if his wife would be joining him, he did not engage in flirting or teasing the young women, but was more reserved, seldom telling entertaining stories or jokes to entertain them. In fact, when on the fourth floor he seldom spoke, which was not the Ang I had come to know. On the fourth floor it was more about the foot massage than the *meimeis*. But when visiting the third floor, where I suspect he doesn't take his wife, he treated the young women more like he treats *meimeis*, openly flirting and constantly joking with them.

He said that Feng (his friend living in Beijing) prides himself on how many women he can sleep with but he is not like that. He has no problem with it, but that kind of lifestyle doesn't suit him. He said in the company of some friends he might brag about how many girlfriends he has but in actuality he would never do that to his wife. "That is just empty talk between men" he explained. He often complained about his wife's frequent trips to Hong Kong and Europe explaining that he often feels like he is living alone. In the year I had come to know Ang, Mei (Ang's wife) was more often than not, out of town on a business trip. Ang on the other hand, during the same period, never left town without Mei. Further, on those occasions when I saw them interact in social settings---be it a wedding, a dinner or entertaining at home---Mei was usually the most outspoken. On one occasion, when Ang had begun to tell a story, Mei told him in no uncertain terms to shut up—which he did.

5.4.2 FENG: BUSINESSMAN AND CONSUMER

Feng is 30 and is from Jinmen Island, a Taiwanese island a half an hour boat ride from Xiamen.⁶⁷ He has lived on the Mainland for three years. He works for a Taiwan based advertising firm and volunteered to work in their Beijing office. He spends much of his time traveling in eastern China and frequently visits his friend Ang in Xiamen, usually when going to, or coming from, Jinmen Island. A little over a year ago he married a woman from a small town in rural Henan province where she continues to live with her mother. “She’s afraid to leave her mother.” he once explained. Unlike Ang, Feng prides himself on how often he “needs” to have sex, and how many different women he can have sex with.⁶⁸ When he and Ang are together they often tease each other about how many *meimeis* each of them have. On one occasion Ang told me that Feng called him from Beijing and said he had nine women with him at the time. “He’s very *lihai*” Ang commented (in this case *lihai* refers to Feng’s strong sexuality). The following is an excerpt from my field notes describing one afternoon meal with Ang and Feng.

After picking Feng up we drove along the sea to a fairly isolated area. Ang told Feng he knew of a good spot nearby. After traveling down several unmarked dirt roads we arrived at a large three-storied building situated on the beach. As we pulled up no less than eight motorcycles stopped at the building, each with a man in front and two young women on the back. They all smiled at us and rushed into the building. Ang had reserved a private room on the second floor with large windows that opened up onto the beach. It was a typical KTV room with several large couches, two coffee tables, a big screen television

⁶⁷ Jinmen is only a few kilometers from Xiamen and was an important site of resistance against the Chinese Communist Party as it marked the first major victory for the KMT during the war (Szonyi 2007). See Szonyi 2007 for a more detailed discussion on Jinmen’s unique local identity.

⁶⁸ Hsiu-Hua Shen’s (2008) study revealed that Taiwanese men often cite biological needs as a common justification for sexual intimacies with Mainland women.

and a bathroom. Ang ordered the food and in a few minutes roughly 20 young women walked into the room single file. Ang and Feng quickly picked one and then told me to make my choice. I said I was fine and didn't need one today but Ang insisted, explaining that she would only pour my beer, sing for us, and feed me dinner. They quickly picked one for me.

Throughout the meal Ang and Feng acted more and more like twenty-year-olds, jumping on the couch, running around the room, dancing, singing and constantly laughing and joking. They had only consumed a couple of beers but they acted quite drunk. The young women made jokes, laughed, poured our beer and sang. As the meal came to a close I realized that neither Ang nor Feng had acted like I had expected. Neither had grouped the women, they rather made fun of them only to have the young women retaliate which both seemed to enjoy (of course the women were working). Suddenly Feng announced that his train would be leaving within the hour, so he had to go to the second floor to shower and would be back soon. He and "his *meimei*" left the room only to return half an hour later looking freshly showered. Ang explained that Feng needed to have sex and a shower with a *meimei* before getting on the train so he could relax.

5.4.3 CHIN-LUNG: THE VUNERABLE ELITE

Chin-Lung has lived in Xiamen for a little over a year and is a manager for a Taiwanese shipping company. Unlike Ang and Feng who chose to move to the Mainland, Chin-Lung claims he had little choice in the matter. In fact, he had just purchased a house in Taiwan shortly before he was transferred. His wife is Taiwanese and he has a two-year-old daughter. While Ang and Feng

seem to enjoy life in Xiamen, Chin-Lung spends much of his time terrified. Each morning his driver waits for him in front of his apartment takes him to work, and delivers him back home safely each evening. Chin-Lung seldom leaves his apartment at night for fear of being robbed. He is also in constant fear of contamination from a variety of sources. The following is a short excerpt from my field notes describing my first experience with Chin-Lung.

This afternoon I was looking for an apartment to rent and the taxi driver pulled over to ask a passing pedestrian where the office was. The pedestrian peered into the cab and upon confirming that I was a foreigner, suddenly panicked. He asked the driver how much the fare was, paid the fee, and told me to quickly get out of the cab. After stepping out of the cab he told me that since I was a foreigner I had better be more careful. In the next few days he would take it upon himself to help me (a fellow foreigner) find an apartment, and to educate me about the dangers of living in China. For example, he explained that if I was ever in a taxi that turned onto the bridge leading to the Mainland I should jump out, because the driver was going to rob and kill me once on the Mainland.⁶⁹

Chin-Lung's apartment is on one of the upper floors in an expensive building that caters primarily to well-off Taiwanese migrants. The grounds include a swimming pool, basketball courts and a large landscaped garden. The first thing that caught my attention in this apartment was the stunning view of the Taiwan Straits and Jinnan Island from the living room, undoubtedly a strong selling point. The apartment is 140 square meters in area and, has marble floors

⁶⁹ Much of my research was conducted on Xiamen Island, one section of Xiamen city of which the largest part is situated on the Mainland.

throughout, three bedrooms, an elevated Japanese style dining room encased in glass, two bathrooms, a very large living room, and a generous patio.

He introduced me to his housekeeper, a middle-aged Mainland woman whom he praised for keeping his home spotless. He was proud to point out that his floors were so clean that you could eat off them. He explained that it is so dirty in China that it is crucial to have a good housekeeper. He said he often locks her in his apartment if he has to leave so she doesn't steal anything. I asked him what would happen if there was a fire in the building. He said "there are no fires, this is an expensive building."

He offered me a cup of green tea "from Taiwan" because he explained "Mainland tea has too many chemicals." He handed me a cup of hot water with a *Lipton* teabag floating in it. He also made a cup for the housekeeper who took a small sip and quickly went back to mopping the already spotless floor.

Although he had lived there for over a year by the time I visited, it looked like he had just moved in, or perhaps was preparing to move out. On the table in the glassed-in dining room were shirts and dress pants all neatly stacked and freshly pressed. There was a large suitcase on the entryway counter at the ready. The large living room was sparsely furnished with a small couch to one side, a footstool, small coffee table and large screen TV. The general feel of the place was one of emptiness. It appears that in a matter of minutes Chin-Lung could pack a bag and disappear.

Once I asked him if his company offered him any pre departure orientation or advice about living in the PRC. He said that they only do that for people who are moving farther away—to Europe, for example. The only advice he was given was to be careful about the restaurants. Incidentally, at the time we were eating in a Taiwanese owned restaurant.

In the next few days we visited countless rental agencies and looked at many apartments. There were several that I wanted to rent but the negotiations ended with Chin-Lung shouting at the agent and leading me out the door. “They are always trying to take advantage of us” he said. In this case “us” referred to foreigners.

Once when I asked him about his co-workers he explained that while he works in a Taiwanese company those he supervises are from the Mainland. He seemed quite isolated and very lonely, which is why I found it so easy to make contact with him. While I continually asked, he did not introduce me to other Taiwanese people in Xiamen, usually claiming that everyone is too busy. Perhaps he was worried about what they might tell me about him, which might help to explain more fully why he is an outsider.

5.5 HIERARCHIES OF DESIRE

I was seated at a large table with a group of local business owners in a Beijing pub discussing what constitutes “the best life” for a man. We were on the subject of income when our waitress leaned over and said, recounting a version of a popular, well known joke, “That’s easy, a Chinese job, an American paycheck, and a Japanese wife.” Everyone nodded in agreement.

The experience above reveals the ways that people inscribe certain traits on individuals from particular areas. In this case Japanese women were perceived, seemingly even by the Chinese waitress, as more suitable wives. This section addresses this type of mapping as it relates to Taiwanese men and Mainland women.

This section is divided into two parts. The first is concerned with the ways that Taiwanese migrants living in the PRC talk about Mainland women with regard to intimate

desire. Most spoke about the differences between women from different areas of China, and Asia as a whole. These perceived differences shape the opinions of men and women about those who are considered potential intimate and/or marriage partners and those who are not. The term “hierarchies of desire” refers to the geographical mapping of perceived traits as they relate to intimate desire. In addition, this term also incorporates other factors such as socio-economic status and citizenship. The second section focuses what position these men believe they occupy within these hierarchies of desire both on the Mainland and in Taiwan.

Given Chin-Lung’s view of the Mainland as a hostile lawless place, and his practice of locking his housekeeper in his apartment, his ideas regarding Mainland women came as no surprise. On one occasion as we were walking down the street he pointed out a well-dressed attractive young woman.

“Look at her. She looks good but a lot of them look good. Then they do something unexpected, like spit on the street or blow snot out their nose. They look good, but they are dirty and uncivilized...disgusting.”

He followed this by glaring at the passing woman, who took no notice. “And they will do anything for money” he added curtly. I responded by telling him that a Taiwanese friend of mine had married a woman from Xiamen. His response was a sneer followed by a long period of silence.

I expected to get a very different view from Ang and Feng as both of their wives were from the Mainland, but their views were certainly not what I had anticipated.

Once while on a drive, Ang carefully explained that Shanghai women in particular (aside from my wife he was careful to add) were the most difficult to get along with because they hold

men in low regard and always want to be in control of the money. He said the women in northeastern China (particularly Harbin and Shenyang) are much better as they are mild and “comfortable” to spend time with. But, he added, it’s much better to marry a Japanese or Korean girl because they are more traditional and soft spoken and they prefer that the man be in charge. When I asked him to elaborate he said that although women from Shenyang are good, even they are “a little bit crazy.” When pressed he said because of the way women have been treated throughout Chinese history, “all Mainland women are unhappy.”

On another occasion, Ang asked me about my wife, who is from Shanghai, and decided to open up to me a bit. He said his first wife was from Sichuan province but had moved to Shanghai years before he met her. He said she often asked him for money for her family, which he always provided without question. In time these requests were made more frequently and he became concerned about her intentions. Finally, he told her she would have to stop asking him for money for her family. Instead, he would provide a set amount every year and no more. After that she began treating him poorly (he would not elaborate) until he finally requested a divorce. Her response was to announce that she was pregnant. In order to end the marriage he offered to pay her 10,000 RMB (US approximately \$1500) a month for child support. He still regrets offering to do this because now he feels that this was her plan all along, that her family had encouraged her to do this. He believed that the only reason she married him was to provide her family with money. He said her parents bought two big houses and became one of the richest families in their town with his money. He also now doubts that the child is his, but he still pays the child support as agreed. I asked him if this kind of thing is common and he said he has lots of friends who have had similar experiences, usually with Shanghai women. He was quick to say he wasn’t insulting my wife but thought I should be careful. I told him I didn’t have any money to

supply her family with and that both of us were students. He reiterated that I should still be careful. We are over 40, he said, “at this stage we should have a relaxing life, free of stress, and no women problems.”

Feng, who was married to a woman from a rural area in Henan province, often commented that it was easy to find women on the Mainland because there are so many of them. He usually qualified this statement with the comment, “as long as you have money.” Despite my attempts to encourage him to talk about his wife, he seldom did. He never referred to her by name, which is not uncommon in China. However, when he did speak about her he referred to her as “the country girl,” which emphasized the fact that she was from a rural area, and not well educated.

Given the many criticisms I heard with regard to Mainland women, I was surprised that Ang and Feng had little to say about Taiwanese women. One afternoon while having lunch with Ang and Feng at a Taiwanese owned restaurant, I asked them what they thought about Taiwanese women. Feng responded with a wide smile and said “Taiwanese *xiaojie* are beautiful, they would love you.” “Why is that?” I asked. Ang responded “they love foreigners, especially Americans.” I responded “what about you guys, you’re rich and handsome?” “The really beautiful ones aren’t interested in us. They are all looking for men that are more rare. It’s better for us here,” Ang said. I responded, “Really?” Ang suggested, “the next time I go back, I’ll take you with me. You will see.” He quickly changed the subject, “How about we go for a foot massage?”

Given those studies of cross-border marriage in which men tend to criticize women in their homeland as “fat”, “lazy” and not feminine enough, I was surprised that I sensed little or no animosity towards Taiwanese women in our conversation (Constable 2003:100, Tolentino 1999).

Both Ang and Feng were openly smiling when they spoke about them. While they proudly boasted about how beautiful Taiwanese women were, they also seemed resigned to the idea that these women would not be interested in them. Perhaps, given the fact that I was a Western male, any animosity towards Taiwanese women was downplayed. I suspect, however, that the possibility of attracting a beautiful Taiwanese woman was so remote that they hadn't seriously considered it.

Once on a drive with the two of them they explained their view of how Mainland women see them within the hierarchy of marital desire. Ang did most of the talking with Feng enthusiastically nodding in agreement.

First they like Americans because they assume they are rich and want a visa. Their second choice is Japanese businessmen because they are also rich. Third are Taiwanese men. Fourth are Hong Kong men because they are also rich and the girls want to live in Hong Kong. Last come the Mainland men, who have a tough time finding *meimeis* unless they are very rich.

I told them that I had heard that Mainland women like Taiwanese men better because they had more in common and could speak Chinese. They both shook their heads and explained that the possibility of getting a US visa was more important to Mainland girls than a common language. I questioned this explanation until it was mirrored by Ting, who worked at The Way.

One evening I arranged to meet an English teacher from London at The Way. He had only been in Xiamen a short time and didn't speak Chinese so he had a lot of questions. We talked for a while and later that evening we exchanged phone numbers. Apparently Ting

witnessed this exchange because several months later she contacted my wife, who had been trying to teach her English, and told her she had quit her job. She was tired of bartending, and was leaving Xiamen, never to return. When asked why, she said she was just tired of it. Before hanging up, however, she asked to speak to me. She asked me for the “foreigner’s” phone number she had seen me talking to several months before. I asked why she wanted it and she explained that she needed to date a foreigner because she was tired of her life and needed a change. “But aren’t you leaving Xiamen?” I asked. “First I thought I would try to call him,” she replied. Needless to say, I didn’t give her the number, and she quit her job and moved away. But this brought home an important point. In this case, dating a foreigner was perceived as an avenue of escape, a way to start anew. For Ting, her decision to move out of town hinged on the possibility of dating a foreigner she didn’t even know. The fact that they couldn’t communicate was not a consideration. This may also have had much to do with notions of the west as a more modern destination where one could live a more modern life (Constable 2003:143).⁷⁰

Ang and Feng’s ideas about Chinese women’s marital desires conflicts with Ong’s study of “flexible citizenship” in which she argues that Chinese men from Taiwan and Hong Kong and elsewhere are thought of as “good catches” in part because these marriages have the potential to widen their social networks (*guanxi*) and improve the living standards of these women and their families (Ong 1999:154)⁷¹. However, Constable’s study of so called “mail order brides” revealed that while some Chinese women might prefer to marry overseas Chinese men these men tended to be much more choosy and desired young, beautiful and obedient wives (2003:133). In addition, the majority of Chinese women in Constable’s study describe western men as “more

⁷⁰ In Constable’s study she found that in some cases while women from China and the Philippines may “look to the west for more modern lives” U.S. men may “look to China and the Philippines for “traditional wives” (2003:143).

open-minded [and], less controlling... and more romantic” than Chinese husbands (2003:134). Ang and Feng however, focused on the more pragmatic issues of money and a visa. This is interesting in that this view mirrors what Constable has referred to as “the western illusion of a divide between the personal and the political” which tends to ignore issues of love and emotion and reduces such decisions to “rational calculations” (2003:120).

Chin-Lung, Ang and Feng had relegated Mainland women to the category of “other” but each of them expressed this in different ways. Chin-Lung viewed them as “uncivilized” and “disgusting.” The only local woman he had any contact with was his housekeeper, whom he appreciated but clearly didn’t trust. He didn’t differentiate between women from various areas of the PRC but spoke about them in general terms. Feng, not surprisingly, spoke about them more like various local commodities that were in great supply—as long as you could afford them. His habit of referring to his wife as “the country girl” was his way of distinguishing himself from those from rural areas who “don’t know how to think.” Ang on the other hand, while acknowledging regional differences in Mainland women, considered all of them “crazy” and “unhappy.” His generalizations about Shanghai women being calculating gold diggers were grounded in his experiences with his first wife, who he claimed married him in order to funnel his money to her family. The one common thread here in all of their responses was money.

Chin-Lung believed that nearly all Mainlanders were untrustworthy, in part because he believed that they would do anything to get his money. Feng believed that his money gained him access to a never-ending supply of Mainland women. While Ang’s comment, “they never have enough” coupled with his experiences with his first wife, pointed to Mainland women as greedy. Ang and Feng’s views suggest that their money was the primary component that marked them as desirable men.

Based on Ang and Feng's comments and Ting's phone call, the fact that they spoke a common language with the women in Xiamen didn't necessarily work in their favor. Their money aside, their Taiwanese-ness arguably marked them as undesirable, given the discourse of abandonment that permeated the area. Finally, considering the well publicized negative treatment of Mainland brides in Taiwan, fewer women would be motivated by the possibility of marrying a Taiwanese man to gain Taiwanese citizenship. In Taiwan, according to Ang and Feng, the situation was no better. They considered themselves too common to be widely desired by Taiwanese women. It is important to note here that Ang's comment, "we have it better here" was in reference to desirability rather than purely economic issues.

5.6 DANGER, SAFE PLACES AND SELF-CENSORSHIP

Once when I met with Chin-Lung he told me that Taiwanese people in the PRC have to be very careful about what they say. For example, he explained that if he said that Taiwan was better than the PRC in any way, he could go to jail. By this point I had pegged Chin-Lung to be more than a little paranoid but I still wondered if Taiwanese people in the PRC really had to be so careful. While being sent to jail might sound extreme, I found that there is reason to be careful about what one says in public spaces. I later found that even Ang, who always came off as being self-assured and quite comfortable in Xiamen, demonstrated a level of fear in some settings.

One evening when I was with Ang and Feng at a very busy bar, we started a game of "Kai" a Chinese dice game. Feng suggested that I go first because I am a *lao wai* (foreigner), to which I replied that Ang and I live in Xiamen and Feng is a guest so he should go first. "But you are a foreigner." he said. To which Ang replied "we are all foreigners here...Joe is from the

States and we are from Taiwan.” A middle-aged woman sitting nearby overheard our conversation and was very offended. She approached our table and began to yell at Ang saying he shouldn’t speak that way because “we are all Chinese.” Ang apologized and said he was just joking but she still seemed quite upset—as did Ang for that matter. We left shortly after. Ang never repeated that joke again in a public setting. He did, however, repeat it several times in a private room at “Seaside” where the only witnesses were Feng, several hostesses and I.⁷² Seaside was one of the places where Ang was the most noticeably relaxed and openly spoke his mind. But this was not the case on one particular evening.

Ang, Feng and I were at Seaside one evening when Ang received a phone call and announced that an important high-ranking PRC official would be joining us. He said that this official was instrumental in helping him open his factory near Shanghai. “Be careful,” he said seriously. Then uncharacteristically he asked the young woman sitting next to him to leave. A few minutes later, a middle-aged man entered the room wearing an expensive suit. Ang stood quickly, greeted him, introduced us and poured him a beer. He and Ang sat across the room and spoke quietly about business matters, while Feng and a hostess sang songs together. After several minutes the official looked around the room scowling and pointed at Feng. “You should stay away from those *xiaojie*. They are dirty. They often have sex with several men at once.” He then pulled out a gold-colored cell phone and stepped into the hallway only to return a short while later. Aside from his comment to Feng, he ignored us and continued his whispered conversation with Ang. Several minutes later there was a knock at the door, and a very well dressed young girl, who appeared to be no more than 15 years old, entered the room. She filled the official’s

⁷² Seaside refers to a large restaurant that Ang and Feng frequented. We never ate in the dining room but ordered a private Karaoke room overlooking the sea where our meal was served. Hostesses who poured beer and sang were included in the cost of the dinner and room. The upper floors were referred to as “the hotel,” where for an extra charge the hostess would accompany clients for sex and a shower.

beer glass, and sat next to him. He did not introduce us or for that matter ever acknowledge her presence. Soon after, the food arrived. During the meal, the young girl fed him his meal with her fingers. His only comment to her was after she fed him some fish, which he spit out muttering “not fresh.” Throughout the meal he continued his private conversation with Ang, while Feng and I ate quietly. Throughout most of the conversation Ang was silent, occasionally nodding his head and saying “yes” or “okay.” Suddenly the PRC official got up to leave, grabbed Miao’s hand and turned to scowl at the rest of us. Ang opened the door for them and walked them out. Not long after, Ang returned with a hostess and soon reverted back to his old self—telling stories and joking with all of us. Neither Ang nor Feng ever spoke about this episode, despite my attempts to steer the conversation in that direction.

Only on one other occasion did I witness Ang interacting with a local government official. It was during a tea tasting at his apartment. He had two guests over, a Taiwanese friend who had been living in Japan for six years and has a wife and child there, and a Chinese official who lived nearby. There was an intense conversation about where the best tea is from, the Mainland, Japan, or Taiwan. The official insisted the best tea was from Mainland China and left to retrieve some from his apartment to prove his point. As we tasted his tea the official concluded that his tea was the best. Ang’s friend nodded. Ang looked at me quickly and gave me a slight shake of his head and then began picking through the spent tea leaves commenting on their good quality. The official was pleased. Having proved his point, the official switched to the topic of Japanese people and how different they are. Ang’s friend, who has a Japanese wife, attempted to shift the conversation to Japanese men, but had little success as the official insisted that “not only do they think differently, but they are not shaped like Chinese people.” This conversation went on for half an hour, focusing mostly on the shape of their legs. Seemingly out of the blue, Ang

asked if anyone knew what *wai po* meant. Everyone agreed it meant grandmother on the wife's side. Not on Taiwan, Ang argued. It refers to foreign second wives (*er nai*) living outside of Taiwan. Everyone laughed. As I attempted to pursue the topic further Ang shifted the conversation back to tea.

Ang's practice of self-censorship in certain social contexts revealed an underlying fear that given his confident easygoing nature was rather unexpected. In his interactions with government officials he was understandably respectful, but kept his opinions to himself always deferring to the officials' viewpoints. In the case of the tea tasting party, Ang's joke about second wives enforced common stereotypes about Taiwanese men on the Mainland. This technique worked to lighten the mood and shift the topic of conversation, making his visiting friend more comfortable.

Aside from Seaside, Taiwanese owned businesses such as *Lao fangzi*, and upscale coffee shops restaurants and teashops were the places where Ang was clearly more relaxed and spoke more freely. It's no coincidence that many of these were included in what he referred to as *meimei* places—that is, places where he could surround himself with beauty.

In Chin-Lung's case, while he didn't seem to consider any place on the Mainland completely safe, he felt more at ease in Taiwanese-owned businesses like restaurants where we often talked. Even in these places however, he often whispered so quietly that I had to ask him to repeat himself, which he would, usually after a quick glance around the room. Chin-Lung was most at ease in an unlikely place.

Once while we were looking at apartments he suddenly announced that he had to get his hair cut and wanted to introduce me to a good barber. We passed over eight hair salons on the way to the bus stop. After a 20 minute bus ride we arrived at the hair salon. He insisted it was

cleaner and more professional but reasonably priced. I could see little difference in either the cleanliness or quality between the average hair salon and this one, aside from the fact that this one charged almost twice as much (40RMB) as others I had visited in Xiamen. But Chin-Lung insisted that the employees were better trained here because this was a Taiwanese owned company. I spoke to the employees who were cutting our hair and they told me they had just moved here from a rural area in Hubei province. Afterwards we went upstairs to a room with a low ceiling and rested on two massage tables. Shortly after the massage began Chin-Lung fell soundly asleep.⁷³

5.7 UNSPOKEN WORDS

In some cases, much can be learned by what is left unsaid. For example, considering the amount of publicity the “Taiwan issue” is afforded in the PRC media, and the amount of time I have spent with Ang, it is quite significant that Ang has never talked to me about the elephant in the room, that is, the political tensions between Taiwan and the PRC. While he did mention that Mainland brides are not treated well in Taiwan, and that the PRC government facilitated his factory opening, political issues have never come up. Although I have broached the subject on several occasions, a conversation about this topic never developed.

Chin-Lung on the other hand, who didn’t possess Ang’s ability to finesse the conversation, found his own way to avoid answering my questions. The following highlights a standard Chin-Lung technique.

⁷³ In China an upper body massage is often included in the price of a haircut.

One afternoon Chin-Lung, who's English was rudimentary at best, suggested we open an English school and make a lot of money. I told him I was not in a position to start a business in China but he said that he and his friends do this all the time and make a lot of money doing it. I asked him where he had opened his schools. He reached into his back pocket, pulled out a dictionary and replied "spear gun." "What?" I said. "How do you say spear gun in Chinese?" he asked "Use it in a sentence." I asked, "Why are we talking about a spear gun?" "Tide" he said. "What?" I replied. "How do you say tide in Chinese?" he asked. I guess he didn't want to talk about where his (probably imaginary) schools were. At this point I figured I had nothing to lose so I asked, "Do you think Taiwan should be independent?" Out came the dictionary.

A short while later we passed a travel station where he made it a point to ask the attendant if I (an American), could take the boat to Taiwan. The attendant explained that I would have to go through Hong Kong first. As we walked back outside Ang said "See?" He refused to elaborate any further.

These silences probably had much to do with my position as an outsider. My key informants were usually very careful about what they said, where they said it, and who was listening. While I had explained that I would keep their identities anonymous they understandably had no intention of putting themselves, their jobs and their families in jeopardy for the sake of my research project. They had too much to lose.

5.8 CONCLUSION

While there were some variations in the ways that local people in the PRC spoke about Taiwanese migrants, there were also some common themes. In Shanghai, a cosmopolitan city,

they were referred to as *bazi*, unrefined somewhat ignorant migrants with money that are often easily duped by young women. In Zhenjiang, a more rural area, they were considered greedy, controlling business owners who made empty promises to their dedicated employees, ultimately abandoning them in the name of profit. In Xiamen, local discourses were more complex. Discourses of inclusion on the surface, highlighting Minnan culture were juxtaposed with an underlying sentiment of difference. These discourses of difference characterized Taiwanese migrants as unreliable, pompous, and culturally corrupt. In all of these discourses they were clearly considered outsiders. My informants were fully aware of this fact but responded to these characterizations in different ways.

Chin-Lung saw himself as a target, living in an uncivilized place and responded by isolating himself from Mainlanders in general. The state of his apartment indicated that he had never really settled in, or for that matter had any intention of settling in. Safe spaces such as Taiwanese owned businesses offered him a respite from his dangerous life on the Mainland.

Feng was content to play the role of the stereotypical Taiwanese womanizing businessman. Like Chin-Lung, he viewed many on the Mainland as uncivilized, but relegated this discourse to women. As he traveled throughout Eastern China he used his economic status to reinforce his perceived superiority by purchasing sexual intimacy from local women, whom he viewed as a commodity that was cheap and plentiful. While he had married a Mainland woman, he referred to her as “the country girl” again, to highlight his superior status. Feng’s view can be summed up by a common *cheng yu* (saying),⁷⁴ “*Zuo ma kan hua*,” literally, riding a horse while

⁷⁴ *Cheng yu* are common sayings usually with four syllables whose meanings often depend on the context in which they are said.

looking at flowers. In this context it refers to a man gazing upon beautiful women from his privileged position high on his horse.⁷⁵

Ang also viewed Mainland women as “others” but in a very different way. Rather than referring to Mainland women as cheap commodities, Ang made it a point to get to know them, often asking about their hometowns, parents and aspirations. He wanted to know who they were, and then did his best to impress them. On the surface, it appears that Ang’s non-sexual relationships with various *meimeis* offered him the opportunity to be more relaxed and entertain a captive audience while projecting a particular sort of male subjectivity. Within these “*meimei* places” he could be outgoing without worrying about overshadowing his wife, who prefers to be the center of attention. Mei, who is adamant about differentiating herself from local Xiamen women—whom she regularly describes as subservient and weak—sees herself, or wants others to see her, as a strong, successful, outgoing transnational businesswoman. In order not to threaten that image, Ang has to tone down his personality or risk being humiliated in public, which was clearly the case when Mei once told him to shut up.

When “surrounded by beauty,” Ang can speak freely and be as outgoing as he likes. Perhaps “beauty” to Ang means more than simply aesthetic beauty. Perhaps it also refers to the freedom he experiences in these spaces to relax and express himself without the fear of losing face. It is important however to note that while Ang often made it a point to interact with *meimeis* on a more personal rather than physical level his ability to do this was based on his economic status and points to issues of power. Ironically, in the same setting, often simultaneously, his visiting guests use this space to shore up these boundaries and articulate the

⁷⁵ This *cheng yu* can also refer to one who hides his faults by remaining high on the horse and/or is unable to see the faults of the flowers from such a vantage point.

differences between themselves and the local population or more specifically—Mainland women.

Hsui-Hua Shen has rightly argued that Special Economic Zones are sexualized masculine playgrounds wherein women are in a sense consumed by Taiwanese businessmen (2008). Shen also makes a valid point in that “women are often seen as the symbol of a nation” and that “sexual consumption of the ‘other’ national women by transnational privileged men is often interpreted....[as] domination” and is also often tied to nationalism (2008:70). Feng seems to fit this description well.

In contrast to Allison’s analysis of Japanese hostess clubs wherein conversations at the tables were often focused on sexual matters, this was more the exception than the rule at Seaside. Rather the differing subjectivities of each of those in our group were manifested in the varying ways each interacted with and spoke about the young women who were serving them. In Allison’s study she describes how Japanese men “assume an identity far more unifying and uniform” and that “ranks of difference and possible discord are dissolved” when visiting a hostess club (1994:181). Simultaneously however, the Japanese men described by Allison craft subjectivities that distinguish them from the others in the group (Allison 1994, Kondo 1990). My findings at Seaside were similar. While Taiwanese men do identify with each other in that they are able to pay these young women to serve them, they are also concerned with expressing their individuality in part through their interactions with these young women. This practice is a clear example of what Shen (2008) describes as a “transnational status ritual” in which Taiwanese businessmen “experience, display and intensify their upward move in position and identity as privileged transnational businessmen in China” (70). But contrary to Allison’s (1994) study, differences between men were not “dissolved”, but rather reinforced (181). My findings with

regard to interactions in these settings were closer to Shen's (2008) in which she draws on Clifford Geertz's (1973) oft cited concept of "deep play" wherein Balinese cockfights served as a forum for "asserting and displaying social status and hierarchy"(Shen 2008:70). In my experiences at Seaside, this deep play had much to do about seemingly good natured competition in which men expressed their masculinity in various ways.

Feng for example seemed to equate his masculinity with his "need" to have sex with *meimeis*.⁷⁶ He tended to choose a young woman based upon how *hao si* (sexy) she appeared. Feng was concerned with the shape and size of their breasts and preferred young women who were thin and had long legs. As he was choosing a *meimei* he did not touch them but he would openly talk about these traits. For example, "This one's breasts are too big and she is fat." or "This one is too short." Such comments served to enforce Feng's masculine identity as a womanizer while clearly (re)establishing his dominant position in relation to the young women.

The PRC official who arrived at Seaside on one occasion to speak to Ang called a young woman from outside the restaurant to serve him because the *meimeis* available at Seaside were dirty. This worked to emphasize the unequal power relations between him and the others in the room. His loud criticisms coupled with his finger pointing worked to demonstrate his dominant position. From Ang's interaction with him and his warning to us to "be careful" it was clear that Ang was involved in some sort of business relationship with him.⁷⁷ Given that *Guanxi* (social relationships) is crucial to the success of business owners in China, Ang's submissive attitude towards him was understandable (Yang 1994, Zheng 2009). The PRC official's criticisms about the *meimeis* at Seaside are related to Bourdieu's (1984) analysis regarding the connections

⁷⁶ Zheng has described the common practice of Chinese men citing the need for men to have sex as a biological and natural fact which "frees them to act with impunity regardless of the consequences" (Zheng 2009:125).

⁷⁷ Wank has argued that businessmen in the private sector rely on connections in the state sector for resources (1996).

between the ability to consume properly and one's social status. He was pointing out that because we were seated with these women we did not know the correct way to consume. Further, when the young woman who he had called arrived, he all but ignored her aside from tersely ordering her what to feed him next. This demonstrated his ability to "control the hostess" which according to Zheng "proves oneself to be powerful" (2009:139).

Ang, on the other hand, while he did purchase their time, more often than not he acted concerned about their comfort and treated them with respect. In fact, he seldom physically touched them. On one occasion, as he was leaving, one girl kissed him on the cheek unexpectedly and he actually blushed. There is no doubt he was consuming but he was purchasing a form of social space in which to express himself. While the visiting businessmen he often hosted were appreciative of his hospitality, he was never pressured to participate in sexual encounters when I was present. Neither he nor I were expected to. Perhaps he was purchasing intimacy--but while this intimacy was not explicitly sexual it was still a form of "social intercourse" (Allison 1994:165).

My informants' comments revealed that their money was the primary component that they believed marked them as desirable men. Feng clearly had no problem with this. But it seems that Ang sought more than money. Perhaps he was purchasing a social space, in which he could put his personality on display. Zheng's study of sex workers in China revealed that "the simple ability to buy a woman with money is not a strong demonstration of masculine potency" (2009:140). Zheng argues that a man who is viewed as possessing "the power and charm to control a commercial sex worker...is the man that is most admired" (2009:140). From this perspective, Ang's seeming egalitarian banter, jokes and singing with the *meimeis* may have reflected his attempts to dominate these young women by showcasing those personality traits

that, when he was with Mei, he had to keep hidden. While there was money involved, it was important for Ang to give the appearance that he was charming these young women in part by acting as if he really cared about them. These qualities differentiate him from understandings and stereotypes that many locals associate with Taiwanese men, such as the *bazi* in Shanghai who are desired strictly for their money.

It also seems clear that Ang used his interactions with *meimeis* as a way to dominate not just the young women in the room, but as a way to elevate his status above the other men in the room as well. Ang always chose a young woman who possessed certain qualities, such as perfect posture, a soft well mannered voice, and a pleasant personality. Mirroring what Yoda (1981) and Allison (1996) have argued, one of Zheng's informants commented that "If a man has a cultured hostess beside him, she will definitely add to his reputation before other men" (2009:141). It was clearly no accident that Ang never failed to choose a young woman with those traits. On one occasion he commented that he could identify a quality *meimei* at first glance." Like the government official, he knew the proper way to consume in order to bolster his status. I would speculate that Ang asked the young woman sitting with him to leave before he arrived so as to not pose a threat to his position in the social hierarchy in the room. The official's performance of speaking gruffly to the young woman who was serving him while all but ignoring her, was clearly a show of power and domination. But Ang's ability to seemingly charm these young women, however, requires finesse and social skills that are more highly regarded than the use of political or economic power (Zheng 2009:139-41). Rather than risk overshadowing a government official Ang simply asked her to leave until his meeting was over.

In chapter 1 I briefly discussed Mahler and Pessar's "Gendered Geographies of Power" framework and how it offers us a more holistic way in which to analyze gender across and

between transnational spaces.⁷⁸ In the opening section of this chapter I discussed the differing ways that Taiwanese migrants are talked about and perceived by those I interviewed in Shanghai, Zhejiang, and Xiamen. These interviews point to the sometimes subtle ways in which social locations shift with relation to local histories, experiences, and understandings *within* the nation-state. For example, in Shanghai some referred to these men as *bazi* or uncultured country bumpkins. In Zhejiang, a much less cosmopolitan city, Mr. Li never referred to them as country bumpkins. He focused on how poorly these Taiwanese businessmen treated their workers and how they seemed to be driven by greed. In Xiamen, while many on the surface claimed “they are just like us” based on understandings of Minnan culture and state discourse related to ROC-PRC political issues. Uncle Liu felt that Taiwanese men looked down upon the local people in part because they were influenced by the Japanese occupation of Taiwan. Ting claimed she would never be interested in a Taiwanese man based on stories she had heard about “widow villages.” The term “social location” refers to “persons’ positions within power hierarchies created through historical, political, economic, geographic, kinship-based and other stratifying factors” (Mahler and Pessar 2001b:6). The above examples reflect all of these factors.

While social locations affect migrants’ access to resources and mobility, their level of agency and hence their ability to effect or transform their socio-economic status is related to individual characteristics such as initiative and imagination (Massey 1994, Mahler and Pessar 2001a, 2001b). The polarized experiences of Chin-Lung and Ang are perfect examples of the importance of individual personality traits with regard to levels of agency and creativity.

Gender is both an ongoing process (Lorber 1994, Ortner 1996) and an institutional structure (Glenn 1999, Ferree, Lorber and Hess 1999:xix). Feng and Ang’s comments about their

⁷⁸ In using the term “transnational” I am not making a political statement regarding Taiwan’s sovereignty, rather I am adopting this theoretical framework because I found it instrumental in my analysis.

improved status after migrating to the PRC with regard to what I have referred to as the hierarchy of desire points to the fluidity of gender and reveals how institutional structures can influence the masculine identities of migrants. Feng seems content to identify himself as a desirable Taiwanese businessman primarily because of economic factors. Ang, however, goes well beyond this as he negotiates his way through social relationships in ways that differentiate him from local understandings about Taiwanese men. This reveals the differences in how both Feng and Ang through practices and discourses construct their gendered identities within the context of Mainland China and in contrast to Taiwan.

6.0 A CROSS-STRAIT COUPLE IN XIAMEN: ANG AND MEI

The bulk of my interviews with and observations of Ang and Mei revolve around their interactions with locals, business associates, and friends. One of these friends was Feng, as described in chapter 5, who was involved in a cross-Strait marriage that ended in a divorce during the course of my research. In this chapter I highlight the ways in which Ang and Mei's experiences are related to local understandings and personal knowledge about cross-Strait couples, which are in turn influenced by socio-economic, historical, and political factors (discussed in earlier chapters) which are linked to and help create and maintain stereotypical ideas about these couples. The ways that couples reinforce or sidestep these stereotypes is both situational and closely related to individual personality, and can work, in some cases, to improve the social location of those involved in cross-Strait marriages.

I began this dissertation with a short excerpt from my field notes in which Mei explains to her customers that both she and Ang are from Hong Kong. My initial reaction to this lie was that it was simply a business strategy. Mei clearly didn't know these people or their views regarding Taiwan, Taiwanese businessmen, or cross-Strait couples in Mainland China, and divulging accurate information could endanger a possible sale. But after spending a considerable amount of time with this couple, it became clear that this was more than simply a business calculation. Rather, it was a coping strategy employed to avoid local stereotypes regarding cross-Strait couples in Xiamen. The ability to side-step such views, allowed Ang and Mei to

shore up or improve their social location in Xiamen. Mei, for example, rather than being viewed as a gold-digging, subservient (traditional) Xiamen bride was known to her customers and many of Ang's associates as a successful businesswoman from Hong Kong. While Ang, rather than being perceived as a desperate Taiwanese man who was unable find a bride in Taiwan was viewed as a successful Hong Kong businessman who had moved here with his wife. Although Ang also probably benefited from Mei's family and social connections just as Bouka did (chapter 3) he never mentioned it. Nonetheless the couple prefers to give the impression that they married someone from a common homeland, Hong Kong.

6.1 THE FIRST MEETING

I first met Ang and Mei through my Hong Kong Chinese friend, Leslie, who had come to Xiamen to study Mandarin. Leslie knew I was interested in interviewing cross-Strait couples in the PRC and suggested I speak to her sister-in-law (Mei) and her Taiwanese husband. Leslie is married to Mei's brother and I later learned that she had been the one to introduce Mei to Ang several years earlier. Leslie described Mei as a very busy successful businesswoman who owns a number of clothing stores in Hong Kong and Xiamen. Our first meeting was arranged by Leslie with the understanding that I would teach Mei English in exchange for interviews with her and her husband. Leslie had warned me earlier that Mei often made plans to do things but seldom had the time to follow up on them. I was to meet Mei in the lobby of an exclusive hotel to discuss our arrangement.

Mei rushed through the door 15 minutes late, wearing an expensive looking summer dress she was obviously nervous and a bit uncomfortable.⁷⁹ She quickly ushered me outside to a silver SUV explaining that her “boyfriend” (*nan pengyou*) who was waiting in the car would be joining us. Ang was less than enthusiastic about meeting me and made it a point to introduce himself as Mei’s husband. My initial impression was that Ang was uncomfortable with a foreign man spending time with his wife and had insisted on coming along. As far as Mei referring to Ang as her boyfriend, I have never fully understood, but perhaps she thought I would be more apt to help her if she were unmarried.⁸⁰

As we drove to a restaurant for our first meeting, I asked Mei if she was from Xiamen and she said that she lived in Xiamen until she was 18 then moved to Hong Kong, so she considers herself a “Hong Kong woman.” She spoke to me in a mixture of Mandarin and English, often pausing to speak to Ang, who I later learned was indeed, her husband, in a mixture of Minnan Hua and Cantonese. I made it a point to speak Mandarin so Ang could understand everything I was saying.

Mei was in her mid-thirties and Ang around forty. She explained that she planned to meet with me twice a week when her business settled down. She is often abroad in Italy or France during certain times of the year buying clothing for her stores.

When asked, Ang said he was from Taiwan and has lived on the Mainland for twelve years (three in Guangzhou, five in Shanghai, and four in Xiamen). Throughout our conversation both of them commented on how much they loved living in Xiamen. Ang explained that they had moved there because of the clean environment, the pace of island life, and because they both

⁷⁹ I later found out that the dress was purchased in Paris on one of her business trips.

⁸⁰ Recall Yue hid her marriage from her American employers as she thought they would be more interested in a single woman.

wanted to be close to the ocean. At one point I made the mistake of asking about “their store” and Mei was quick to point out that the clothing store was *her* business. Although Ang often “helps out” (he usually works there each day from 8:00 AM to noon). I later learned that Ang owns his own ball bearing factory outside of Shanghai, which he visits about once a month. They said that “they” owned two apartments, one in Hong Kong and one in Xiamen, as well as a house in Taiwan.

We arrived at a local seafood restaurant where they seemed to know everyone. The walk back to our private dining room was punctuated by frequent stops to acknowledge the many diners who knew Ang and Mei and were curious about me. I was introduced as their “new American friend.” I later learned that the manager of the restaurant, a woman of about 25, was married to Mei’s younger brother. During dinner Mei spoke primarily about her business and how much she enjoyed traveling to Europe. Ang remained mostly silent. Afterwards they drove me to Mei’s clothing store.

Mei’s store was situated in a very expensive section of Xiamen directly across the street from a row of exclusive cafés and an expensive hotel where many wealthy foreigners visiting Xiamen choose to stay. There were four women employees working in the store that evening. All were around 25 years old, tall and thin, and each of them wore identical makeup and hairstyles. I was quickly ushered into the back room where there was a comfortable couch, several expensive-looking leather chairs, a coffee table and various wall hangings. Ang made us tea while Mei spoke with her employees and several customers at the front of the store. During the half-hour I spent in the back room with Ang I made it a point of mentioning that I was happily married and my wife would be joining me in several weeks.⁸¹ Once that was out of the way, Ang

⁸¹ In hindsight I was working to subvert a common stereotype about middle-aged western men who visit China.

seemed to relax a bit. We had a good conversation about life in Xiamen and arranged to meet again the following day.

6.2 THE APARTMENT

The following day Ang picked me up at my apartment and explained that we had to stop by his apartment so he could change out of his work clothes. His work clothes consisted of black pants, a white shirt with a button-down collar and black leather shoes. The apartment was about a half hour drive from mine, situated on the other side of the island. Ang and Mei's neighborhood was much quieter and cleaner than either my neighborhood or the downtown area. Ang explained that most people living in this neighborhood were not from Xiamen and wanted more space.⁸² I later learned that Mei and Ang's neighbors included PRC government officials, Japanese expats, and many Mainland Chinese people who used these apartments as vacation homes. In the time I spent in this community I did not see anyone else who appeared to be a "westerner".⁸³ There were several Taiwanese owned businesses (primarily tea shops and restaurants) which led me to believe that there must be Taiwanese people in the community to support these businesses. However, the only Taiwanese people Ang introduced me to in this neighborhood were those who owned and operated their tea shops.

As we drove into the gated community, we passed a security check point where a guard waved us through. Within this community there were quite a few seafood restaurants, a McDonalds, a KFC, and a Wal-Mart. I also spotted a host of tea shops, grocery stores and

⁸² In many parts of Xiamen, the houses, apartments and streets tended to be quite crowded and noisy even by Chinese standards.

⁸³ Many "westerners" lived outside of the city in exclusive communities.

several KTVs. As we drove into the parking lot an attendant showed us to an open space. The area surrounding the apartment building was landscaped with tropical trees, a well maintained lawn, and a trellis-covered walkway covered in grape vines. An attendant stationed inside the building greeted Ang and motioned us towards the elevator. When we reached the door Ang rang the bell and his housekeeper let us in. He introduced me as his American friend and introduced her as his Indonesian housekeeper. He later explained that Indonesian housekeepers are better than Chinese housekeepers because they are more particular and less trouble. He told her to prepare some snacks for us as he motioned me towards the couch and went into his room to change.

The apartment was approx 150 square meters in area, with two bedrooms (one for their housekeeper), an office, two bathrooms, a large dining room with seating for eight, a glassed-in open kitchen, and a walkout balcony off the living room. The floors were polished marble. In the living room there was a big screen TV, a large aquarium, an impressive sound system, a leather couch flanked by two overstuffed chairs, and a coffee table, upon which sat a tea service. The photos on the wall were all of Ang and Mei attending various high-end social functions. On a later visit several weeks later Ang made it a point to show me their closets. His was in the spare bedroom and contained several white shirts, a couple of black polo shirts, six pairs of black pants, and two Italian suits. “Men don’t need much” he said. Mei’s closet was twice the size of Ang’s and was packed with dresses (I never saw Mei wear anything but dresses) and shoes. “Women never have enough,” Ang said as he shook his head.

It was not until I was reviewing my field notes that I was struck by the absence of wedding portraits which commonly adorn the walls of many Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese couples (Adrian 2003, Constable 2006). Ang had once mentioned to me that they had been

married in Xiamen but didn't elaborate. It figures that when friends and business associates visit their apartment, questions might be raised as to why they were married in Xiamen rather than Hong Kong—Mei's "home".⁸⁴ Another explanation could be the fact that this was Ang's second marriage (as discussed in Chapter 5). I often wondered if, given Mei's strong aversion to Xiamen men that she too may have been previously married, perhaps to a local man. Although on several occasions I tried to steer the conversation in this direction, by asking about how common divorce was in the PRC, or how divorce law had changed, I was often met with silence. Regardless, Mei and Ang were clearly not a typical Xiamen couple. They didn't plan to have children (although Ang has a daughter from a previous marriage), and given the photos on the wall, tended to portray themselves more as cosmopolitan socialites than a couple focused on raising children.

Mei and Ang's apartment's location, in an exclusive gated community did more than distinguish them from the local community. As Pei-Chia Lan has argued, "people fortify spatial segregation in the built environment to make concrete the existence of social boundaries, thereby avoiding trespass and consolidating the exclusion of minority groups" (2006:19). However, in this case, the physical location of Ang and Mei's apartment also works to distinguish them from a group (Taiwanese) of which Ang is a part. It differentiated them from other cross-Strait couples and Taiwanese businesspeople that often choose to live in their own enclaves on the outskirts of Xiamen.⁸⁵ In Taiwan the media has referred to some of these Taiwanese enclaves as "second wife villages," where Taiwanese men are said to establish a second household on the Mainland (Chang 1999:80). This may be in part the reason Ang and Mei chose not to live in a

⁸⁴ While bridal portraits seldom include the actual ceremony, Xiamen's local scenery would surely be included in portraits taken locally. I regularly witnessed many couples having their wedding portraits taken in Xiamen at various beaches and parks.

⁸⁵ There are also several apartment complexes, like Vincent's (Chapter 5) in the city proper which cater primarily to Taiwanese businesspeople and tend to be surrounded by Taiwanese owned and/or managed businesses such as restaurants, tea shops and salons.

Taiwanese community. More importantly perhaps, is the fact that had Ang and Mei lived in one of these communities they would be hard pressed to deny that they were a cross-Strait couple, and would be subject to the stereotypes surrounding this designation.

It was only on my first visit to their apartment that Ang made it a point to knock on his door, so the maid would let us in. On later visits he made a point of always finding something for the maid to do, be it to take off his shoes, prepare a snack, or find a particular shirt he had misplaced. On one occasion, Ang and Mei drove their maid to Mei's store to work, on another they dropped her off at Mei's sister's flower shop to help out. Ang had been quick to point out to me that his maid was from Indonesia rather than the Mainland. Indonesian maids are the most sought after in Taiwan because of they are regarded as more docile and obedient than maids from other areas of Southeastern Asia (Lan 2006). Ang seems to have brought with him the idea that a live-in Indonesian maid is a marker of wealth and social status. But there is also a practical side. An Indonesian maid would make a good impression on Taiwanese friends and business associates who visit or live in the area. While I cannot speak to local ideas and perceptions about Indonesian maids, most of those with whom Mei and Ang socialized would probably have been impressed. I would assume that most who knew Ang and Mei were well aware that they employed an Indonesian maid.

Mei and Ang's apartment, situated in an exclusive community on the other side of the island, simultaneously worked to distinguish the couple from both the local population and other cross-Strait couples in the area. The addition of an Indonesian maid (which Ang explained was rare in the PRC) living in their household marked them as quite unique in their community and more like Hong Kong people who prefer Indonesian maids (Constable 2007). Although it is not uncommon for families to employ a live-in maid to help out with the cooking, cleaning and child

or elderly care, Ang and Mei had no children and seldom ate at home. As was the case in de Regt's study of domestic workers in Yemen "employing migrant domestic workers has become a strong sign of social status" (2008:593). Employing Indonesian maids in particular, who are considered more obedient and easier to control, is in no small part due to the promotion of these women as ideal workers by the Indonesian government, and is clearly a marker of status (Constable 2007, de Regt 2008, Lan 2006). These markers of distinction reflect the fact that class is "a matter of practice and process" that is ongoing and involves the construction and ongoing maintenance of boundaries (Lan 2006, Liechty 2005:3).

I often thought it strange that Ang would ask me what shoes I thought he should wear with certain outfits when he was always much better dressed than I was. Often when we went to coffee shops or cafes he would grab a stack of car magazines and ask me which car I thought was better. More often than not he was torn between BMW and Mercedes. On one occasion, after an hour of this I told him I didn't even own a car. I rode the bus. But this did not diminish the importance of my opinion. It seemed that I was viewed as an authority in such matters simply because I was a "westerner," which seemed to carry an assumption of taste, at least with regard to clothing and cars. Ang's constant questioning about such things were a testament to his ongoing search for items that would mark him as one with taste that would be admired by those who he would come into contact with, whether they be locals, expats from Asia, or from the west. On the other hand, perhaps Ang wanted to demonstrate to me that he knew what items of conspicuous consumption would bolster his image. This speaks to how important it was for Ang and Mei to construct and maintain a global, transnational modern identity which would place them well outside local understandings about cross-Strait couples and the local population.

6.3 MEI: HONG KONG, SHANGHAI AND XIAMEN WOMEN COMPARED

Several weeks I initially met Ang and Mei, my wife Qian and I were invited to join them for dinner. Upon meeting Qian, Ang commented that she was very tall and thin (often regarded as good traits in China) and that I must feel very lucky. Mei, who is about six inches shorter than Qian, and of medium build didn't appreciate this comment which set the tone for the evening. Qian and Mei's conversations revolved around western opera, classical music and Broadway plays. It seemed to me that they were competing with each other about their knowledge and appreciation of Western arts. For example, Mei mentioned that she enjoyed opera, to which Qian asked what particular style of opera she liked. Mei had trouble answering and was clearly embarrassed. To compensate Mei began to focus on her Hong Kongness. She explained that she moved to Hong Kong at least 10 years before she was 18 (which conflicts with her earlier claim of moving to Hong Kong after she was 18), and considered herself a Hong Kong girl. At one point Ang started to tell one of his usual entertaining stories when Mei cut him off and told him to stop being so active just because Qian was there. Ang tried to remedy the situation by moving closer to Mei and putting some food on her plate (a common sign of closeness between couples in China) but Mei asked him to not do so. Ang then turned to me and tried to start a conversation about cars, and Mei interrupted him and asked me about my research. As soon as I mentioned Xiamen, she explained that she and Ang had moved to Xiamen because of the slow pace, clean air, and good seafood. This was an explanation I would hear many times in my interactions with them.

Soon after, the conversation shifted to the status of women in China. This is when she made the comment below as mentioned in chapter 4.

Women in Xiamen are too easily controlled. The men are in charge here. Women don't argue with their husbands. They do whatever the man wants to do. The men here yell at their wives and beat them if they don't listen. At home the woman has to cook, but usually doesn't eat with her husband. She eats in the kitchen. Ang and I are not like that.

I had intended to explore this further, but her next comment shifted the focus to Shanghai women. Knowing that my wife is from Shanghai, she commented "Xiamen women think too little of themselves, but Shanghai women think too much about themselves." She shook her head "it's too much." After an uncomfortable silence, Qian deflected the comment by complimenting Mei on her dress. Mei suggested we all visit her store.

When we arrived at the store it became clear that Mei's goal was to convince Qian to buy a particularly expensive dress. Ang ushered me to the back room and whispered that he would like to take me with him to a wedding on the following day. I later found out that he was whispering so that Qian would not hear. They did not invite her along.

The next day when Ang picked me up, he looked at me sheepishly and asked, "Is your wife upset about this?" "No," I said, "She's very busy anyway." Once I was in the car, Mei continued the conversation that had ended abruptly over last night's dinner. She explained that money is not the most important thing in life and that she and Ang enjoy their lives rather than working all of the time. "Money is not so important" she repeated. Ang raised his eyebrows at me in the mirror. Mei, like many people in China, consider Shanghai women as being too overbearing or gold diggers or at least obsessed with accumulating money. Ang interceded and asked if we would ever consider living in Xiamen for good. I told him I liked Xiamen but that both of us wanted to get jobs in the United States. Mei asked why Qian didn't want to live in

China since “she *is* Chinese.” I explained that after living in the United States for over five years she felt that her personality was a better cultural fit there. Qian had told me that many Chinese consider her to be too strong and outspoken. Mei said that at Qian’s age (she was 35 at the time) she felt the same way, but after 10 years away she missed her home and wanted to live near her family. This was the only time that I heard Mei openly refer to Xiamen as her natal home, and describe her desire to live in Xiamen as a longing to be close to her family. She also described herself as someone who enjoys life and doesn’t work all the time.

I found the latter comment strange as well, as she spends the majority of her time away on business. Perhaps she wanted to further differentiate herself from what she perceived as a negative trait related to money-driven Shanghai women. Part of the reason for Mei’s sharp comments about Shanghai women probably stem from Ang’s experiences with his first wife, as discussed in the previous chapter. In addition, as discussed in chapter four, the characterization of Shanghai women as manipulative, self-serving gold diggers is quite common in China.

Mei made it a point to differentiate herself from both Shanghai women and Xiamen women by characterizing them as two extremes, while attempting to define herself as a more moderate and reasonable Hong Kong woman. While the aggressive manner in which she treated Ang may have been a reaction to him complimenting Qian, it also differentiated her from subservient Xiamen women and marked her as a strong woman who doesn’t take a back seat to her husband. At the same time her comments about Shanghai women attempted to differentiate her from women who are too strong. Mei’s self-portrayal as a Hong Kong woman, allows her more social space in which to reconfigure her identity. Identifying herself as an outsider in Xiamen allows Mei to move beyond expected gender roles at the local level. Her ability to do this is closely related to her marriage to Ang, himself an outsider. If she were married to a local

man she would be hard pressed to claim that she was not what she considers a typical Xiamen wife. A Hong Kong couple, on the other hand, would be expected to act in ways that are outside of the local norm. My experiences with Ang and Mei revealed that the practice of cross-border marriage can also (in some cases) offer the migrant's partner the social space in which to reconfigure their identity as well. The fact that Mei's conversations often involved reinforcing her identity as a Hong Kong woman points to the fact that this is an ongoing process that requires constant maintenance.

6.4 A "TRADITIONAL" WEDDING IN ZHANGZHOU

On our way to what Ang later jokingly referred to as the "traditional" wedding I asked Ang and Mei what their relationship was to the wedding couple. Mei explained that they were attending as a favor for a business associate and that we wouldn't stay for long. They were just obligated to make an appearance.

When we pulled up to the hotel, a red carpet ran from the entry to the sidewalk flanked by no less than 30 men in black suits passing out cigarettes to every guest. In the entryway the couple stood in western style white dress and black suit, and greeted each guest. This was all documented by a professional camera crew. The bride's mother stood beside her and collected red envelopes (*hongbao*) from the arriving guests. These were recorded in a ledger by another women sitting at a small desk.

We were escorted upstairs to a huge banquet hall and were seated at the Xiamen table. Each circular table seated 12 and there were well over 40 tables on each side of a central red carpet, which led to a large stage. On the wall by each table there was a flat-screen plasma

television which showed the couple greeting the guests at the entrance. A sound and light technician booth was at the back of the room with three people operating the controls. The speakers played current Mainland Chinese pop love songs.

A waiter offered us *baijiu* (a strong grain alcohol), red wine or juice, and poured us all tea. The room was only half full and we waited for over an hour before all the guests were seated. As each couple arrived at our table Ang introduced himself, Mei and me (my American doctor friend). During that time I learned that the groom had studied in New York and earned a masters degree (no one seemed to know in what subject), and had returned to his hometown to marry a local girl and take over his father's business (a factory of some sort).

As the couple made their entrance the Bridal March played as they walked through the heavy smoke (created by a fog machine). Once they reached the elevated stage area they sat at the head table with their family members. The Master of ceremonies walked on stage and began a half-hour routine welcoming the guests and telling amusing anecdotes about the couple. Next a young woman, probably in her mid-20's appeared holding a saxophone and "played" several Kenny G songs although it was clear to me that the music being played over the speakers was a Kenny G recording. Next, the couple stood on each side of what appeared to be a Menorah complete with nine unlit candles. As each of them touched a candle on either side it was electronically lit. When they got to the ninth candle they both touched it at the same time. Immediately following, the father of the bride danced with the bride and shortly after several couples joined in.

Dinner was served in twelve courses starting with oysters Rockefeller, sharks fin soup, fresh seafood, and much later, culminating with a whole roasted piglet for each table. Towards the end of the evening the couple cut the wedding cake (western style) and fed each other a

violent mouthful. Throughout the evening the couple and their parents stopped at each table thanking the guests for coming. They made it a point to stop at our table and speak with Mei and Ang who introduced me to the couple. I thanked them for allowing me to attend and wished them luck. The groom said something in English which I could not understand but I smiled and nodded and they moved on to the next table.

Throughout the meal it seemed that the others at our table thought highly of Mei and Ang, often asking questions about potential business opportunities and real estate investments. Most were curious about me and asked me a lot of questions about life in the United States. Throughout the meal Mei and Ang chatted quietly with the other couples at the table and acted quite reserved compared to most of the others at our table, and for that matter those at the surrounding tables. At several of the tables the *baijiu* had begun to take its toll and some became loud and belligerent. As the party began to get louder, Ang and Mei suggested we leave early so we could get back to Xiamen by mid-night. This was the most subdued I had ever seen Mei and Ang in a public setting.

6.5 DISJUNCTURE AND RECOVERY IN HAIWAN PARK

One evening I asked Ang what he thought about the new bar that had opened in Haiwan Park. He said he hadn't heard about it and suggested we go and check it out. This bar was opened by a man from Sweden (Ulf) and his Chinese wife. It is situated on the beach, has live music and offers a nice view Gulang Yu Island in the evening. It is frequented almost exclusively by Westerners. This bar is somewhat unique in that its owners discourage *meimeis* from approaching the customers. In an earlier conversation Ulf had told me that westerners are

bothered by Chinese women plying them for drinks and attention at every bar in Xiamen. He and his wife wanted to offer customers a different experience. I was curious about what Ang might think about that kind of setting.

When we arrived, it was not too busy and all the customers were Westerners. In fact, aside from the employees Ang was the only person who appeared to be Chinese. While I had become accustomed to him taking the lead, in this situation he was much louder and much more aggressive than usual. He began barking orders at the help, and moved from one table to the next until he was satisfied with the view. By the time we were seated at our third table, I felt self-conscious and scanned the room. No one, however, seemed to take notice of Ang's behavior even as he yelled across the room for someone to hurry over to light his cigarette. As we settled in, he seemed impressed with the place, but later he became frustrated when he couldn't find any *meimeis* to sit with us. Ang suggested that in the future he should bring his own *meimei* with him since none are available at the bar. In his frustration this was one of the few times I heard him refer to young women so openly as commodities that should be readily available.

Later that evening he repeatedly tried to call a *meimei* on his cell phone to join us, but she did not answer and he became very agitated. When she did call back about an hour later she apologized and said that she was out having fun. A few minutes later I heard him angrily tell her not to bullshit him. When I asked him what was wrong, he said the girl told him she loved him and missed him. He ended the call telling her he would go to see her tomorrow. After hanging up, however, he told me that he would never call her again and deleted her number from his phone. Not surprisingly, soon after he suggested that we call it a night.

On our way to the car two attractive young women walked past us. Ang smiled widely and said (in English) "Hello." Both of the girls scowled at him and hurried by us. Ang was

furious. He yelled (in Chinese) “I have traveled all over the world and those *xiaojie* think they are better than me! They have probably never been out of Xiamen.” For a moment I thought he was going to follow them and tell them off but eventually he calmed down. This was the only time I witnessed Ang losing his composure in public and afterwards he was clearly embarrassed. On the way home he told me that he would be really busy the next few days so would not have a chance to contact me as Mei would be coming back from Hong Kong soon.

The following week Ang called and asked if Qian and I would like to join him and Mei at Haiwan Park. Much to my relief, Qian and Mei seemed to get along well and walked together well behind us so we wouldn't overhear their whispered conversation. Ang for his part was quite relaxed. We were shown to our table without incident and spent a relaxed evening in quiet conversation. While Mei and Ang were not quite as subdued as they were at the wedding discussed above, but they were more soft spoken than usual. Mei and Qian spent most of the evening talking about women's fashion. At one point Qian mentioned that Xiamen women tend to wear cheap, ugly clothes. Much to my surprise, Mei was not offended in the least. In fact she agreed wholeheartedly and continued the conversation. After a few minutes, Ang who was clearly not interested in the topic of conversation leaned over and pointed out a group of about 20 Chinese men and women who were standing on the beach staring at those of us in the bar, openly pointing at various people, commenting and laughing, as though we were performing on stage. After staring at them for a bit, Ang turned to me and said, “locals, they don't know how to act” as he shook his head.

As discussed in chapter 5, Ang is very careful about differentiating *meimei* places and wife places. After our uncomfortable first visit, he seemed to have recognized that Haiwan Park was not a *meimei* place or a typical Xiamen bar. Towards the end of the evening Mei mentioned

that it was Ang's idea that we all get together at the park. As I know that Ang prides himself on his ability to adapt to different social settings, this led me to think that he might have wanted to redeem himself from his previous experience. Having Mei with him allowed him to do just that while also allowing him to further differentiate himself from those who "don't know how to act."

6.6 A SHORT MEETING WITH MEI: DANCING IN HONG KONG

Mei called me one afternoon and asked if I could help her with her English and I readily agreed. We met at a coffee shop where she insisted we sit away from everyone else. This could have been because she was embarrassed by her English, sitting with me (a foreign male), or embarrassed by the fact that someone was teaching her. I have noticed in group conversations she likes to add English words whenever possible, and I have heard her friends comment on her good English. So it was possible she didn't want anyone to know that she couldn't speak fluent English. Perhaps this is because if she was from Hong Kong she would have studied English in School.

I started by asking her how her recent trip to Hong Kong was. She opened the conversation by explaining that she was very busy in Hong Kong but loves it there because there are a lot of fun places to go. "Like where" I asked. She leaned forward and said that she likes to go dancing but can't go with Ang because he moves "like a stone." "He hates dancing" she added. So sometimes after work, she explained, she likes to go to dance clubs. Then she laughed and said that the funny part was that every time she goes, Ang calls her. So she has to turn off her cell phone and tell Ang later that she couldn't hear the call. "He gets so mad," she said

smiling. Just then her phone rang and she said she had “business” to take care of and had to leave.

This was my only one-on-one meeting with Mei and it lasted all of fifteen minutes. Her reason for meeting with me seemed ultimately to have little to do with learning English. I highly doubted that she was unaware of Ang’s activities with *meimeis* and perhaps Mei wanted to tell me these things about herself to highlight the fact that she too had her own recreational activities that did not include Ang. She was not a stereotypical submissive wife (read Xiamen wife) who was under her husband’s control. Her comments about Ang getting so upset when he couldn’t reach her coupled with her wide smile drove the point home.

6.7 A FAILED CROSS-STRAIT MARRIAGE

Ang picked me up in the afternoon and announced that we were going to meet Feng, who was in town for the day. I asked if he was visiting from Beijing and Ang explained that Feng had moved back to Jinmen Island a few months ago. As Feng walked up to the car I could tell he wasn’t his usual happy-go-lucky self. He forced a smile and told me it was nice to see me again. He began an animated conversation with Ang in Minnan dialect. Ang asked a lot of questions and the conversation seemed quite serious. After a few minutes I asked what the problem was. Feng replied he was very close to finalizing his divorce. He continued, “My baby girl is only three months old so it doesn’t matter.” Then he turned towards Ang and continued their conversation. During a break in the conversation I asked Feng why he was getting divorced. He replied, “My wife is from the country...and she is Christian...so she does not believe abortion.” I told him I didn’t quite understand and he shrugged it off and continued his conversation with Ang.

Ang drove us to Seaside, the same restaurant we had visited when I first met Feng. Our room overlooked the beach as before and was well furnished. Ang ordered a bevy of dishes and a case of beer. About 30 young women crowded into the room and Ang told Feng to pick one to cheer him up. After walking up and down the line of girls Feng settled on a tall young woman of about 20. Ang chose one for himself and one for me. He saw I was still uncomfortable with this type of arrangement and whispered to me “just to pour drinks and sing.” We spent most of the afternoon playing *kai* (a dice game) and listening to Feng sing duets with the young woman he had chosen. Ang allowed Feng to be the focus of the afternoon by downplaying his personality. After several hours Ang said we had to go soon and suggested that Feng take his *meimei* to the second floor. After a half an hour they both returned and Ang gave the young women 200RMB each and Feng tipped the *meimei* who was with him another 100RMB. This is one of the few times I have seen Ang openly pay the young women at Seaside. On this occasion Ang seemed more focused on trying to cheer Feng up than to bolster his own status.

As we walked to the car I asked Feng again about his divorce. He half staggered over to me put his arm around me and said, “it doesn’t matter. There are many *meimeis* in China. Anyway, the PRC can send a rocket to the moon, but the people in the countryside don’t even know about toilets yet.” He fell asleep in the car as Ang drove me home. I told Ang I was aware of a population imbalance of women on the Mainland relative to men and he explained that in the countryside that may be true because many women move to the city. “In the cities there are plenty of women,” he said. I asked Ang what the story was with Feng and he waved his hand, palm out and shook his head, to indicate that he didn’t want to talk about it.

Several days later Ang called and asked me out for coffee. He explained that this is a very busy time for him so he didn’t have much free time, only a few hours. He drove us to a very

expensive coffee shop near the area where he lives. As we walked in, as usual, he quickened his pace and started ordering the staff to find us a good table, settling on one in the corner. He flirted with the waitress and introduced her as his *meimei*. I responded that he had a very large family. To which they both laughed. Then he said “beautiful girl” in English and I said “sure.” He then told me she was Chinese, and told her I was his American doctor friend. Next he ordered some Taiwanese sausage and a club sandwich for us to split. Then he said “newspaper” in English and led me to the newspaper display. He asked the manager if there were any English language newspapers and she smiled and said no. I didn’t think there would be. In this part of Xiamen I had never seen anyone who appeared to be a Westerner. Ang told the manager that he brings a lot of *laowai* here so she should have some next time. She nodded okay.

We returned to our table and quietly read our newspapers until the food arrived. This gave me an opportunity to ask him about Feng’s divorce. I said that Feng had told me that his wife was Christian and would not get an abortion. So I wondered if that was why he was getting a divorce. Ang laughed and said “no, he was just drunk that day. He’s getting divorced because his wife is from the countryside and doesn’t think like he does.” “What do you mean?” I asked. Ang answered, “She’s from the country, uneducated and is kind of stupid. For example, Mei and I invited them to our home several months ago and Feng’s wife was mesmerized by the amount of clothes Mei had in her closet. So the next day she went out and bought a ton of clothes. Feng wouldn’t have minded but she didn’t buy them for any particular person, she just bought clothes. Feng asked her, “Who are these for? You? Me? The baby?” She couldn’t answer.” Ang explained “She just wanted to buy clothes. Mei and I didn’t know what to say. This is just one example, but these things happen all the time.” Then he grabbed his cell phone and called Feng, who was on Jinmen Island. Feng answered but couldn’t talk because he was holding his sleeping

baby. After Ang hung up I asked if the baby had a Taiwanese passport and he said “sure, that way it can travel anywhere.” I asked, “does the baby live with the mother on the Mainland or with Feng in Taiwan?” “Both,” he said. He abruptly changed the subject to the weather...rainy and cold.

Despite my attempts in the following months to learn more about Feng’s situation, I could get no more information. Feng’s comment regarding the baby being a girl “so it doesn’t matter” coupled with his comment on abortion, could be related to the common preference for male children. Perhaps the divorce was related to his wife’s refusal to get an abortion, but Ang didn’t think that was the reason. The fact that the baby was at Feng’s home on Taiwan’s Jinmen Island, given his earlier comments, was surprising. Given Feng’s circumstances and his views regarding Mainland women, I had thought that he might abandon both the baby and the mother. Children born on the Mainland can be brought to Taiwan, but whether in this case it was within or outside the law is unknown. Finally, this reinforces a point made in the previous chapter, that both Ang and Feng clearly express a low opinion of rural Mainland women. This brought up an interesting point.

While Mei’s regular characterization of herself as a Hong Kong woman works to differentiate her from local women and works to elevate her social location, this claim also worked to set Ang apart from Taiwanese men who marry rural Mainland women. As discussed in Chapter 4, Mainland brides in Taiwan are often portrayed in the media as uneducated, poor women from rural areas, while their husbands are typically depicted as older, poor, mostly rural men who cannot find a wife in Taiwan. Although Xiamen is on the East Coast it is still considered by many to be somewhat off the beaten path and in many ways it is considered a “traditional” town. Mei herself has discussed the low status of women in Xiamen which is tied to

customary patriarchal practices. It seems the adoption of Hong Kong as a surrogate homeland simultaneously differentiated Mei from Xiamen women, and Ang from men who marry uneducated, and according to Ang, plentiful rural women. Mei's identity as a "Hong Kong woman," therefore elevated their social locations as individuals and as a couple in Xiamen.

6.8 CONCLUSION

Mei and Ang's decision to settle in Xiamen, rather than Taiwan involves a number of factors that go well beyond the "clean environment" and the "pace of island life." Settling in Taiwan, as discussed in Chapter 4, was never a serious consideration given Mei's reaction to my questions about living there. Why would they consider moving to a place where both their social locations would suffer? She would be referred to as a "Mainland bride," who in Taiwan are often portrayed as "prostitutes," "uneducated," and "poor." Even advocates for Mainland brides in Taiwan portray them as marrying primarily for economic purposes (Hsia 2009). Further, Taiwanese husbands are regularly described as undesirable "peasants" who are too undesirable to find Taiwanese brides (Hsia 2009:27). It is no wonder Mei laughed at the idea of living in Taiwan.

The possibility of improving his economic situation was the primary reason that Ang moved to the Mainland. Recall that when I asked Ang why he had moved to the Mainland his response was "to make money." Ang had taken advantage of the PRC's preferential policies by opening a factory in a special economic zone outside of Shanghai which supplied him with a substantial income. In Mei's case her store relied heavily on Xiamen's tourist industry. Her

customers, tourists, who for the most part had come to Xiamen on holiday from other parts of China or abroad, had the means to afford her products whereas most locals did not. Xiamen's status as a popular tourist destination was an important factor. In addition, the overall cost of living in Xiamen, considering its location is quite reasonable. However, Ang and Mei's reasons for *remaining* in Xiamen go well beyond economics.

Although Mei only included missing her family and home as a reason for moving back to Xiamen on one occasion I believe it was an important factor in her decision probably subsumed within her comments about the "nice environment." While I did not meet her family (aside from her sister-in-law Leslie), on several occasions I accompanied Ang when he went to pick her up from her parent's home, which she did visit regularly. Although I could not see the building where her family lived, it was situated in an old, very cramped, low income section of Xiamen. The narrow streets packed with pedestrians could barely accommodate Ang's SUV. Mei's expensive clothing differentiated her from the rest of the crowd as she emerged from a narrow alley. When returning from her visits Mei was always in a good mood, laughing, and very talkative and spoke strictly Minnan hua, aside from greeting me in Mandarin.

It also seems clear that Minnan culture plays a role in their decision to settle in Xiamen. While Ang and Mei both spoke Cantonese and Mandarin, their native language was Minnan hua. I often had to politely remind them that they were speaking Minnan hua when they spoke to me. They often hadn't realized they had switched languages in mid-sentence. While I was not privy to them participating in all of the traditional practices associated with Minnan culture, such as publicly burning "money" for their ancestors, which is wide-spread in Xiamen and Taiwan, I do know that they visited a temple dedicated to *Mazu* a deity discussed in chapter 4, who is honored

on both sides of the Taiwan Straits.⁸⁶ Ang showed me the temple one afternoon and introduced me to the keeper, who asked if he and Mei would be visiting again soon. Also Ang prides himself on preparing and enjoying tea in the “Minnan way” which is a reflection of his pride in Minnan culture. Given these issues, living in a Minnan cultural area would appeal to both Mei and Ang.

Xiamen’s close proximity to Taiwan and Hong Kong is also important for several practical reasons. Mei needs to regularly visit her store in Hong Kong. They both visit Taiwan via Hong Kong regularly. Ang’s parents still live in Taiwan, and Mei and Ang own property there. Xiamen’s location coupled with its reputation as a popular tourist site also helps them maintain social networks on the Mainland and abroad. Feng was only one of many visitors that Ang and Mei regularly received in Xiamen. During the course of my fieldwork they received guests from Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and England, as well as quite a number of domestic guests.

Xiamen’s location also offers them a hidden benefit: the ability to be “foreigners” while not being too foreign. It allows them enough social space to act outside of the local norms, while not being cast as clear outsiders. This position however, requires constant reinforcement.

Ang and Mei’s ability to sidestep local understandings about cross-Strait couples is highly reliant on maintaining flexible, situational identities which allowed them to adapt to various social environments. In the two situations that I witnessed in which they did not accomplish this, Mei’s comments about Shanghai women over dinner, and Ang’s first visit to Haiwan Park, they both made it a point to repair the situation. Recall Mei’s taking no offence to Qian’s comments about Xiamen clothes (doing so would cast her as a local woman), and Ang

⁸⁶ See Strathern and Stewart 2003, 2007 and Mayfair Mei-hui Yang 2004.

pointing out those who “don’t know how to act.” This also points to their initiative, persistence and flexibility, personality traits that greatly aid them in presenting what Kondo has described as “the illusion of a seamless and coherent whole” self (1990:14).

Differentiating themselves from local understandings of cross-Strait couples on in Xiamen is an ongoing process for Mei and Ang. Mei prides herself on being a successful Hong Kong woman, and her marriage to Ang (a pseudo-foreigner) allows her more social space in which to negotiate this identity. In turn, Ang’s marriage to Mei (a Hong Kong woman) offers him the social space to differentiate himself from Taiwanese men who marry Mainland women. While their case is certainly not typical, it does highlight the connections between, cross-border marriage, identity and class. Most importantly it emphasizes one of the ways in which cross-border marriage can be a source of power that can be employed to avoid commonly held views of those involved in these relationships resulting in higher social status at the local level. In essence, Ang and Mei “speak and act themselves...into cultural reality” (Liechty 2005:3).

7.0 CONCLUSION

This dissertation has addressed some of the ways that geopolitical issues, media representations, local histories and understandings influence the processes of migration and family formation in both the ROC and PRC. Just as important, however, are the ways in which individuals and couples respond to these processes, which are related to their level of initiative and creativity and have a powerful influence on their lives and marital relations. While the bulk of my data was collected in Mainland China, I also considered media representations, government policies and academic literature originating in Taiwan.

As discussed in chapter 2, despite the various marriage law reforms which affirm that men and women have equal rights, the long-term practice of interpreting and enforcing marriage law based on local, traditional, often patriarchal understandings regarding marriage and gender roles have brought about recovery of “patriarchal domination” particularly in China’s rural areas (Harrell 2001:8). Traditional marriage practices, such as patrilocal marriage it has been argued, have “defined and shaped women’s place in Chinese society more than any other set of factors” (Johnson 1983:3, Watson 1991). Also discussed in Chapter 2 were government policies and programs such as the *hukou*, and *danwei* systems have further influenced marital migration patterns in the PRC. The well documented inequalities of the *hukou* system effectively reinforced a system of spatial hypergamy which encourages potential brides to migrate from poorer areas to more prosperous ones. It has recently become more common for brides to migrate over longer

distances across provincial borders for marriage. After migrating, however, often with the intent of “marrying up,” many of these women face discrimination in their new environment and are considered “double outsiders” as they are looked upon as outsiders both in the community and within the household. Mainland Chinese men, on the other hand, seldom migrate for marriage because it is most often considered a humiliating experience for the husband. Given the cultural understandings about marriage and gender in the PRC it seems that within the PRC, the migrating spouse, whether it be the husband or wife, is often at a disadvantage.

For those involved in cross-Strait marriages, political relations between the PRC and ROC, particularly issues related to Taiwan’s status as a sovereign nation, have a profound effect on their lives (Friedman 2010a, b). Mainland brides living in Taiwan are often portrayed in the media and in government studies as a threat to Taiwan’s population quality, prostitutes, spies, and potential “run-away brides” (Chang 2003, Hsia 2007, 2009, Taipei Times 2003, United Daily 2006, Wang and Belanger 2008). Wang and Belanger argue that “differential legal and social citizenship” places these brides at the “bottom of the social hierarchy in Taiwanese society” (2008:91). In some cases, Taiwanese men married to Mainland women in Taiwan, are also considered a treat to Taiwan’s population quality, and are often described as desperate, unpatriotic or peasants (Hsia 2009, Wang and Belanger 2008, Yiu 2004).

Those cross-Strait couples who settle on the Mainland, however, are treated quite differently. Consider the case of Mei and Ang. Mei lived a short drive from her natal home and had easy access to family and support networks. She often pointed out the ways in which her marriage to Ang was more egalitarian than traditional marriages in Xiamen. Both Ang and Mei benefitted from the preferential economic policies offered in the SEZ’s. They were also both accustomed to living in the Minnan Cultural Area. Economic and social policies in the PRC and

ROC clearly, played a large role in both Ang's decision to migrate to the Mainland, and the couples' decision to settle in Xiamen rather than in Taiwan. These decisions were aligned with the Mainland government's agenda of increasing economic and social integration between Taiwan and Mainland China and in part, as a result, Ang and Mei both experienced upward economic and social mobility. In chapter 1, I alluded to Warner's (1999), argument; that marriage works to connect intimate desires with government agendas. The experiences of Ang and Mei, in part, demonstrate the ways that governments reward those whose practices support these agendas.

It is important here to note that while both partners may experience upward social and economic mobility, Taiwanese men on the Mainland have greater freedom with regard to the ability to move across administrative and political borders than Mainland brides. This issue was also discussed by Newendorp in her (2008) study of Mainland women's experiences migrating to Hong Kong and their subsequent reunions with their families. In this study, the author emphasizes the anxieties that "migrating across political difference" evoke (Newendorp 2008:18). As a result of Hong Kong's immigration policies, Mainland women who have Hong Kong husbands often have to wait years before they can legally become Hong Kong residents and reunite with their families (Newendorp 2008:13). While on the other hand their Hong Kong husbands enjoy the privilege of freely traveling across these administrative borders without so much as a visa (Newendorp 2008:13). Taiwanese men living in Mainland China also enjoy this freedom while the movement of Mainland women across these borders, as discussed in chapter 4, is strictly limited and controlled. With regard to this study, Taiwanese husbands have the ability to return to Taiwan at will, leaving their Mainland brides and families behind. This is one clear example of the way in which migration is often a gendered process.

But being a Taiwanese migrant in the PRC is not without its problems. In Xiamen, local discourses about Taiwanese men on the surface spoke of cultural continuity, but there were also those who described them as “infected by Japanese culture”, pompous, unreliable, and lustful. The fact that none of my Taiwanese informants dared to speak about cross-Strait political issues reflects the high level of self-censorship that each of them practiced. On the one occasion when Ang referred to himself as a foreigner in public, it did not go unnoticed.

The different social locations that Ang, Feng and Chin-Lung occupied in the PRC emphasize the importance of individual characteristics in shaping migrant experiences. Chin-Lung imagined himself living in a dangerous land wherein the PRC government and citizens were preying upon him. His constant articulations about the differences between himself and Mainland citizens reinforced these ideas. While Chin-Lung was living in Xiamen, his sterile apartment with a view across the Taiwan Straits and a suitcase at the ready by the door made it clear that his stay on the Mainland was temporary and his thoughts were of returning home to Taiwan.

Feng tended to reinforce local stereotypes about Taiwanese men. Although he had, in some way, attempted to establish a family and possible kinship network on the Mainland, he considered Mainland women to be much like inexhaustible commodities that would always be available to him insofar as he could afford them. His eventual divorce and return to Taiwan was similar to those stories of abandonment often connected to Taiwanese businessmen and husbands.

Ang’s case, on the other hand, seems more complicated. Perhaps this is because I spent more time with him than either Chin-Lung or Feng. Ang seemed committed to his life on the Mainland. His marriage to Mei helped facilitate his ability to “fit in,” at some level in Xiamen.

Mei and Ang's transnational cosmopolitan identities coupled with their cultural competence regarding Minnan culture allowed them more flexibility with regard to gender roles. Mei's frequent business trips and Ang's tendency to stay near home demonstrate this. While Mei made it a point to differentiate herself from the traditional Xiamen wife, Ang seemed to try to differentiate himself in some ways, from the stereotypical Taiwanese husband in the PRC, who is sometimes viewed as undependable, uncultured and unfaithful. At the same time, however, Ang's relatively easy access to *meimeis* on the Mainland allowed him to express his masculinity by "surrounding himself with beauty." Abstaining from sexual relations with these young women bolstered his status well above those who used money or political power to purchase sexual favors. Rather Ang worked to portray himself as a charming, cosmopolitan man who rather than desiring young women was himself the object of desire.

Piper and Roces (2003) in their edited volume have argued that conventional studies of migration tend to ignore marriage as a result of labor migration, but rather uncritically categorize Asian female migrants as either labor or marriage migrants. In the course of my research I found that marriages that formed as a result of migrating for work were often overlooked with regard to Taiwanese men in the PRC. Rather, these men are viewed simply as workers. I argue that further studies are needed which focus on the practice of men marrying and settling in their partners homeland as a *result* of the process of migration. I expect that this will reveal that this practice is more common than previously thought. Exploring this practice will contribute to the literature on transnationalism as it will offer a more nuanced view of the process of migration as it relates to family formation and gender. Constable's (2005) term "global hypergamy," most often refers to brides from less developed regions who attempt to "marry up" by finding a husband in richer, more developed regions. The experiences of Ang and Mei add an interesting twist to this

concept. In this case it was a male, who had migrated from a more developed region to one that was in the process of being developed. As a result of migrating, he married Mei and both experienced upward social and economic mobility. In this case, both Mei and Ang could be thought of as “marrying up.” In Constable’s (2005), nuanced study she concludes that because of the complexities involved in the process of migration and marriage the term “marrying up” is problematic. Therefore I use this term loosely when referring to Ang and Mei.

It is important to stress here that cross-Strait marriages in the PRC, have emerged, for the most part, as a function of larger, global economic shifts that have occurred in recent years. The growing number of Taiwanese people migrating to the Mainland reveals how powerful the prospect of economic gain can be in the decision making process. The preferential treatment that Taiwanese investors in China’s Special Economic Zones (SEZ’s) enjoy including tax breaks and access to cheap labor are fairly straightforward, but there are other factors also at work here.

In Ong’s (1999) study she argued that Mainland women considered overseas Chinese men “good catches,” in part, because of their perceived overseas connections (*guanxi*) that could result in economic benefits and the possibility of eventually migrating to areas where they could enjoy greater wealth and personal freedom (154). However, as Constable’s (2003, 2005) studies of cross-border marriages reveal, it is not uncommon for migrating brides’ experiences to fall well short of their expectations. Consider the situation of Mainland brides living in Taiwan discussed above and in greater detail in chapter 4.

I argue that Mainland China’s recent emergence as an economic power has resulted in marriage patterns that for many, in the not too distant past, would have been unimaginable. China’s booming economy, I argue, has resulted in a marked increase in the perceived value of what Ong refers to as “network capital” (*guanxi*) within Mainland China’s borders, particularly

from the point of view of those who want access to China's economic opportunities (1999:154). While in Ong's (1999) study, Mainland women were drawn to overseas Chinese men in part, because of their perceived connections and the benefits that they might provide, in recent years, the perceived *guanxi* that potential Mainland brides and their families may possess has become increasingly important. This network capital, I argue can both empower Mainland women and result in them being viewed as more suitable or desirable potential brides. This network capital is particularly valuable for those whose natal home is nearby China's Special Economic Zones. Recall Buoka's story, for example, in which Lin's family connections (in Xiamen) were a major factor in his economic success as they allowed him to side-step import regulations and avoid paying exhorbant bribes to local officials. Recall also Mei who laughed when I asked her if she and Ang planned to move to Taiwan. I would doubt whether either of these couples had any intention of leaving these economic and kinship networks wherein both partners enjoyed the benefits.

In the years since Ong's (1999) study there has been a fundamental global economic shift. This is evidenced by China surpassing Japan as the second largest economy in the world in August 2010 (Tabuchi 2010:B1). This shift, I argue has influenced marriage patterns and as a result marital relations in the PRC, particularly in and around China's SEZ's. While connections beyond the borders of China are clearly still important, access to domestic networks *within* China have become crucial. Overseas Chinese capitalists are drawn by dreams of freewheeling capitalism within China's SEZ's, but of growing importance to these "road-trip Romeos," as Ong refers to them, are the potential benefits and protections that can be accessed through marriage, in the form of network capital (Ong 1999:155). Further, although many are initially drawn by economic opportunity and ready access to network capital, those who remain, do so for

a number of factors including, the benefits of upward social mobility and the possibility of more personal freedom. Here, however, we must not fall into the trap of overlooking the importance of emotional attachments and love. A particular phrase uttered by Ang when he was commenting on Feng's practice of having frequent sexual relations with *meimeis*, comes to mind. "I would never do that to Mei," he said, looking me in the eye. Although Ang's practice of abstaining from sexual relations with *meimeis* did bolster his status in certain settings, perhaps his reasons are also connected to his feelings for Mei.

Finally this project points to directions for new research. In chapter 4, I discussed some of the negative ways that Mainland brides are portrayed in the Taiwanese media, in recent years, however, media portrayals of Mainland brides and cross-Strait couples in Taiwan have become more diverse. In a future project, I plan to examine the different ways that migrating spouses are represented in transnational popular media in both the PRC and ROC. I am particularly interested in a new 40 episode dramatic series entitled "Moving to Taipei." This is a groundbreaking collaborative effort between Taiwan and Mainland China that focuses on the lives of three Mainland brides who have moved to Taipei to live with their Taiwanese husbands. The series will be filmed in both the Mainland and Taiwan, will be jointly produced, and aired in both sites. By examining the production, distribution and reception of this series in Taiwan and Mainland China, I will more deeply explore some of the themes raised in my dissertation, specifically gender and transnationalism, migration and family formation. Importantly, the fact that this series exists, says much about the changing ways that these couples are portrayed in the popular media in Taiwan. As the series will be aired on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, I expect views of cross-Straits couples to be more nuanced than in the previous years.

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