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## Migrant Life/Married Life

### Life as a cross-border marriage migrant

The life histories of women and men considering migration for the purpose of marriage naturally have a profound effect on their chance of finding foreign-national partners, on their potential for negotiating entry into their spouse's country of residence and on how such marriages are contracted. The Internet and other forms of global communication have radically altered the ways marriages are negotiated and arranged whether between ethnic groups or within them, and the use of agents of various types has increased and developed to take advantage of these opportunities. Academic studies of women in the Philippines who have contracted, or who wish to contract, marriages overseas describe their complex reasoning and some of the ways they seek to balance of the pros and cons of marriage and the realities of their own and their families' lives. Spouses who are citizens of the potential country of settlement are also shown, according to research, as weighing up the relative advantages of marriage with nationals of different countries. Potential spouses and their families in both countries of emigration and immigration may be involved in arranging and negotiating what, in their view, are suitable matches even though the information they are basing their opinions on may be sparse and unreliable. This chapter sets out to consider how the decision to marry across borders may come about and what the results of such marriages may be. As in previous chapters, the decisions migrants make are shown as being made by individuals able to act with differing degrees of agency and autonomy within the structural parameters set for them by families, communities and legislative frameworks.

Marriage migrants may have extremely variable knowledge about their new country of settlement – some will have already lived there, or indeed be living there while others may know very little about their

proposed homes. Some migrants may have been misinformed about how they will live post-migration and may be quite unprepared for what they find on arrival. This may be because they have made assumptions about the living standards of their spouses (Thai 2008, 2005). Thai describes how the Vietnamese wives of US-based Vietnamese husbands may be unprepared for their husbands' low socio-economic status on arrival in the US, while others may find they have to work in occupations that they had hoped to leave by migrating away from home (see, for example, Mix and Piper 2003 who describe former sex workers finding themselves obliged to carry on working in the sex trade post-migration). Other migrants may expect to be better protected by the states they move to than is really the case and I will draw on research on the post-migration experiences of marriage migrants to demonstrate how social policy and social conditions in countries of settlement impact upon the lives of migrating brides and grooms. Experiences of dislocation and isolation will affect almost all migrants and in the case of migrant spouses, the period of dependency on the citizen-partner and new family members (a situation which some cases may last for years) may exacerbate already difficult situations. Restrictions on employment and on social welfare entitlements will negatively affect almost all marriage migrants regardless of how their marriages were contracted and should marriages break down, the non-citizen partner may become very vulnerable.

This chapter builds on earlier discussion of the tensions between the personal agency of women and men in cross-border marriages and the constraining factors that limit and shape that agency. The focus of this chapter will be on what happens after marriage and after migration. Are non-citizens married to citizens able to achieve or work towards their personal goals? Are their expectations met? How do they go about building lives in their country of settlement and what are the factors that promote or prevent their integration and participation in society at large and in their local communities? To answer these and other questions, this chapter will first look at what motivates cross-border marriage migration in the first place – enquiring into the different reasons men and women may have in choosing permanent migration as a partner of a citizen. The literature reviewed shows how, not only are expectations and motivations different between the citizen and the non-citizen partner, but that the treatment migrants receive and the obstacles they face depend on how they are viewed by the receiving society. Following this discussion I will consider the nature and degree of on-going contact with the home country and review evidence of how this impacts upon

the lives of migrants in their countries of settlement. A third section will discuss the issue of citizenship and the dependency experienced by many migrant spouses that is recognised in the literature as a major cause of problems for cross-border marriage migrants. It will be argued that this dependency and lack of autonomy have serious negative effects for the dependent partner, but that they also undermine relationships and have broader negative effects. The final section will consider how and indeed whether, cross-border marriage migrants are able to achieve a sense of belonging and citizenship in their country of settlement.

### **Who marries across borders and why?**

Throughout this book cross-border marriage has been defined very broadly – as marriages or permanent relationships between people with different formal citizenship statuses. This definition does not presuppose difference or similarity in ethnic or cultural background and it includes the marriages (or formalised relationships) of people already in the country of migration, but who do not hold citizen status of that country. The significant common point shared by these marriages is that the partners have different relationships to the state they live within with one being an ‘insider’ (at least formally) and the other an ‘outsider’. There are important points that need to be made here that relate to the degree to which having formal citizenship actually grants an individual ‘insider’ status. As we have seen throughout this book, the meaning of citizenship varies dramatically from country to country and the ability to participate equally in society and to experience a sense of belonging is not something that comes from formal citizenship alone. That said, formal citizenship grants formal rights – to welfare entitlements, work, recognition, travel, etc. – and allows marriage migrants to claim rights as individuals rather than through their relationship to their citizen spouse.

This broad view of what constitutes marriage migration means that there are many different explanations possible for why people choose to form permanent partnerships across borders. In relation to marriage within transnational families, Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2007) has suggested three motivations for Western citizens to marry members of their transnational community living in the country of origin. These are loyalty and obligation, promise of upward mobility and shifting power balances in gender relations. Beck-Gernsheim elaborates on this third motivation arguing that ‘[the] choice of spouse becomes a vehicle for introducing new modes of gender relations; or conversely, for keeping

them outside' (2007: 282). The argument being that women oppressed in the country of origin choose marriage in countries of the diaspora to free themselves of traditional patriarchies and gender norms while men in the diaspora choose women from home to maintain those norms. There is undoubtedly some power in this argument but it is based on a simplistic, culturalist discourse that makes dangerous assumptions about the motivations of 'others'. In my view, this argument does not leave sufficient room for an appreciation of the more personal reasons for marriage across borders that research reviewed for this book has described.

Hidalgo and Bankston (2008) have argued that a sense of familiarity between partners is a motivator for marriage and this observation can apply to all kinds of cross-border marriages whether between people who share an ethnic connection or who share common interests or experience. Hidalgo and Bankston's work relates to marriages between veterans of the Vietnam War and Vietnamese women and they argue that being a veteran of a war in a country leads to greater chance of intermarriage. They predict that a large number of marriages will take place as a direct result of conflict and from being stationed in a country on active service. Furthermore, they describe a 'delayed "military-bride" phenomenon' (2008: 179), defined as a greater propensity for veterans to marry from that country in later years. Sallie Yea's work (2004, 2008) has certainly shown that the existence of military 'camptowns' in South Korea led to many cross-border marriages and relationships but it remains to be seen how the present conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, will affect future cross-border marriage patterns. This notion of familiarity, however, is an important one and familiarity may be represented by all kinds of shared interests and attributes. It is to the detriment of the body of research that, because of its focus on ethnic and cultural characteristics, other shared experiences are neglected. Commonality, for example, in terms of class and education, may be very important in bringing couples together but as these couples are less problematised, and fewer in number, they have not been the focus of much research (an exception being Rodriguez Garcia 2006: 403).

Jennifer Sanchez Taylor (2006) has written of the importance of marriage and sexual or gendered relationships matching a 'social ideal' that may be unspoken and highly individual. She applies this notion in relation to Western women in relationships with non-Western men arguing that these relationships grant women the social ideal of greater equality as the loss of power these men experience as migrants, is balanced by their inherent power as men (2006: 52). The social ideal represented by a

'proper marriage' has a powerful effect on who may be seen as a potential marriage partner and is shaped as much by romance, fantasy and desire as social and cultural norms. Nicole Constable uses the notion of 'cartographies of desire' to describe the role of fantasy and imaginings in relationships – important for both men and women in determining who may be acceptable as permanent partners. Constable records how

Men's openly stated assumptions about the 'traditional' moral values and character of Asian women as well as their less openly expressed ideas about the erotic sexuality and women's assumptions about 'modern' outlooks, power, or attractiveness of Western and other foreign men are factors in their motivation to meet and marry.

(Constable 2005a: 7)

Louisa Schein's work (2005) similarly demonstrates the role of imagination and fantasy in relationships, arguing that Chinese Miao women represented fantasy figures for Hmong refugees living in the US who looked to them as symbols of lost tradition and belonging but that relationships were temporary and not necessarily formalised by marriage. In Johnson's work with Russian women seeking husbands overseas (2007), both parties express a sense of grievance against previous and potential partners from their home countries – the women condemn Russian men as irresponsible and the American men reject Western women as unfeminine. Similarly Andrea Lauser (see also MacKay 2003: 30) describes women from the Philippines looking for marriage with Western men because they imagine them to be good husbands (i.e. romantic and good providers) in contrast to men in the Philippines, who are typified as having mistresses and where divorce is difficult (Lauser 2008: 88). For both sides, marrying across borders promises a way of finding partners that they believe, hope or assume will be more suitable for them than any they are likely to find at home. Inevitably, many in these partnerships will be disappointed.

Cross-border marriage migration happens through various different channels and processes. Women and men may be actively seeking matches abroad or may unintentionally find themselves in relationships that join citizens and non-citizens. Dan Rodriguez Garcia's (2006) research with bi-national Senegalese-Gambian-Spanish couples in Catalonia, for example, records a change in marriage patterns reflected in an increase, since the 1970s and 1980s, of marriages between Spanish women who have met their African partners through tourism rather than in Spain. Travel, for tourism, work or study along with a

greater acceptance of cross-ethnic relationships increases the likelihood of cross-border marriages and partnerships. A further route to marriage across borders may be through the internationalisation of domestic work. Women's migration has long been linked to labour migration but Piper and Roces (2003a) have noted the reluctance on the part of commentators to see women migrants as not just workers *or* wives and mothers but combining both these roles. Since Piper and Roces' edited volume (2003b), the meshing of women's roles as workers as well as wives has been increasingly studied. Pei-Chia Lan's work, for example, links the migration of foreign brides and foreign maids through their shared place at the 'intersection of globalisation and nationalism' (2008: 833). Lan finds similarities between the desires of grooms and of their families and that 'Taiwanese working-class men seek cross-border marriages not just to end their bachelorhood: they also need the unpaid labour of foreign spouses to assist with agricultural production in farming households and the reproduction of the next generation' (2008: 840, citing Hsia 1997). Brides marrying into these families are marrying into a whole set of assumptions about the roles of wives as labourers, carers, reproducers as well as life partners. This work suggests that there are similarities between the working-class choice to marry a worker to provide labour and the middle- and upper-class choice to meet their labour needs by employing a migrant domestic worker with whom they have a less intimate and more 'disposable' relationship.

Hsui-Hua Shen provides another example of how the different roles of wives may play out through a study of families where the husband maintains a lover or a mistress as well as a wife. In Shen's examples, the wife's role in the 'international division of familial, sexual and emotional labour' (2005: 420), is to care and support the family at home, paid for by the husband who maintains his stake in the family through his financial input. The role of the mistress is more than just to provide sexual labour and researchers have noted the importance of emotional labour and intimacy in relationships whether or not they have a commercial basis. Graham Scambler (Scambler 2007: 1088) cites Gross' (2005: 286) reflections on the 'detraditionalization of intimacy' which recognise that intimacy and care can be bought in the same way that sex can. Foreign wives, in some circumstances, may be seen as embodying notions of womanhood and 'wifely-ness' by combining traditional roles of carer, mother, domestic labourer and intimate partner. Thus a wife may be obtained in much the same way as a domestic worker may be. The lived experience of such arrangements should not be condemned out of hand, however, and for women who share an expectation of

the roles of a wife with her husband, such a marriage may allow her to travel, to improve her socio-economic conditions, to support her natal family through remittances and to enjoy security and a relatively self-governing married life.

The stereotyping of marriages, particularly those in which partners met through sex work, as merely a continuation of prostitution presents a very simplistic view of marriages based on the perceptions of those outside the marriages. Views, such as those cited in Cohen (2003), describing marriages between women working as bar-girls and tourists as 'Instead of prostituting themselves with many men, they prostitute themselves with only one man' (ibid.: 66) are commonly heard but deny the humanity of both the woman and the man in the relationship and tell us nothing of *their* hopes, dreams or expectations or of their lives together. This essentially male view of sex work, which decontextualises it from the rest of a women's life, should be contrasted with Larrissa Sandy's observation that 'Female labour migration for sex work is closely related to notions of filial duty and as a relatively high income earner, sex work is an integral part of this' (2007: 202). Undoubtedly, some marriages do oblige women to stay in the role of sexual labourer throughout their marriages but this may be the case whether or not the marriage came about from an initial commercial connection. The relationship between sex work and marriage or long-term relationship may be a close one but simply because a partnership came from commercial sex work, there should be no assumption that the relationship cannot be 'genuine' or that it is not significant for those within it.

This section has attempted to describe some of the drivers of marriage across borders. These include the transnational motivations described in greater detail in Chapter 6 and the effect of the various fantasies and assumptions made about men and women from certain countries and groups. The nexus between labour migration, especially domestic work, and marriage is also recognised as important in promoting and shaping the marriage opportunities of many. A further motivation for marriage across borders lies in the strategic value of marriage as a means of negotiating borders. This has been discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and it is an important explanation for why many men and women are prepared to take the inevitable risks of entering into marriage contracts. Such strategic marriages are difficult to identify in the literature and I have argued that their significance has been overestimated and have been co-opted into the rhetoric of immigration control with little substantive research to justify their ubiquity. Further, I argue that the original motivation for marriage is less significant in the understanding

of marriages than the lived experience of that marriage. The subjective judgements as to why anyone marries or forms permanent relationships inevitably change through the life course and for this reason, the rest of this chapter will focus on that lived experience.

### **Continuing contact with country of birth**

Throughout this book I have been at pains to emphasise the importance of family and caring responsibilities in motivating marriage across borders. These obligations to kin and country of birth clearly do not end on migration but it seems that continuing contact is not something necessarily anticipated by marriage partners. Sallie Yea (2004), for example, describes how the GI husbands of the women from the Philippines in South Korea generally assume that their wives are free from ties to their home country and husbands may not be prepared to accept responsibility for these family members nor be prepared to help their wives support family at home. Yea's work provides examples of marriages breaking down over the wife's continuing responsibilities either for children, siblings or older relatives. There can be no doubt that many women who marry across borders do so to meet their caring obligations and because they see marriage as a way of supporting those who depend on them back home. Conflict within marriages relating to family responsibilities may be very difficult for women who find themselves torn between loyalty to their new family and to their old one. The notion of transnational caring is becoming increasingly studied and the existence of ongoing interpersonal relationships across borders is an important signifier of transnationalism as opposed to uni-directional migration. Paul Hoggett quotes Susan Mendus (1993) on the multiple and conflicting roles of women and reflects on the 'unchosen nature to much of their moral life' characterised by contradictory social injunctions that result in women feeling that 'someone is always being let down, choices always seem to be between the lesser of competing evils' (Hoggett 2001: 45). This sense of conflicting obligations may be particularly debilitating for many cross-border marriage migrants whose caring responsibilities are multiple and complex as well as geographically spread. The provision of care is also culturally determined and migrant women may not only be dealing with disparate locations of care but also of divergent notions of what caring represents – as Martha Nussbaum writes: 'When we talk about love and care, we are talking both about emotions and about complex patterns of behaviour mediated not only by desire but also by habits and social norms' (2000: 264).



In marriages between people of different cultures and ethnic heritages, an accommodation needs to be made between the cultural expectations of the two partners, or indeed the two families. Jutta Lauth Bacas describes how Greek and German family members, linked by marriage, had different expectations of how that marriage would affect the family as a whole. Lauth Bacas shows how Greek families may feel they have 'lost out' as when a son marries a German woman, the Greek family doesn't gain the social advantages they might traditionally expect. German in-laws didn't feel obliged to their son-in-law's family and 'No German father of the bride feels obliged to lend money to the Greek groom for a surgery or a shop' (Lauth Bacas 2002: 9). In some cases, the couple may be able to balance their connection to the two countries but in many other cases the degree of connection to the country the couple is *not* resident in needs constant negotiation. Ewa Morokvasic has discussed the concept of mobility rather than simply migration between fixed points and argues that the care the Polish women she studies provide for their families is enabled by their migration away from home. She writes 'Their experience of migration thus becomes their lifestyle, their *leaving home* and going away, paradoxically a strategy of *staying at home*' (Morokvasic 2004: 7, italics in the original). Maintaining connection to a home country that is stigmatised as poor or backward may be particularly challenging but Carol Freeman found that the Chinese women she worked with in South Korea displayed an increasing sense of pride in their country of origin after some time as migrants (2005: 96). Perhaps they gain a sense of agency that allows them to reject the stereotypes of their country of origin and encourages their continuing allegiance and sense of identification with their natal country. For couples married within transnational communities or from the same country, maintaining a connection with home may be a given and may unite the couple who can reinforce each other's sense of identification with 'home'. Katy Gardner, however, writes of the challenges of maintaining caring relationships across distance and of the pain physical separation can cause whether or not that pain is shared and respected by those in the family (2006). Michael Peter Smith (2001) argues that theorists need to 'free' the everyday from conflation with the 'local' as the everyday of many migrants connects them to their home countries and other parts of their emotional worlds. Smith uses the example of Muslim communities who may identify community as existing on a global scale that is part of the everyday – 'physically absent but hardly spiritually distant...' (2001: 117). The notion of an everyday that is transnational is not restricted to Muslim communities, though for Muslims the concept of the global may have a more spiritual

meaning than for other groups. Studies have demonstrated how global connections affect the day-to-day lives of migrants (Williams 2006). As for many migrants, their families and friends at home have an enduring and ever-present place in their daily lives. For migrants married to citizens of other countries, their relationships with their country of birth may be contentious but will always have an impact on how life is lived in the country of settlement.

### **Norms, expectations and ‘value conflicts’**

Once living in the country of migration, migrant spouses find themselves subject to the local policies described in Chapter 9. These policies set the tone for the interaction of migrant spouses with the general population. The attitudes of society in general are influenced by the citizenship policies of the state, and most spouses crossing borders experience a probationary period short of citizenship during which their connection to their citizen partners and families grants them their rights. In some cases this status will offer more security than their previous status as marriage may free migrants from the uncertainty of temporary, contract-based visas and may ‘shorten the transition from contract worker to resident’ (MacKay 2003: 45). Lisa Faier’s work in Japan describes how spousal visas were temporary and could be granted from 6 months to three years – this meant that ‘women faced considerable pressure to comply with their husband’s and families’ desires’ and to behave in ways judged to be ‘Japanese’ (Faier 2007: 156). This pressure is contextualised by Nobue Suzuki’s observation that in Japan, a ‘legitimate’ marriage marks a man’s place in society and that the legitimacy of a match is reduced when wife is foreign (2005: 137) and especially when the wife is stigmatised by public assumptions about her past and respectability. Lisa Faier describes how the wives of Japanese men take trouble to establish their commitment to their marriage: they challenge Japanese stereotypes of them as selfish and greedy by explaining their lives in Japan as ‘sacrifice’ and that ‘married women went to great lengths to demonstrate their selflessness.’ (2007: 155). Elizabeth Mavroudi (2007) has argued that migration leads to new conceptions of national identity as well as to multiple identities which individuals may or may not be comfortable with. Mavroudi sees identities as constructions that are ‘active and strategic, rather than “given”’ (ibid.: 407), and in emphasising one facet of identity and downplaying another (as we see in the example of women from the Philippines in Japan), migrants may be able to increase their personal agency.

Thomas Cooke has argued that social constructions of gender roles have an important place in understanding the outcomes of migration and that scholars of migration should 'investigate how gender role beliefs mediate migration causes and consequences' (2005: 408). Cooke's observations, made in a study of the migration of same-sex couples, have important implications for the study of cross-border marriage migration more generally. The learning of new values and local constructions of an ideal woman and wife affects all the different stages of life that migrant women go through. Once they have come to terms with what is expected of them as wives, they may have to come to terms with what it means to be a mother in the new society. Many new experiences and value-conflict differences, which are faced by all first-time mothers, have cultural dimensions and even within transnational communities, shared values cannot be assumed. At least in transnational communities it is likely that a migrant spouse will be living among people who value the cultural traits they bring with them even if they may not wish to maintain them. Women's behaviour is generally scrutinised more closely than men's, and I note Martin Manalansan's argument that female migrant sexuality is an 'arena for the contestation of tradition, assimilation, and the travails of transnational migration' (2006: 233). This scrutiny constrains the ways in which women can position themselves within families as well as within society more broadly. Attitudes to tradition and to the homeland may also be seen as gendered and Maria Balzani's study of marriages (2006) shows that within the Ahmadi sect, women were more likely to choose a spouse from the UK or Canada than from Pakistan while the opposite was the case for men. She observes: 'British men are more likely to agree to marry a Pakistani wife and British women tend to be more concerned about finding spouses with common local cultural and career aspirations' (Balzani 2006: 353). The assumption being that men tend to opt for more traditional marriage partners than their female counterparts. This may well be the case, but giving too much weight to this argument without more research risks further stigmatising men as resistant to change in gender relationships.

A further challenge to relationships between citizens and non-citizens relates to cultural differences or 'value conflicts' around meanings of marriage and the gendered roles they presuppose. Marriage and intimate relationships reflect our personal *habitus* and our sense of the everyday to such an extent that individuals may not invest much thought into what they expect from such a relationship and how their expectations and assumptions may differ from their partners. Any differences in these

assumptions may be seen in sharp relief as partnerships develop. Value conflicts may arise where wives and husbands have different views on gender roles and citizen husbands and their families may expect their wives to adhere to traditional gender roles which their wives may have hoped to have escaped by moving from their country of birth. This may be particularly acute in marriages in which the wife is expected to be a contributor of labour and services to the family as well as to her husband. Gender roles are to a great extent socially defined and research in Taiwan with women in intercultural marriages shows how the husbands' families, and sometimes the marriage brokers, actively instructed women on how to behave and be a good wife (Yu 2006). They were taught how to do housework, cooking and how to manage family life; they were not to have strong opinions and meeting their husband's and children's needs should be their whole life – that is to say, their own needs and aspirations were secondary to those of their Taiwanese family. Taiwanese men, in common with many others marrying across borders, hold certain received opinions about the women they marry – that they will be malleable and easy to control and the husbands may have unrealistic expectations of their behaviour as wives. Taiwanese families are not alone in this, and research in Japan (Ito 2005; Suzuki 2005; Faier 2007, 2008) shows that migrant wives are similarly expected to fit Japanese expectations of gender roles. Research shows women actively claiming respect for their individuality and humanity but having to do this through behaviours, such as duty and care, that meshed with Japanese ideas of proper womanhood and 'wifeliness'.

Jutta Lauth Bacas' study of Greek-German couples in Athens demonstrates how 'cultural differences were instrumental in expressing gender differences and different power claims' and cites Collet and Varro's (2000) argument that couples need to create 'a common everyday family culture' if they are to successfully bridge their cultural differences (Lauth Bacas 2002: 10). Lauth Bacas argues that bi-national marriages have more internal difficulties and conflicts than others but that in successful partnerships, the partners take on the role of gatekeeper to support each other and to acknowledge each other's differences. This role will clearly be easier to achieve when the partners' respective differences are valued and recognised which is not always the case when one partner's culture is seen as more of an embarrassment than a resource or an asset. Roger Ballard has argued, in relation to transnational marriages, that difficulties are 'better understood as the outcome of the micro-politics of interpersonal relationships within the spouses' immediate kinship

networks than of the phenomenon of transnational marriage per se' (2004: 1). This important point applies as much to marriages between people who do not share ethnicity as to those who do share it. Dan Rodriguez Garcia's work with bi-national Senegalese/Gambian-Spanish couples argues that problems are often not from any 'clash of civilisation' but 'due more to socio-economic, situational and personal factors than cultural differences' and his work argues against 'culturalist explanations which favour processes of essentialisation' (Rodriguez Garcia 2006: 426). Rodriguez Garcia's evidence 'suggests that social class factors are more important than cultural origins in patterns of endogamy and exogamy, in the dynamics of living together and in the bringing up of children of mixed unions' (ibid.: 403). Ada Engebrigsten (2007) makes a slightly different point by arguing (following Elizabeth Bott's (1957) hypothesis) that close social networks are supportive for couples. Further, she draws on Kapferer's work (1973) that 'cross-linkage between wife's and husband's networks, and investment in the cross-links, are the most important features in order to understand role relationships' (2007: 738). Engebrigsten argues that the shared social investment represented by the interconnected networks that characterises Tamil marriages in Norway make them more stable than the marriages between Somali migrants whose marriages typically do not unite family and social networks.

Carol Freeman (2005) has described how the different cultural assumptions that may have drawn couples together at first, play out in the longer term. Freeman's point is that it is caricatures of certain ethnicities and nationalities that often lead people into relationships rather than the reality of those individuals. So the Russian woman who looks for a romantic and faithful American man is as likely to be disappointed as the Korean man who looks for a traditional and obedient village girl from Indonesia. Nicole Constable's case study shows how a marriage failed because the Chinese wife married for freedom and the US-based husband married in the hope of finding a submissive wife (Constable 2005b). The disjuncture between expectation and reality leads to the contradictory stereotypes of women recorded by Kathryn Robinson in Australia where, she argues, 'Filipinas have been constituted . . . as meek, docile slaves, oriental beauties with shady pasts, passive and manipulable, but also grasping and predatory using marriage to jump immigration queues' (1996: 53). These examples of value conflicts may represent conflicts of purpose in seeking marriage in the first place but to some extent can be seen as the result of immigration controls that oblige migrants to clothe their desire to travel in different

ways that reflect their limited migration options rather than their real desires.

## **Identity and belonging**

Stephen Lubkeman's (2000) research on Mozambican (Machaze) refugees living in South Africa argues that relationships between Machaze refugees and South African citizens only became formalised by marriage contracts once refugees had come to the realisation that their 'temporary' migration had become permanent and that futures should be built in exile rather than back home. This suggests that the making permanent of relationships through marriage may mark a shift in attitude from expectation of life in the natal country to seeing a future in the new one. A positive decision to settle in one country or another may not be as stark a decision as Lubkeman's work suggests as the period of contingency or liminality experienced by many marriage migrants means that many years may pass before an intention to settle permanently becomes institutionalised through citizenship or permanent right to remain. Thus a husband leaving Pakistan to live with his British wife, or a woman from the Philippines marrying her Japanese boyfriend may be making a permanent commitment to family formation and to settlement away from home without having established the assurance of a secure legal status in that country of settlement. Even with the insecurity of contingent immigration status, migrant life may grant a sense of belonging in families and communities but for others, life as migrant means dislocation and isolation. Dan Rodriguez Garcia, for example, records migrants feeling they belong nowhere, neither 'here nor there' (2006: 424) and this sense of liminality, being no longer a member of the community of birth but not yet accepted within the country of migration, is a typical one. Yang and Wang's work (2003) refers to the physical adjustment which migrants have to make when they arrive in Taiwan. These problems, relating to food and customs, are likely to be shared by many marriage migrants coming to a country that they have no previous experience of, where they may be unfamiliar with the language and have few contacts, other than their husbands, to call on for support. Especially in cases in which marriage migrants' first experience of a country is after they are already married, their first weeks, months and possibly years may be marked by loneliness and isolation.

This sense of isolation may be exacerbated when marrying traditionally means marrying into another family. In the cases Katherine

Charsley (2005) describes, husbands are marrying into their wife's families, against tradition, and are unprepared for losing status, place in the family and the capacity to control how the family operates. Charsley records the heartache this may cause and how, even within ethnic communities, migrants may feel out of place and isolated. Anxiety about children growing up in a different culture is commonly recorded in the literature and Stephen Lubkeman's research participants expressed concern that their children, considered as Machaze children but born in South Africa may be "morally corrupted" by South Africa (2000: 61). This concern is manifested in encouraging children to relate to other Machazians and in fathers trying to influence children's marriage choices. Dan Rodriguez Garcia records the fears of Senegalese and Gambian fathers that their children, and especially their daughters, would (and were) growing up too Westernised in Catalonia. While the families wanted their children to grow up as Muslims, they found it difficult in a country in which 'Islam is looked down on socially'. One solution to this dilemma is described by Shuko Takeshita who describes how families living in Japan with Pakistani fathers and Japanese mothers left Japan for the Gulf States where they felt it would be easier to raise Muslim children (Takeshita 2007).

Studies also point to the importance of the mother in raising children and in setting the family's cultural tone. Rodriguez Garcia, for example, records fathers attributing the loss of the children's Senegalese or Gambian culture to the fact that the children spent more time with their Spanish mother (2006: 422). These fathers may hope to ultimately return to Africa, but the benefits of a Spanish education and of public health care, for example, keep them in Spain. As we have seen throughout this book, the 'normal' pattern in marriage migration globally (increasingly an imagined one) is for the mother to be the migrant party. Given that mothers are often assumed to be the nurturers and the maintainers of culture, it may be assumed that children growing up with migrant mothers will be more culturally in tune with their migrant parent's country of origin. This may well be the case with children growing up in transnational communities where the mother's culture is reinforced by family and community but where the culture of migrant wives is devalued, as it is in much of East Asia and beyond, it is unlikely that mothers will be able to bring their children up to be fluent in their language or in their culture. At present, there is little research on the issue of how children of mixed heritage relate to their heritage or on how that heritage *could* be passed on and valued. In my view, there is an urgent need for study as research that touches on

this area generally indicates that women from stigmatised groups find it extremely difficult to pass on positive views of their culture with the result that children may grow up ashamed of their mother and of their heritage. Clearly, national attitudes to other countries and to the valuing of difference have a major effect on how mixed heritage is viewed. Some countries, for example Taiwan, have launched programmes to support multiculturalism and to counter the dominant nationalism based on ethnicity, but while a welcome beginning, 'foreign wives' in Taiwan are still under-valued.

Identity conflict and cultural misunderstandings are always likely to be issues in cross-cultural relationships but these conflicts also occur in marriages which are ostensibly intra-cultural. Carol Freeman's work with Chongsonjok women (women of Korean ethnicity from China) found that despite the Korean myth of cultural homogeneity that makes them attractive as wives for South Korean men, they don't fit in as expected. 'Readily identified by their style of dress, their patterns of speech and pronunciation, and their unfamiliarity with Korean linguistic and behavioural codes of politeness, Chongsonjok are for the most part unable to "pass" for South Koreans' (2005: 95). Their 'failure' to integrate within Korean society and their 'cultural incompetence', Freeman argues, are not forgiven as might be the case with people perceived as truly foreign. Again, the culture of migrants may simply become a problem recognised in countries where the population is relatively homogenous and where migrants have not established communities or a presence, except as a stereotype, in the national imagination. Gabrielle Fortune, found 'war brides' migrating to New Zealand after the Second World War experienced 'a lack of interest in their families and past affiliations' and as a result 'many war brides felt stripped of their identity' (2006: 588). Fortune's description of the war brides' experience could equally apply to many of today's marriage migrants: 'Being cut off from their own families and, more importantly, facing a life where the losses inherent in this separation were unaffirmed and unacknowledged, were common war bride experiences' (ibid.: 595).

### **Belonging, citizenship and the integration of migrant spouses**

The literature relating to the integration of migrants is vast and it is beyond the scope of this book to summarise it. Within the literature, however, are studies that focus on integration defined as a sense of



'belonging' within the nation-state which adopt an informal definition of citizenship. Belonging, it is argued, offers individuals and groups many of the benefits of citizenship, for example, the ability to participate in the life of the nation as an employee or a community member even when citizen status has not been formally granted. The study of citizenship

recognises that the specific location of people in society – their group's membership and categorical definition by gender, nationality religion, ethnicity, 'race', ability, age or life-cycle stage – mediates the construction of their citizenship as 'different' and thus determines their access to entitlements and their capacity to exercise agency.

(Werbner and Yuval-Davis 1999: 5)

Cross-border marriage migrants may claim constructions of citizenship for themselves that are different from those imposed upon them from society at large. Some transnational groups may be satisfied with membership and participation within their own communities but other migrants may want to participate alongside majority communities but find their opportunities to do so are limited. The notion of belonging has been explored by Nira Yuval-Davis, Floya Anthias and Eleonore Kofman who characterise it as a 'thick' form of citizenship that includes emotional connections to place and community. These authors remind us of the 'differential positionings from which belongings are imagined and narrated, in terms of gender, class, stage in the life cycle, etc., even in relation to the same community and to the same boundaries and borders' (Yuval-Davis *et al.* 2002: 521). Imaginaries and narratives of belonging, as they relate to gender, class and life-cycle are always contested and have shifting boundaries and borders. By this definition, belonging incorporates formal and informal citizenships (*ibid.*: 527), and is fostered by a goal of inclusivity that is not always reflected in policy. Linda Bosniak argues that 'the current fetishization and devaluation of the figure of the alien' (1998: 31) have fed into conceptions of the national project that encourage the exclusion of aliens from citizenship despite a rhetoric of integration and inclusivity. Migrants are fetishized and devalued in most countries of the world and migrant families and migrants within families consequently suffer by having to negotiate their own sense of belonging within the narrow constraints imposed upon them.

Migrant women who are mothers make an interesting case study to demonstrate how belonging and citizenship may play out in real life

and several studies describe and discuss how mothers may have to adapt their behaviour to fit the norms imposed upon them by society. I have already discussed how migrant mothers may not be able to employ their own cultural resources in the bringing up of children, where passing on their language and culture may be disapproved of and migrants mothers face criticism of their parenting skills. In Taiwan and Japan, migrant wives are accused of being unable to support their children at school and are blamed for the poor performance of their children (Yang and Wang 2003; Ito 2005). It is sometimes assumed that the children of migrant mothers do not do well at school but the data these assumptions are based on, is poor and may reflect prejudice in their collection. That said, the contested and devalued role of migrant mothers in the education of their children impacts upon the achievement of children. The problems of women who can't read the local language, for example, cause 'difficulties establishing communication with school teachers which creates much psychological pressure and frustration' (Ito 2005: 64–5). Racism within the school system is also likely to have an impact on the attainment of the children of migrants, but this has been less scrutinised than the capacity of migrant mothers to support their children. Ruri Ito recognises that schools have a significant role to play in the integration of migrant families but she argues that instead of challenging stereotypes, the school system 'participates in creating negative images of Filipino women migrants' (ibid.: 65). Young Rae Oum similarly recognises the role of racism in South Korea where the racially mixed children from working-class areas, including the mixed race US 'camptown' children, suffer more racism than middle-class children of mixed-heritage (Oum 2003: 436). For social integration to occur, there has to be more than a willingness of the migrant to fit in and participate. Institutions and policies have a part to play and the above discussion shows how the settled population may resist the participation of certain foreigners through a refusal to adapt to their needs. Ada Engebriksen's work in Norway describes how economic integration is sometimes used to differentiate between 'good' and 'failed' migrants. Engebriksen argues that, in Norway, Tamils are seen as 'good' migrants while Somalis are considered to have 'failed' based on a judgement of their willingness to adapt to Norwegian society, and on perceptions of their cultural norms, kinship and gender practices (2007: 728). A contrary example comes from Pei-Chia Lan's work that describes how wives from mainland China who marry citizens of Taiwan are condemned for being 'too assimilatable' (Lan 2008: 838) and of representing a 'fifth column' whose loyalty and nationalism in Taiwan are doubted. These

examples, of migrants being condemned for being both too different or too much the same demonstrate effectively how attitudes to foreigners differ from state to state and can foil the best attempts of migrants to fit into their new homes.

## Problems and marriage breakdown

It is important to recognise that cross-border marriages do have a high rate of breakdown, which is hardly surprising given the pressure placed upon them through the social scrutiny they are subject to as well as because of problems that are intrinsic to each individual relationship. The following section will attempt to consider some of the challenges marriages between citizens and non-citizens are likely to face while trying to avoid stigmatising them further.

Within transnational communities, cross-border marriages are recognised as being 'risky' (Shaw and Charsley 2006; Charsley 2007) and that the process of arranging marriage can be understood as a way of reducing or at least managing those risks. Alison Shaw and Katherine Charsley (2006: 406) discuss the risks inherent in separation from natal family and there are many other risks too – of British women becoming 'immigration widows' (Menski 2002) if husbands are refused visas and unable to join their brides, of partners who are only interested in marriage for the purpose of migrating or of husbands only interested in a bride's dowry. Marriage within family, therefore can be seen as offering protection from at least some these risks (Charsley 2006: 1119–20). In a Chinese context, Min and Eades have made a similar observation – that 'marriages with outside wives are cheap but risky' (1995: 867), indicating that the involvement of family, or at least of locally known people, helps guarantee the success of a match. Kalpagam's work on marriages within Brahman Tamil communities between the US and India carry the risk of abandonment for the Indian women who marry an American-based Tamil but who never get invited to the US. She writes: 'Most of my informants were aware of the risks of American *varan* marriages, but were willing to take them' (2005: 206).

Chapter 5 discussed issues of dependence experienced by marriage migrants before they are able to gain independent rights and this period of dependency can cause great problems for marriage migrants. They may find themselves heavily reliant on their husbands – financially as well as socially, especially if they do not have access to sources of social support or good language and communication skills. David Griffiths has suggested that a further source of friction experienced in

many cross-border marriages comes from their frequent dependence on welfare payments which creates problems in marriages and which can upset traditional gender roles. Griffiths quotes a Somali man who argues:

One marriage is from social security, one marriage is from the women and the man. The important one is from the social security, because the marriage for the man is less respectable because he doesn't provide anything for her or the children.... So she's happy to marry to social security. And if you have a problem with your wife you will lose your benefit.

(Griffiths 2002: 110)

This argument demonstrates how heavily enmeshed the private world of marriages can be with public policy perceived here as enforcing, in this case, British social norms. Ada Engebrigsten sees the relationship between welfare support and marriage slightly differently arguing that Somali women who separate from their husbands exchange dependence on a husband for dependence on welfare (2007: 742).

Within the EU, if marriage breaks down, the non-citizen partner may be obliged to return home with their children as they may not have established a right to state support and may not be able to manage to stay in the EU if they are left with neither financial support from a partner nor the support of a social network (Ackers 2004: 381–3). In these cases, a desire to be close to family may cause migration post-marriage breakdown. Ruri Ito (2005) describes the difficulties migrant mothers may face when their marriages fail and when children are born out of marriage. Ito's work demonstrates the importance of being recognised as having been a good wife if migrant women are to gain custody or at least access to their children (Ito 2005: 61). As right of residence is often connected to the success of marriages and custody rights in many countries are automatically granted to the father (especially if he is a citizen, and she is not), women may have extreme difficulties in remaining with their children after their marriages fail. This fact, added to their low social status in many countries, and the general view that they are poor mothers, can make staying with their children very difficult. Research from Taiwan and Japan shows how women may lose access to their children and may have to leave the country without them. There is also evidence that children from failed relationships may have to leave their country of birth and return with their mothers, losing contact with their fathers and in some cases becoming effectively stateless having neither the citizenship of their father *or* mother. Currently there are said to be

about 3,000 children in Vietnam who were born in Taiwan but were brought back to their mother's country because their fathers did not want custody of them after divorce – the majority of them are girls (pers. comm., Hong Xoan Nguyen Thi). These children have been marginalized in both Taiwan and Vietnam and their rights to citizenship have not been recognised by either country.

When children are born in cross-border marriages, the problems for women in violent relationships increase and there are nearly always serious social sanctions against women who leave their husbands and children even when their personal safety is compromised. If women do manage to leave abusive husbands, these sanctions may affect migrant women particularly hard given their marginal position without family or community to support them and argue their case. Leaving the matrimonial home, may be a way wives can shame some husbands into treating them better (Faier 2008) but in violent situations, leaving home means women have to leave their children behind (in Taiwan, for example, refugees rarely take children as well as women, Yu 2006). Fleeing a violent relationship may leave them vulnerable and without rights of residence. In some circumstances, cross-border marriage migrants may have not only lost their right to reside in the country they had intended to live permanently, but also may have compromised their chances of re-integration into their country of origin and they may be forced to return to their country of origin to face shame and ignominy. Khatidja Chantler's work on services for minoritized women in the UK who are leaving violent partnerships argues that these services often privilege the achievement of public 'justice', that is identifying and punishing criminal actions over the provision of private 'care' for the victims of abuse (2006). Her argument does not excuse violence in any way but argues instead that appropriate care must recognize the interdependence of some communities as well as the independence of individuals. The point of comparison with Chantler's work and the experience of marriage migrants in other parts of the world is that this concern for 'justice' has little to do with the rights of the victim of the abuse. In Chantler's case, women are expected to cooperate in the public punishment of their abusive partners – something they may not wish to do because of the damage it will do to their family and community. In the cases described in Taiwan and Japan, migrant women who may have suffered abuse at the hands of their husbands are being punished further by been forced to return home and possibly by losing their children too. Such public 'justice' is not justice for the women concerned whose original abuse is compounded.

## Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to describe and discuss some of the challenges that cross-border marriage migrants face once in countries of settlement. I have included a discussion of why migrants might wish to leave home to set up families abroad arguing that their situation in countries of origin and their imaginations of countries of migration have an important bearing on how they will find a partner and what expectations they might have of that partner. I have argued that migrants may enter into marriage contracts for very different reasons and while some marriages are undoubtedly the product of coercion and force, the majority are the product of positive decisions to further individual or community goals. The motivations that spouses have in establishing formal partnership may be very different, however, and I have argued that the migrant and the non-migrant citizen partner may hold very different views of marriage and enter into marriage with widely divergent expectations. These differences may only become obvious as the relationship develops but may cause problems for the partnership. These possible mismatches can include attitudes to continuing relationships with the migrant partner's home and natal family and, if there are children involved, a contested relationship between the spouses' homes and cultures may result in difficulties balancing caring and other commitments. Research shows that creative solutions to balancing responsibilities can be found but that, especially in countries where the homelands of the migrant partners are stereotyped as backward or inferior, maintaining contact and sense of pride can be difficult.

Sustaining a successful and happy marriage is a hard job at the best of times and cross-border marriages may be even harder to maintain than marriages between citizens – not least as they have to overcome public scrutiny and policies that enforce dependency and unequal relationships on the partners. Families, we have seen, adopt creative strategies to deal with these pressures but their capacity to self-direct and to find ways of living that are satisfactory and logical according to their own priorities are reduced by the structures of policy, responsibility and environment they must live within.