

Marriage Migration in Northern British Columbia

*The Negotiation of Place and Identity
among Foreign Brides*

***Courtney LeBourdais
& Dr. Catherine Nolin***

University of Northern
British Columbia

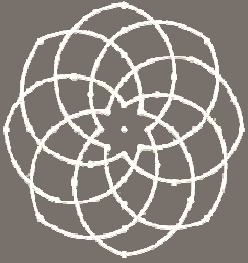
Cascadia Critical
Geographies Conference

Kelowna, BC

October 24, 2009

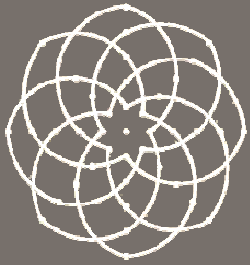


Source: www.coryparris.com

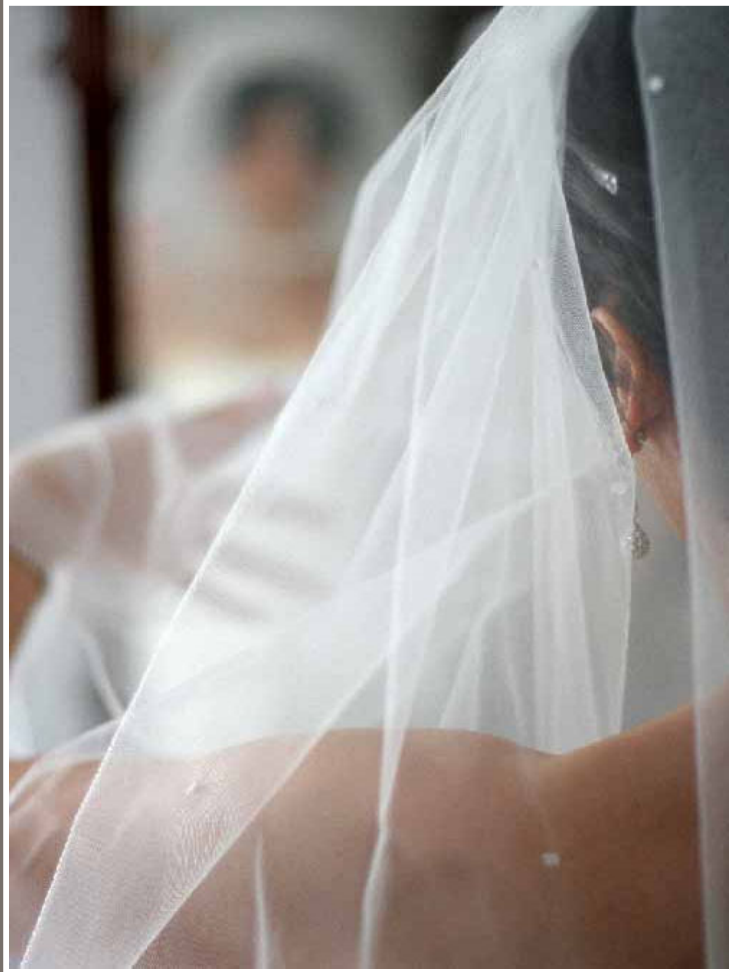


Outline

- Introduction to Foreign Brides
- Study Context
- Introduction to Marriage Migration
- Research Questions
- Conceptual Framework
- Research Design & Methodologies
- Conclusion & Value of Research

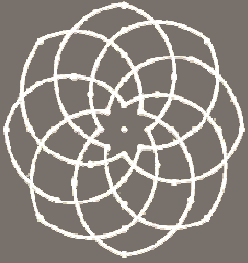


Who are Foreign Brides?



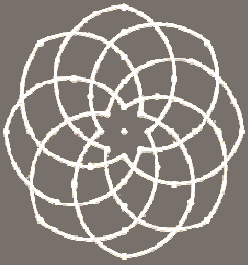
- A woman who participates in a transnational **correspondence relationship** that requires her to **emigrate** from her country of origin for the **purpose of marriage**.

- **Predominant Areas of Origin:**
(Kojima 2001; Belleau 2003a; Constable 2005a).
 - Asia: Philippines
 - Eastern Europe
 - South America



Why ‘Foreign Brides’?

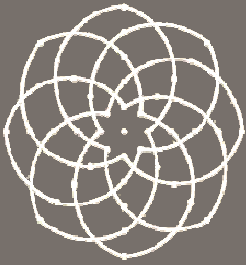
- Traditionally, “Mail-Order Brides”.
- Offensive, degrading, and derogatory (Constable 2003a).
- Active agents (Constable 2003a; Piper & Roces 2003).
- Agency shaped by “gendered geographies of power” (Mahler & Pessar 2001).
- “Power is best understood in terms of location and circumstance, rather than as something some have and others do not” (Constable 2003b).



Study Context



- ▣ Growing number of foreign brides in Northern BC
(Aldaba- Ferguson et al. 2006).
- ▣ Resource Economy:
(Hanlon & Halseth 2005; Markey et al. 2007).
 - Oil & Gas
 - Forestry
 - Agriculture
- ▣ Regionalization= new questions



Study Context



Service Reduction & Economic Restructuring

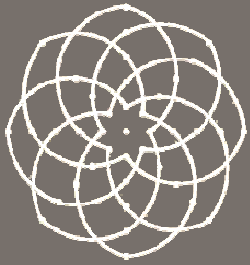
(Hanlon & Halseth 2005; Halseth & Ryser 2007; Markey et al. 2007).

Study Communities:

- Prince George
- Fort St. John
- Dawson Creek

Distinct Experiences

(Hanlon & Halseth 2005; Nolin & McCallum 2007).



Methods of Introduction



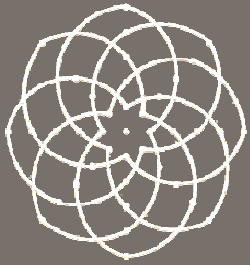
A FOREIGN AFFAIR
Introductions and Tours



 Mail Order Brides.com

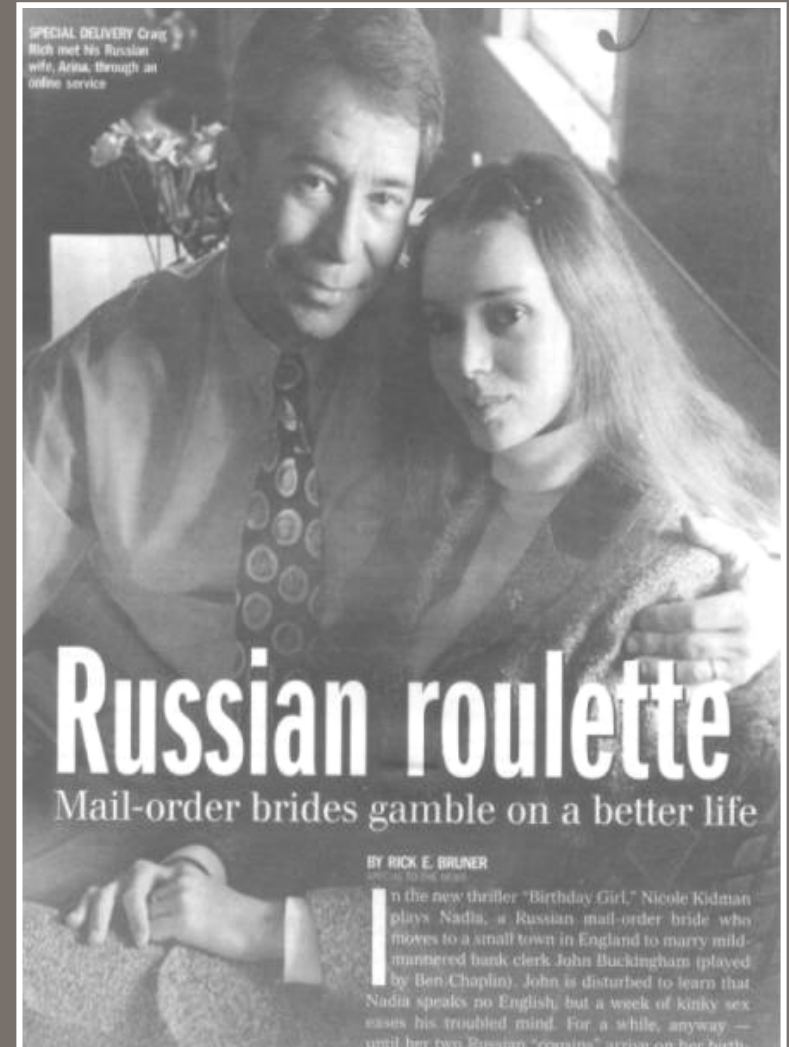
My Foreign Bride.com
International Dating and Marriage

- Traditionally:
 - Pen Pal Correspondence
- Contemporarily:
 - Introduction Agencies
 - Online Profiles
 - Romance Tours
 - Chat Rooms
- 10,000 websites

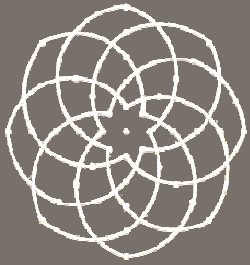


Why Marriage Migration?

- **Love** (Constable 2005a; Mix & Piper 2003; Constable 2005a; Lauser 2008).
- **Social Mobility** (Kojima 2001; Belleau 2003b).
 - Stability for self and family
 - Escape lower statuses
- **Bilateral Sexism** (Belleau 2003a).
- **Remittances**
 - “Unpaid labour of love” (Lauser 2008).



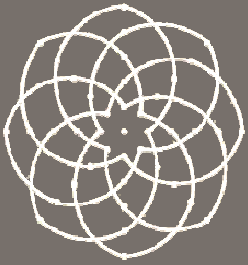
Source: www.volgagirl.com



Spousal Sponsorship in Canada

- Sponsorship: Family Class
 - 48% of family class are **female spouses or partners** (CIC 2007).
 - No **legal control** or **documentation** = **unmonitored** and **unknown** (Belleau 2003b; Pehar 2003).
 - **Hidden nature** of marriage migration = increased **vulnerability**





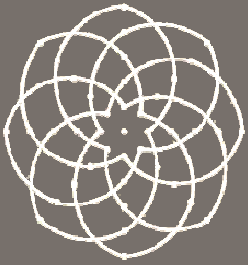
Equitable Sponsorship?



Source: www.educationtimes.com

▣ Sponsorship Agreement

- ▣ **Vulnerability: Privatization of sponsored person's basic needs** (Coté et al. 2001).
 - Inequitable Power Dynamic
 - Dependency
 - Abuse
- ▣ **Sponsorship Debt** (Coté et al. 2001; Merali 2009).
- ▣ **Language Proficiency** (Coté et al. 2001; Merali 2009).

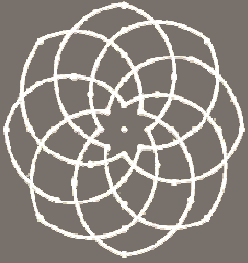


Effects of Marriage Migration?



Source: www.gettyimages.com

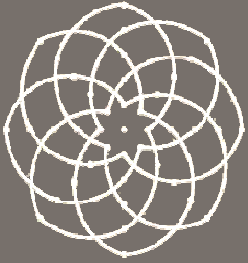
- Relationships based on the objectification of identity characteristics (Langevin & Belleau 2000).
- Engender unrealistic or contradictory expectations (Belleau 2003).
- Dislocation from socio-cultural systems of knowledge and understanding (Massey 1994; Gupta & Ferguson 1997).
- Vulnerable negotiation of place and identity in both public and private spheres.



Research Questions

Primary Research Questions:

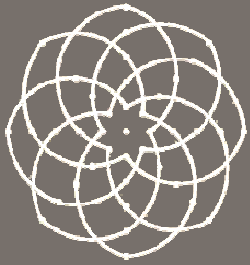
- How do the physical, social, and cultural **landscapes of a northern community** affect the **settlement and integration experiences** of foreign brides?
- Are **transnational linkages** present and how does that effect **place making skills** and **negotiation of identity** in a new environment?



Research Questions

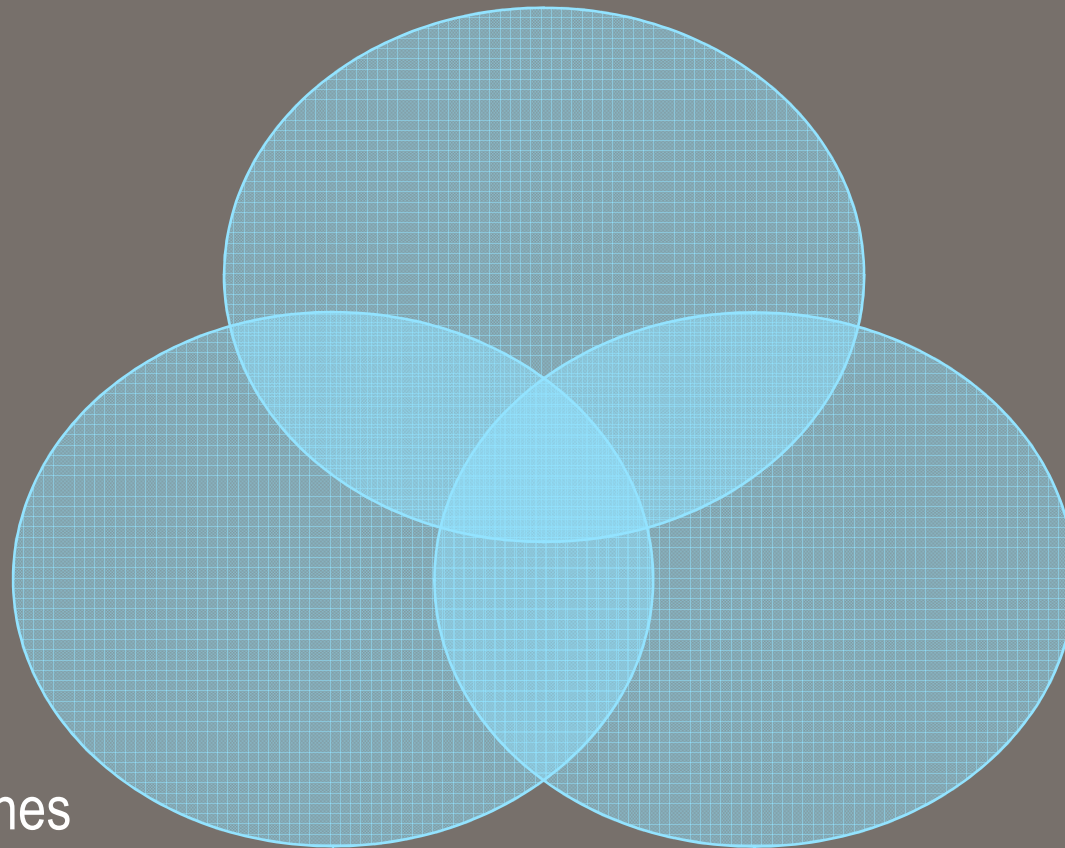
Supplementary Research Questions:

- What types of **services** are available to foreign brides to aid in **settlement** and **integration** to northern communities? (education, employment, wellness)
- How have foreign brides' perceptions of **social inclusion/ social exclusion** shaped their **mobility**, **construction of identity**, and **place making strategies**?



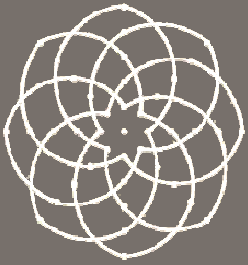
Conceptual Framework

Transnationalism



Feminist Approaches

Place & Identity

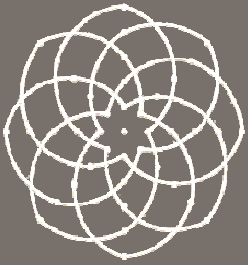


Research Design

- Fieldwork: May-November 2009
- Exploratory Case Study
- Qualitative Field Methods:
 - Snowball Sampling through “Women, Migration, Marriage”
 - Semi-Structured Interviews
 - Multiple meetings with each participant



Source: “Women, Migration, Marriage” Project



Research Design

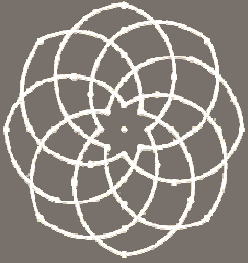
- ▣ Media Analysis *
 - ▣ Five Year Period
 - ▣ Prince George Citizen & Alaska Highway News

- ▣ Photovoice*
 - ▣ Photography
 - ▣ Journaling
 - ▣ Photo- Elicitation Interviews



Source: Kitty; Photovoice Project

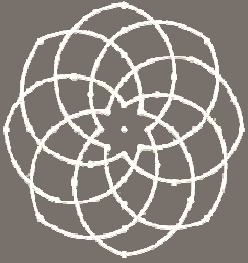
* = Methods from Dr. Nolin's "Women, Migration, Marriage" Project



Research Design

- Qualitative Methods After Fieldwork:
 - Transcription of Interviews
 - Participant Verification
 - Latent Content Analysis
 - Thematic Coding: Descriptive & Analytic

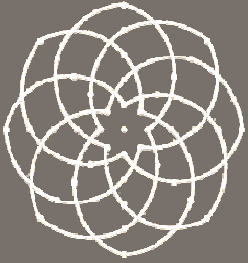
Thesis: synthesis of individual, particular experiences



Methodological Approach to Writing

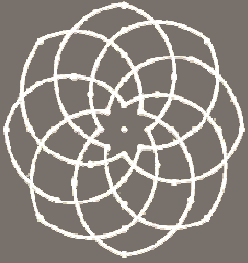
- ▣ **“Ethnography of the Particular”** (Abu-Lughod, 1991).
 - Understanding everyday, lived experiences
 - Socio-cultural knowledge is inscribed in actions, words, and bodies.

- ▣ **“Transnational Ethnographies”** (Nolin, 2006).
 - Transmigrants are shaped by their experiences across space and time.



Conclusion

- Respectfully understand the **individual** and **particular experiences** of foreign brides
- Advancement of **knowledge** in a vastly **understudied** area
- Pertinent to **policy makers** and **community organizations**
- **Enhanced wellness**



Acknowledgements

- ▣ Dr. Catherine Nolin
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