

# Writing *Zuhause* : Identity Construction of the Korean-German

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## Abstract

Asian migrant experiences written in German are still somewhat rare, but the first generation of Korean migrants to Germany, who took up jobs as nurses and miners in the 1960s and 1970s with little to no knowledge of German, have moved beyond their initial loss for words and begun to record their memories of their first years in Germany. The collection of essays in *Zuhause* (2006), for instance, edited by Heike Berner and Sun-Ju Choi, serves as testimony to the guestworker experience in general and also more specifically to the Korean-German encounter. Told from the Korean nurses' perspective, this work offers an eye-opening view of a group of women long incapable of and also simply unaccustomed to voicing their opinions and demanding their own rights. They address both the rewards and the difficulties of their years in Germany and show that, although they occasionally felt exoticized by the media, they also gained a new voice in the German language that they might not have had in their own native Korean. This article discusses how the autobiographical narratives demonstrate that various struggles with language, society, and identity eventually triggered a process of re-invention that resulted in the acceptance of life in Germany and a position "in-between" two cultures. Indeed, that the Korean women even spoke up to defend their right to stay in Germany after their contracts had ended shows that they had gained a new attitude, for such resistance contradicts the notions of harmonious and obedient behavior that Korean society expected not only of women but of citizens in general. In their struggle for acceptance in Germany, these Korean women were even able to combat social discrimination, thus creating the possibility of a German-Korean hybrid identity for later generations.

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## Key words

Migration, Koreans in Germany, identity, discourse analysis

### Writing *Zuhause*: Identity Construction of the Korean-German Woman

Between 1963 and 1976, some 10,000 Korean female nurses and 6,000 men hired as miners came to Germany after a bilateral agreement between Korea and Germany. Nurses within the German hospital system were needed as early as the 1950s. Germany was facing a labor demand in the health system at the time and invited nurses from Korea and the Philippines for temporary help. The three-year contracts were initially not renewable and made sure that the guestworkers would return to their home country after their short work stint in Germany. South Korean president Chung Hee Park was determined to rebuild Korea after the Korean War (1950-1953) via export-oriented politics. Since work opportunity was scarce in South Korea at the time, he supported the export of “human labor.” Thus, Korea profited from this bilateral agreement as much as Germany did, because the nurses and miners had to send a certain amount of their salary to Korea every month to help the Korean economy, which had suffered tremendously after the Korean War. About 50 million US dollars a year were sent to Korea by Koreans working in Germany. The nurses and miners covered the expenses of initial airfare and transportation themselves, and other recruitment costs were paid by the Korean government. Once their work permit expired they had to leave the country. In 1977, after the economic recession of 1966/67 and the ensuing oil crisis of 1973, the German government planned to stop any further recruitment and prepared to send nurses back to Korea. However, the Korean nurses, unwilling to leave their new home abroad, lobbied for their right to stay by collecting thousands of signatures for their petition on the streets of Germany. With these petitions in hand, they demanded, among other things, that nurses who had worked in Germany for more than five years be given a permanent right to stay in the country. Their demand was granted.<sup>1</sup> For many, official life in Germany began in this way. Many Korean miners took the chance to get retrained into another profession. They married and raised their children in this once foreign country. The second generation often grew up bilingually and bicultur-

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the arrival of Korean nurses as guestworkers in Germany, read Choi & Lee (2006).

ally, and today, roughly 30,000 Korean immigrants live in Germany.

Like many migrants of the first generation, Koreans who arrived in Germany as nurses and miners in the 1960s and 1970s experienced a period characterized by a literal loss for words, since many had to overcome their initial lack of fluency in the German language. Recently, however, they have begun to write down their memories of their time in Germany. The collection of essays in *Zuhause: Erzählungen von deutschen Koreanerinnen*<sup>2</sup> [At Home: Stories by German Korean Women] edited by Heike Berner and Sun-Ju Choi (2006), for example, attests to the guest-worker experience from the Korean nurses' perspective and presents an eye-opening contrast to the one-sided, sometimes discriminatory portrayal of their life in Germany found in the German media. The Korean nurses faced various crises in Germany that forced them to choose between German and Korean culture, but these choices also enabled them to negotiate a new hybrid identity in the host culture. Over time, the Korean women began to adopt German ways of speaking that gave rise to linguistic impossibilities in their native Korean language and granted them certain social liberties they had not previously had.

## I. Methodology

Research on migration often focuses on social-scientific aspects that explain why migrants leave their home country and enter a new country. Statistics, numbers, "hard data" can certainly explain aspects of migratory movements, but the individual human side is a rather complex matter. Social scientists have attempted to answer questions about the individual experience by doing, for example, in-depth interviews or focus groups. These seem to be the preferred tools for data collection in qualitative social studies. The analysis of autobiographical narratives, however, has traditionally been neglected. Increasingly, scholars (White, 1995; Fischer & McGowan, 1995) are asking for an inclusion of literary

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<sup>2</sup> The following analysis includes numerous quotes from *Zuhause: Erzählungen deutscher Koreanerinnen* (2006), an edited collection of autobiographical narratives. Individual contributors will be mentioned by name when quoted. However, all references to the edited collection cited in the text will be listed simply as *Zuhause* (the abbreviated title of the book) and the page number.

expressions in the study of migration in order to reach a fuller, more encompassing picture of the migrant experience.

As recent scholarship on migrants has suggested that women and men experience migrant life differently (Park, 2009, p. 25), a closer look at the female experience and perspectives will enhance our understanding of what it means for women to be migrants in a foreign country. Too often their perspective is entirely overlooked. Research on the Koreans in Germany has shown that in the German media the Korean nurses often became targets of positive discrimination (Roberts, 2008a). Numerous newspaper articles stressed their “exotic” physical features and “submissive” personalities, for instance, ideas that reinforced already existing stereotypes of Asian women and erased the nurses’ individuality. The stereotypes about Asian women presented in the German media are by no means new, and other scholars have also demonstrated that Asian women “tend to be hyperfeminized, part of the (female) Asian mystique in the Western imagination” (Davidson, 2008, p. 28). It is perhaps not surprising that, in contrast to the Korean women, Korean male migrants to Germany received more critical media coverage, much like other guestworkers at the time, a finding that further strengthens the argument that the migrant experience is often gendered (Roberts, 2008b).

This discursive analysis focuses on specific words, phrases, and the structure of arguments in various contributions to *Zuhause* that communicate the resistance to discrimination and the development of group membership among the Korean women as a sign of the transformation of their identity from Koreans working as nurses in Germany to Korean-German nurses. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) functions here as a tool for identifying and exposing social inequalities, racialization, and symbolic racism, also called “everyday racism,” in discourse (Fairclough, 1989; Van Dijk, 1998; Wodak & Fairclough, 1997; Weiss & Wodak, 2003; Wodak & Chilton, 2005; Wodak, 2008). The latter term was coined by Philomena Essed in her book *Understanding Everyday Racism* (1991) and identifies symbolic violence<sup>3</sup> and instances of discrimination in everyday situations that, at first sight, may seem harmless

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on symbolic violence, read Flam & Beauzamy. (2008).

but are nevertheless an exclusionary act to alienate and to marginalize the Other.<sup>4</sup>

*Zuhause's* narratives serve as examples of the kind of “discursive practice” (Fairclough, 1989; Hall, 2000) which are both created and, at the same time, create meaning, and that are based on socially shared ideologies and concepts (van Dijk, 1998). Stories--and the language within which they are recorded--encode their writer's identity, which Kroskrity (2000, p. 111) has defined as “the linguistic construction of membership in one or more social groups or categories.” Identity is not exclusively a linguistic construct, of course, but, as De Fina (2003) has explained:

...identities emerge through the interplay between linguistic choices, rhetorical and performance strategies in the representation of particular story worlds, and the negotiation of such representations in the interactional world. ... Identities are ‘achieved’ not given, and therefore their discursive construction should be seen as a process in which narrators and listeners are constantly engaged. (p. 25)

Thus, such narratives offer deep insights into the manner in which the writers conceived of their new identities, for in the words of De Fina, they “tell past events, revolve around unexpected episodes, ruptures or disturbances of normal states of affairs or social rules, and convey a specific message and interpretation about those events and/or the characters involved in them” (De Fina, 2007, p. 14). Those “ruptures or disturbances” are of particular interest when analyzing migrant identity, because they usually present a dilemma in the new host culture that the narrator was forced to solve. Often not easy, the solutions usually come in conflict with the writers' own cultural expectations or linguistic means, but the stories allow the writers “to classify and evaluate characters and their actions against implicit or explicit norms and values” (De Fina, 2007, p. 21). They often contain insights into how the narrator confronts a certain challenging situation, and how he or she struggles

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<sup>4</sup> For other works on “everyday racism,” read Delanty, Wodak & Jones. (2008).

to adapt his or her traditional ways to it. The collection of autobiographical narratives in *Zubause* provide a glimpse into the nurses' current state of mind as they were struggling to deal with discrimination and feelings of inadequacy coming from both German culture and their own, native Korean culture.

## II. Cultural Background of the Korean Nurses

As much as the German media may have reinforced a stereotype by portraying the Korean nurses as passive, the stereotype was not completely false. It is not an exaggeration to say that those women who left for Germany shared an unusual sense of adventurousness, bravery, and even a streak of individualism. Reasons for leaving Korea for a three-year work contract in Germany included such things as general curiosity about the Western world, the opportunity for better pay, and the knowledge that one would be able to return to Korea after finishing the stint abroad. Yet another strong reason for migration, however, was a desire to escape strict social expectations in their home country. Filial duty was extremely important for Koreans, and the Korean marriage system was severely limiting, especially for women. One young woman explained in *Zubause* that she shocked her parents with her sudden plan to leave Korea, and her parents tried to convince her to stay by reminding her that it was her filial duty to get married soon. Interestingly, the narrator had already quit her job and applied for the contract to work in Germany, which was quite an independent and even individualistic move. This decision probably clashed with the collectivistic expectations of her parents (*Zubause*, p. 44).

Korean tradition expected women to fulfill demands of the collective Confucianism that for several centuries (i.e., Choson Dynasty or Yi Dynasty 1392-1910) had shaped Korean culture. Among the tenets of Confucianism is the belief that the family is the most basic social unit, and within the family, gender roles are clearly divided. Kim has explained that the social principle “*namjom yobi*” [Men should be respected; women should be lowered] which was derived from the Confucian belief in hierarchy, functioned as the leading ethical principle, while “*hyonmo yangch'o*” [wise mother-good wife] became the motto for women's role performance (Kim, 1996, pp. 5-6). Not only were women not

equal to men in the social hierarchy, they also were not seen as individuals. Instead, according to Kim, they were viewed in relation to men or as dependent on a male figure, be it the husband, father, or son:

The ideal woman in Confucian Yi society was a nameless woman. Women were given names at birth but did not use them as such and were identified with their men. Before marriage, women were called “so and so’s” daughter; after marriage, “so and so’s” wife; after a child’s (son’s) birth, “so and so’s” mother.” Thus, women in the Yi dynasty did not have their own identities as individuals apart from their men. ... Instead of calling a girl (or adult woman) by her given name, family members and friends addressed her by the particular function she performed in the family. All of this bespeaks the fact that a woman was “nameless” in Confucian society; her existence was totally immersed in her men, and her own self was negated. (pp. 24-25)

Modern Korea has developed into a capitalist class system, but its Confucian heritage continues to prevail and influences social life even today. There can be little doubt that the Korean women who went to Germany in the 1960s and 1970s had grown up in households that emphasized Confucian values and traditions with strict notions of gender roles. It is somewhat surprising, therefore, that young women of the time dared to make the step into a new world as individuals and working women, rather than as spouses accompanying their working husbands, a scenario that is more common among, for example, Korean families in the United States. As it happens, the Korean women’s bold choice to go to Germany was the first step toward an identity of their own making.

### **III. From Resenting to Resisting Discrimination**

The Korean nurses’ first years as guestworkers in Germany are a

time marked by the sort of culture shock one writer has called “Entwurzelungskrankheit,” or [illness of being uprooted] (*Zuhause*, p. 35), but their struggles with the new language and society eventually led to an acceptance of a life “in-between” and even triggered a process of self-reinvention. While they were supposed to leave after three to six years of work, they lobbied for their right to stay in Germany by going out on the streets and collecting signatures from German citizens for their petition. In the end, they not only achieved their goal but also won Korean men the right to stay. The nurses’ success seems all the more significant when one considers that resistance was relatively foreign to them, since Korean society traditionally stipulated obedience not only of women but of all Korean citizens.

After a few years of work in German hospitals, which many experienced as humiliating because they were asked to clean toilets rather than take care of patients, the Korean nurses felt exploited and empty. One nurse, Gum-Hi Song-Prudent, writes:

Wie hätte ich den Deutschen andererseits vermitteln sollen, dass es nicht Heimweh war, das mich im Spülraum der Krankenstation zum Weinen brachte, sondern Wut und Enttäuschung? ... Meine Tränen waren oft Tränen der Enttäuschung, weil ich mich damals nicht verstanden und ausgenutzt fühlte. Ich fühlte mich wie eine Dienerin. Darauf war ich leider nicht vorbereitet worden.

[How could I have communicated to the Germans that it wasn’t homesickness but anger and disappointment that caused me to cry in the wash room of the hospital. ... My tears were often tears of disappointment, because I didn’t feel understood but exploited then. I felt like a servant. Unfortunately, I wasn’t prepared for that.]<sup>5</sup> (*Zuhause*, p. 95)

Song-Prudent remembers crying tears of anger and disappointment

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<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.



rather than of loneliness and homesickness, because she felt put down and discriminated against. She felt a “servant” rather than a highly-trained nurse. Her foreigner status and her initial lack of the language prevented her from doing the work she was hired for and that left a mark on her self-confidence. This feeling was commonly shared by other fellow Korean nurses, but instead of fighting this unfair treatment, they, at least in the beginning, gave in. Another nurse, Jung-Ja Peters, narrates:

Wir koreanischen Krankenschwestern waren sehr gut ausgebildete “medizinische Fachkräfte”, was für die deutschen Behörden auch der Grund war, uns einzustellen. Doch diese Tatsache war offensichtlich nicht bis zu meinen Arbeitgebern durchgedrungen. Ich nahm meine “Nurse Cap”, Kennzeichen unseres Berufstands und unserer Ausbildung, vom Kopf und begann, die Toiletten zu putzen.

[We Korean nurses were highly trained “medical professionals” which had been the reason why German officials hired us in the first place. But this fact obviously didn’t reach our employers. I took off my “nurse cap,” the symbol of our profession and our training, from my head and began to clean toilets.] (*Zuhause*, p. 85)

Peters took off her sign of her profession, the nurse cap, literally and symbolically, to lower her head to clean toilets. In many ways, this image represents the sense of degradation the nurses must have felt individually and collectively upon their arrival in German hospitals. Then, after three years, their contracts expired and they were expected to leave Germany. The nurses were shocked, because they had worked so hard for their new life in Germany and had slowly begun to establish meaningful relationships there. Kook-Nam Cho-Ruwwe remembers:

Und dann wurde mir klar, dass wir nur billige Arbeitskräfte waren, quasi Ware, keine Menschen. ... Man sagte uns praktisch

ins Gesicht: Euer Vertrag ist jetzt abgelaufen, fertig und weg. Das hat mir wirklich die Augen geöffnet. In ihren Augen waren wir Arbeitstiere, die man beliebig einsetzen und dann auch wieder wegschicken konnte. Dass Menschen dort, wo sie arbeiten, auch Freundschaften schließen, Familien gründen und ein Eigenleben führen, spielte überhaupt keine Rolle.

[And then I realized that we were just cheap labor, basically goods, not human beings. ... They basically said to our faces: Your contract has expired, you're done and should leave. That really opened my eyes. In their eyes, we were work animals that you could put to work as you liked and then send away again. The fact that human beings also make friends where they work, start families and lead a life, that didn't matter at all.] (*Zuhause*, p. 18-19)

In fact, Germany's bilateral guestworker contracts had been designed not with the individual migrant in mind but for the purpose of filling a labor demand. Guestworker contracts were not renewed if the demand ceased to exist. To some, this regulation seemed practical and efficient. To others, it seemed inhumane, because guestworkers who had worked and lived in Germany for several years had begun to see the country as their home. Thus, they felt reduced to their labor ("like goods" and "work animals") and not seen as individuals with their own needs. Just such feelings marked the beginning of the Korean nurses' efforts to organize themselves into a political group to fight for their right to stay. It is true that all of the Korean guestworkers were aware that they had signed limited-term contracts and, thus, should not have had reason to feel entitled to remain in Germany. Nonetheless, the Korean nurses made up their minds to stay. Interestingly, they received more support from German citizens than from their own countrymen. Cho-Ruwwe explains:

Das Interessante war für mich damals die Reaktion der koreanischen Behörden in Deutschland. Wir wurden nicht etwa

unterstützt, sondern – im Gegenteil – eingeschüchtert. Wir sollten den Deutschen keinen Ärger machen und koreanische Anständigkeit zeigen. Also kein Widerstand und keine Demonstrationen.

[The reaction of the Korean Offices in Germany then was interesting to me. We weren't supported, but – on the contrary – intimidated. We weren't supposed to upset the Germans but show Korean decency. That meant no resistance and no demonstrations.] (*Zubause*, p. 18)

Similarly, the Korean men who had come to Germany to work as miners had received instructions from the Korean embassy in Germany not to stand out negatively by taking too many sick days or by other behavior that was considered to be harmful to the Korean-German relationship. The Korean government expected Korean men and women to work efficiently, send money home to help the struggling Korean economy, and to do so silently without any sort of protest. They were supposed to show “koreanische Anständigkeit” [Korean decency] (*Zubause*, p. 18). Caught between a German government that wanted to send them home and their own Korean government asking them to comply, the Korean women felt doubly strained. Peters recalls a moment where she reached her breaking point. As a result, she attacked her superior who had blamed her for not working thoroughly enough. A Korean colleague had to pull her away and convince her to give in and let go of her aggression. Their belief in “Schicksal” [fate] restrained them, since they remained passive and simply chose to cope with this situation:

In diesem Moment konnte ich meine über Wochen angestaute Wut und Enttäuschung nicht länger unterdrücken. Meine Schmerzen und Müdigkeit führten dazu, dass mein Verstand aussetzte: Ich ging auf die Nonne zu und würgte sie mit beiden Händen. Dazu rief ich laut: “Wer hat behauptet, ich hätte die ganze Nacht geschlafen, wer?” Eine ältere koreanische

Schwester riss mich schließlich von der Nonne fort. Sie sagte: “Wir müssen es aushalten, das ist unser Schicksal.” ... Wir weinten gemeinsam und langsam beruhigte ich mich.

[In that moment, I couldn't suppress my anger and disappointment that had been building up over weeks. My pain and exhaustion caused me to lose my mind: I went up to the nun and choked her with both hands. I yelled: “Who said that I slept all night? Who?” An older Korean nurse finally ripped me away. She said: “We have to endure this. It is our fate.” ... We cried together and slowly I calmed down.] (*Zuhause*, pp. 86-87)

Many such instances, the general sense of feeling unwelcome, and then finally the threat of being sent back after the expiration of their work permits forced the Korean women to think about what they wanted from their stay in Germany. When some of the Korean nurses mobilized and insisted that they be allowed to stay in Germany, the Korean men remained silent on the issue. Given the traditional background from which the Korean nurses came, their active resistance was not merely something new but something altogether foreign. It is important to note that they displayed two new forms of behavior, first in their willingness to protest against their fate and then in their explaining their situation to random Germans and asking for signatures of support. Cho-Ruwwe admits that the protest had been unusual for her, especially since she had participated as an unmarried woman. In stressing that she was a single woman, she highlights her new-found ability to take responsibility for her own actions, something that left a mark on her character and that literally opened her eyes:

Die Teilnahme an der Unterschriftenaktion war für mich ein einschneidender Einschnitt in meinem Leben. Ich war ja damals eine alleinstehende junge Frau. Und die Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Koreanerinnen war bedeutend, sie hat mir den Blick geöffnet für Geschichte und gesellschaftliches Zusammenleben.

[The participation in the petition efforts was a drastic moment in my life. I was then a single, young woman. And the collaboration with other Korean women was important. It opened my eyes for history and civic life.](*Zubause*, p. 18)

The Korean women faced a dilemma, Cho-Ruwwe points out, because they clearly knew that they were committing an act of “civil disobedience” (*Zubause*, p. 19). Although she explains that such behavior was foreign to her, she also describes it as part of a learning process: She had come to the realization that one was allowed to and, in fact, had to fight for one’s rights:

Ziviler Ungehorsam und Widerstand waren Begriffe, die uns zu Beginn völlig fremd waren. Am Anfang war es daher alles andere als selbstverständlich, dass wir Protestaktionen und Demonstrationen durchführten. Aber wir haben daraus gelernt, was möglich ist, und dass man sein Recht fordern kann und muss.

[Civil disobedience and resistance were words that were completely foreign to us. At the beginning, it was, thus, not a given that we would hold demonstrations. But we learned what is possible and that you can and must demand your rights.](*Zubause*, pp. 19-20)

She stresses that an undertaking such as the protest in Germany would have been outrageous in Korea, and initially she trembled while pursuing signatures. Later, however, she even enjoyed the task and began to see it as a process of individual growth:

Die ganze Unterschriftenaktion war für mich nicht nur eine wertvolle Erfahrung, sondern ein wachsender Prozess. Auf einen Fremden zuzugehen, ihm die Umstände zu erklären und ihn dann um eine Unterschrift zu bitten, war keineswegs eine

leichte Sache. In Korea wäre zu dieser Zeit so etwas undenkbar gewesen für eine junge Frau. Am Anfang habe ich noch gezittert vor lauter Aufregung, es kostete mich jedes Mal große Überwindung. Mit jeder erfolgreich gesammelten Unterschrift legte sich die Aufregung aber etwas. Später fand ich sogar Gefallen daran ...

[The whole petition experience wasn't simply a valuable experience, but also a process of growth. It wasn't an easy undertaking to approach a stranger, to explain the situation and then ask him to sign the petition. In Korea, this would have been unthinkable at the time for a young woman. In the beginning, I would tremble because of sheer nervousness. It took a lot of effort each time. However, with each successfully collected signature my nervousness calmed down. Later, I even enjoyed doing it.] (*Zuhause*, p. 19)

Hyun-Sook Song remembers strict societal pressures that had taught her not to criticize. Struggling with her traditional, submissive, and passive past, she suddenly felt forced to confront her situation with behavior completely new to her:

Ich war ja so erzogen worden, dass man nie Anlass zu Kritik oder Tadel geben durfte. Daher war ich eher ängstlich und wusste am Ende nie, wie ich mich verhalten sollte. Gehorsam oder Aufbegehren? Mitschwimmen oder Widerstand leisten? Schweigen oder Forderungen stellen? All solche Fragen. Ich hatte ein unglaubliches Bedürfnis, darüber zu reden, eben weil ich nicht genau wusste, was richtig ist. ... Die Kontinuität der Gespräche und der Auseinandersetzung hat mir unglaublich viel Kraft und Inspiration gegeben. Der Kwang-Ju Aufstand hat dann nochmals meinen Blick für Machtverhältnisse und politische Systeme geschärft.

[I was raised in a way that one was never supposed to cause any trouble. Thus, I was rather timid and never knew completely how I was supposed to behave. Obedient or disobedient? Play along or resist? Remain silent or make demands? All those questions! I had a strong desire to talk about it, because I simply didn't know what was right. ... The continuation of talks and discussions gave me tremendous strength and inspired me. The Kwanju revolt sharpened my eye for power relations and political systems even more.] (Zuhause, pp. 22-23)

Song states that she, in the beginning, did not know what behavior was right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable. The two cultures, German and Korean, were sending mixed messages: "To play along or to resist?" Song's initial confusion is not surprising. The feeling of empowerment that the Korean nurses gained thanks to the success of their protest gave them a new view of their relationship with their own native Korean culture. Hyun-Sook Kim even found herself able to criticize the traditional role of women in Korean society of the twentieth century and men's involvement in the creation of the woman's position. In her experience, Korean men seemed to downplay or even reject female opinions, especially if they were of political nature. For this very reason, the Korean women in Germany had desired their own women's group would allow free discussions in which their opinions were valued. When the women founded their women's group, however, other Koreans leveled much criticism against them, calling them "communist" and the "Red group." Kim remembers the threat of looming social stigma attached to the participation in the women's group. She admits that she was scared and that she had to weigh the risks against the benefits of "emancipation":

Ich war schon ein wenig politisch aktiv, bevor ich zur koreanischen Frauengruppe kam. Aber es geschah oft, dass meine Meinung oder die der Frauen nicht akzeptiert oder entwertet wurde – häufig durch Männer. Das hat uns sehr geärgert, und

einige Frauen haben sich zusammengesetzt und wollten eine eigene Gruppe gründen. Damals war ja groß von Emanzipation die Rede. ... Als die Frauengruppe zustande kam, gab es auch sehr viele negative Reaktionen und Kritik. Einige nannten uns die "Rote Gruppe", andere sagten "Rosa kommunistische Gruppe". Ich muss schon zugeben, dass ich ein wenig Angst hatte. Was sind die Folgen, wenn ich mit den Frauen weiter zusammenarbeite, was kann mir passieren, ist das nicht doch alles zu gefährlich usw.

[I was already politically active a little before I joined the women's group. But it happened often that my opinion or that of the women wasn't accepted or was put down - often by men. That really upset us, and a few women got together and wanted to form their own group. Back then, emancipation was talked about a lot. ... When the women's group was formed, there were many negative reactions to and criticism of it. Some called us the "Red group," others said "pink Communist group." I have to admit that I was indeed a bit scared. What are the consequences if I keep working with those women? What could happen to me? Isn't it all too dangerous, after all, etc.] (*Zuhause*, p. 23)

She remembers a friend whose husband even threatened a divorce, if she kept attending the group (*Zuhause*, p. 25). Many women had to decide whether their participation was worth such an uproar and potential marital discord. Korean men, as well as some Korean women, probably felt intimidated, because the Korean women's group was not only behaving differently from the expected norm but had raised awareness of and voiced criticism against the differences in gender roles. Hyun-Sook Song noticed, for example, that Korean women generally behaved differently in the presence of Korean men. They became "quieter" or worked in the kitchen to serve them, the choice of "bewirten" indicating an unequal relationship between men and women. The narrator



compared Korean gender roles with German gender roles and acknowledged German emancipation as the driving force behind the differences. The narrator even uses the word *frau* instead of *man*,<sup>6</sup> a not new but playful way of pointing at gender issues in the German language:

Für mich war es absolut richtig und wichtig, dass wir Frauen uns zusammengeschlossen haben. Wenn koreanische Männer dabei waren, dann wurden wir eben stiller oder gingen in die Küche, um sie zu bewirten. Das passiert eben nicht unter Frauen. Ganz früher habe ich gedacht, dass Mann und Frau alles zusammen diskutieren und gemeinsam machen können und müssen. Aber dem ist nicht so. Das ist vielleicht auch ein Unterschied zu der deutschen Emanzipationsgeschichte. Koreanische Frauen, besonders in unserer Generation haben einen anderen Background und eine andere Sozialisation. Wir konnten und wollten uns nicht einfach von unserer kulturellen Prägung trennen...Gerade wenn frau mit einem deutschen Mann verheiratet war, war [sic] Erfahrungsaustausch und gegenseitige Beratung wichtig, weil es so viele ungelöste Probleme gab.

[For me, it was absolutely right and important that we women got together as a group. When Korean men were present, we got quieter or we went into the kitchen in order to serve them. That doesn't happen among women. Way back, I believed that men and women discuss everything and do and have to do everything together. But that doesn't happen to be true. That may even be a difference compared to German emancipation. Korean women, especially of our generation, have a different

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<sup>6</sup> *Man* is an indefinite third-person pronoun, such as in English *one*. It is spelled similarly to the German word *Mann* (man), and is often, in feminist language, deliberately replaced by *frau* (the lower-case spelling of German *Frau* [woman]) in order to indicate power and gender issues in and through the German language.

background and have been socialized differently. We couldn't and didn't want to separate ourselves from our cultural upbringing.... Especially when one [female one] was married to a German husband, the sharing of experiences and helping each other was important because there were so many unsolved problems.] (*Zuhause*, p. 25)

Interestingly, the Korean women did not feel the same social expectations when conversing with German men. Cho-Ruwwe describes how Korean gender roles applied in Germany in the presence of Korean men but not among German men:

In meiner Familie war die Rolle von Frau und Mann streng festgelegt. Natürlich war das in Korea auch gesellschaftlich vorgeschrieben. Ich muss mich als Frau so und so verhalten, wenn ein Mann im Raum anwesend ist, im Sinne von sittlich, höflich, etc. Ich habe dann in Deutschland die Feststellung gemacht, dass diese Erziehung nach wie vor greift. Wenn ein Koreaner dabei war, war ich ruhig und unterwürfig. Ich habe mich dabei unwohl gefühlt, ich mochte es nicht, dass ich mich anders verhielt als sonst. Aber das steckte so tief in mir drin. Als koreanische Frau hat man sich gegenüber Männern so zu verhalten, das sind anerzogene Geschlechterrollen, die fast zur zweiten Natur werden. Mit deutschen Männern war das nicht der Fall, da konnte ich mich geben, wie ich war.

[In my family, the gender roles of men and women were strictly laid out. It was, of course, a societal rule as well. I have to behave as a woman in such and such way, when a man is present, meaning decent, polite, etc. I realized later in Germany that this upbringing is still valid. When a Korean man was around, I was quiet and submissive. I didn't like it that I behaved differently from usual. But that was deeply ingrained in

me. As a Korean woman, one has to behave in a certain way with men, those are taught gender roles that almost become second nature. This wasn't the case with German men; with them, I could present myself as I was.] (*Zuhause*, p. 24)

By saying that she could behave “as she was,” she indicated that a transformation of her self had already taken place. She distanced herself from being “calm” and “submissive,” an image or stereotype also reinforced in German media reports (Roberts, 2008a). She noticed that she behaved differently (“anders”) when she was with Korean men, not German men. Other nurses also addressed German emancipation, and they expressed the desire to create their own form of emancipation in order to have some freedom (“sich Freiraum verschaffen”). Personal freedom is traditionally not particularly highly valued in a collectivistic society like that of Korea. The group's interest is generally of more importance than the needs of the individual. The Korean nurses developed a new-found desire to find their own personal freedom, inspired by German emancipation patterns but which was nevertheless not the same. For instance, they forbade the participation of Korean men in order to avoid repeating patriarchal structures and hierarchies. Thus, they were able to resist discrimination in their own culture. Cho-Ruwwe remembers:

Ja, das war es. Sich Freiraum schaffen, einen eigenen Weg zur Emanzipation finden. Und sie unterscheidet sich von der deutschen Emanzipation, weil die Geschlechterrollen und gesellschaftlichen Verhaltensmuster anders gestrickt sind und greifen. Wir wollten exakt aus dem Grund um jeden Preis patriarchalische Strukturen vermeiden und duldeten keine Anwesenheit von Männern in unserer Gruppe.

[Yes, that's what it was. To get freedom, to find one's own way to emancipation. And our emancipation is different from German emancipation, because the gender roles and societal behavioral patterns are different and function differently. For

exactly this reason, we wanted to avoid patriarchal structures and [thus] didn't tolerate any presence of men in our group.] (*Zuhause*, p. 26)

Cho-Ruwwe uses the German word “nicht dulden” (to not tolerate) when she speaks of setting boundaries for her women's group and not allowing men to participate. She puts her group in a position of power that can decide who is and is not tolerated as a group member. While in traditional settings women were used to “serving” their men and “being quiet,” these women were able to turn patterns around and to free themselves of restraining elements. This was the first step these women took to molding their new identity. Realizing that their way to emancipation would be different from that of German women, given the differences in social and cultural backgrounds, the Korean women looked for other ways to create their own emancipated Korean-German selves.

#### IV. Emergence of the “Korean-German” Woman

The Korean women changed in Germany. They even admitted that, before founding the women's group, the protests, and collecting signatures, they were scared and shy but that they not only had changed but also “progressed” since then. They had become more self-confident and dared to demand things. Initially, discriminatory and racist remarks deeply offended and even stunned them (“tief verletzt, ja sogar beschämt”), but they quickly learned to resist such discrimination by becoming even more active in the women's group. In the end, the women were able to “laugh” at their initial inability to deal with instances of racism. They had learned to become stronger individuals who did not put up with taunts and who were able to demand things for themselves. Cho-Ruwwe comments on the transition:

Natürlich habe ich auch negative Erfahrungen gemacht. Vereinzelt haben Leute auch gesagt, „Geht dahin zurück, wo ihr hergekommen seid“. Beim ersten Mal war ich tief verletzt,

ja sogar beschämt, so dass ich darauf nicht reagieren konnte. Aber im Austausch mit anderen Unterschriftensammlerinnen fasste ich wieder Mut und sammelte weiter. Später haben wir gemeinsam darüber gelacht, wie verängstigt wir anfangs gewesen waren und wie wir uns im Laufe der Aktion verändert, entwickelt haben, selbstbewusster und fordernder geworden sind.

[Of course, I also had negative experiences. Once in a while people would say: “Go back to where you came from.” Hearing that for the first time, I was deeply hurt, even so ashamed that I couldn’t react to it. But by talking to other petition workers I gained courage and kept on going. Later, we laughed together about how timid we were in the beginning, and how we changed over the course of the petition, how we developed, and we became more confident and more demanding.] (*Zuhause*, p. 19)

Even though resistance was initially foreign to them, the Korean women in Germany had negotiated a new identity for themselves. Thanks to less restrictive gender roles and emancipation movements that were going on in Germany at the time, the German part of their identities allowed them to see gender roles in a new light. The new Korean-German woman was even able to find her political voice. One nurse remembered the first time she experienced the women’s group was at a public discussion with politicians. The members of the group argued and discussed in such an authoritative and confident way that it simply overwhelmed the narrator. Such behavior would have been impossible in Korea, as Hyun-Sook Song points out:

Kurz darauf habe ich erfahren, dass es in Frankfurt einige Koreanerinnen gibt, die politisch aktiv sind und einiges auf die Beine stellen. Also bin ich alleine dahin, ich wollte diese Frauen unbedingt kennen lernen. Ich muss sagen, dass ich fast überwältigt war. Sie hatten schon eine Pressekonferenz gege-

ben, in der Öffentlichkeit mit Politikern diskutiert und waren unglaublich selbstsicher. Ich fragte mich, wie das überhaupt möglich war, wo und wie sie den Mut hernahmen. In Korea wäre so etwas undenkbar gewesen... Daher war es eine sehr wichtige Begegnung, die mich tief geprägt hat.

[Shortly after that, I found out that there were Korean women in Frankfurt who were politically active and organized things. So, I went there on my own, because I really wanted to get to know these women. I have to say, I was almost overwhelmed. They already had given a press conference, they had debated with politicians in public, and they were unbelievably confident. I asked myself, how that was even possible and how and where they got their courage from. It would have been unthinkable in Korea... Thus, it was a very important encounter that left a deep impression on me.] (*Zuhause*, pp. 20-21)

The very language choices the nurse made “fast überwältigt” [almost overwhelmed], “unglaublich selbstsicher” [unbelievably confident], and “undenkbar” [unthinkable] demonstrate that they themselves could not believe the changes they were undergoing. Hyun-Sook Kim, who was a participant at this discussion, recalls how much the group had impressed her. In writing of the group, she employs a range of pronouns, first “von ihnen” [by them], then “von uns” [by us], and then later even “wir Frauen” [we women], and in this sequence of words she demonstrates the gradual change taking place in the self of the Korean female in Germany:

Ich war damals bei der Podiumsdiskussion in Münster dabei. Da waren mehr als 100 koreanische Krankenschwestern anwesend, die entweder von der Abschiebung bedroht waren oder aktiv gegen die damalige Abschiebepolitik protestierten. Ich war so unglaublich beeindruckt von ihnen, von uns, wie wir

Frauen die Veranstaltung geplant, organisiert und durchgeführt haben. Sie haben so gut gesprochen, ihr Auftreten war so selbstbewusst – und das sogar vor Ministern, vor einem Publikum. Sie haben kein Blatt vor den Mund genommen, haben Kritik geäußert und haben Forderungen gestellt: Koreanische Krankenschwestern sollten nach fünf Jahren Arbeitszeit eine unbefristete Aufenthaltserlaubnis und nach acht Jahren eine Aufenthaltsberechtigung bekommen.

[I was present at the debate in Muenster. There were more than 100 Korean nurses, who were either threatened by deportation or who actively protested against the deportation politics at the time. I was tremendously impressed by them, by us, how we women had planned, organized, and executed this event. They spoke so well, their presence was so confident – and that even in front of politicians, in front of an audience. They did not beat around the bush, they voiced criticism and made demands: Korean nurses should receive an unlimited work visa after five years of work and a permanent visa after eight years.] (*Zuhause*, p. 21)

Other Korean nurses seemed altogether aware that German society had given rise to a new type of woman, and Korean women just happened to have been a part of that transformation. Cho-Ruwwe recalls, for example, that the whole society was on its way to emancipation. She claims that women had begun “to rebel,” and she notes also that Korean women had not only experienced this movement but also participated in it in their own way:

Nach meinem Empfinden war die gesamte Gesellschaft damals auf Frauenkurs. Frauen haben angefangen zu rebellieren, sie haben nicht länger die gesellschaftlichen Widersprüche hingenommen. Sie haben ganz gezielt “Oben” und “Unten” hinterfragt und kritisiert. Wir koreanischen Frauen haben es

miterlebt und zum Teil auch daran teilgenommen. Das hat uns natürlich sehr geprägt.

[In my opinion, the whole society then was geared towards women's issues. Women began to rebel. They didn't accept societal contradictions any longer. They questioned and criticized "top" and "bottom." We Korean women experienced it and to a certain degree took part in it.] (*Zuhause*, p. 24)

Yet Hyun-Sook Kim admits that it had not been easy for her to cut loose, or to "free herself" from the patriarchal and hierarchical structure: "Es hat später lange gedauert, bis ich überhaupt meinen Mund aufgemacht habe, um meine Meinung zu äußern, mich von der patriarchalisch-hierarchischen Denkweise und Struktur zu befreien." [Later, it took a while for me to open my mouth to state my opinion, to free myself from the patriarchal-hierarchical thinking and structure] (*Zuhause*, p. 26). Kim suddenly realized that these hierarchical structures that formerly seemed natural to her, having grown up surrounded by them, had become restraining.

At some point, the women in the group decided on a radical, almost unthinkable step: to defy certain linguistic forms of address that indicate social hierarchy in Korean. No sentence in the Korean language can be uttered without indicating some relationship between the self and others. Moreover, it is considered a taboo to address someone older than the speaker by the first name and by the informal "you." As mentioned earlier, women were also usually identified and addressed in such a way as to describe their relationship with the men in their lives, whether with their husbands or their sons. Thus, it was even more revolutionary that they resisted such discrimination by defying given social expectations and rules by addressing each other by their first names and insisting on each other's individuality. Cho-Ruwwe explains:

Wir wollten die patriarchalische Gewaltform nicht wiederholen – trotz des Wissens, dass die hierarchische Grundstruktur in uns steckt, weil wir mit ihr aufgewachsen sind. Beispielsweise



haben wir eingeführt, dass wir uns beim Vornamen anreden, weil es neutraler ist, was im Koreanischen absolut nicht üblich ist. Da wird man als „Mutter von XY“ oder „Tochter von XY“ angeredet, wobei die Bezugsperson zumeist männlich ist. Auch sollte der Altersunterschied zwischen uns keine Rolle spielen, worauf in Korea sehr geachtet wird, weil sich dadurch automatisch eine Hierarchie ergibt.

[We didn't want to repeat a patriarchal power dynamic- in spite of our knowing that this hierarchical thinking was in us, because we had grown up with it. For example, we introduced calling each other by our first names, because it is more neutral, [but] it is absolutely impossible to do in the Korean language. You are addressed as "XY's mother" or "XY's daughter," and the person of reference is most of the time a male. The age difference also wasn't supposed to play a role, which is taken into consideration in Korea, because it automatically creates a hierarchy.] (*Zuhause*, p. 27)

This linguistic choice of addressing someone older by their first name is, for a Korean, not only bold but would be virtually impossible in Korea. Because the Korean nurses had learned German, they had been inspired to adopt a less hierarchical way of communicating. It is important to note that the Korean social hierarchy to which the Korean language makes constant reference is generally not perceived as negative or unfair. Rather, it functions as an integral part of the language and determines language choices. By knowing German, the Korean nurses must have realized a different perspective; that is, that linguistic deference as they knew it was not universally necessary. Thus, the women in the group began to discard titles and rank. This describes hybridity at its best. The new Korean-German identity that formed would not have been possible without the Korean nurses' knowledge of German. While they were feeling suppressed and discriminated against by the Germans, the German language allowed them to free themselves from

discrimination in their own native culture. More interestingly, had they not known German and the German culture, they may have never noticed the difference, since hierarchy and inequality as it is expressed in the Korean language is generally not perceived as something negative. One nurse describes a feeling of relief about this change, for she had felt degraded by her German colleagues at the hospital and expected to feel the same among older and perhaps more successful Korean women. Not completely able to resist all instances of discrimination, such as at work, the Korean nurses managed to rebel against inequality within their own culture first. Hyun-Sook Song explains:

Ich hatte am Anfang ganz schöne Minderwertigkeitsgefühle gehabt. Nicht etwa weil ich dachte, ich bin tatsächlich schlechter oder weniger wert. Aber das kommt von den anderen, das wird von außen vermittelt. Das gesamte Pflegepersonal im Krankenhaus schaute auf mich herab, weil ich für die niederen Putzarbeiten zuständig war.⋯ Daher hatte ich Angst, in der koreanischen Frauengruppe würde es wieder so sein, dass sie auf mich herabgucken. Aber so war es nicht. Rang und Titel spielten keine Rolle. Und das hat mich beeindruckt und überzeugt.

[I had a real self complex in the beginning. Not necessarily because I thought that I was indeed bad or worth less. But that comes from the others, it is communicated from the outside. The whole staff in the hospital looked down on me, because I was in charge of doing lowly cleaning tasks.... For this reason, I was afraid that it would be the same in the Korean women's group, that they would look down on me. But it wasn't like that. Rank and title didn't play a role. And that impressed and convinced me.] (*Zuhause*, p. 27)

The Korean nurses went beyond linguistic norms by abolishing politeness levels. It was as much an answer or reaction to their having felt

degraded by others as it was a sign of their newly found solidarity and activism. The participation in the women's group not only fulfilled collective goals, that of being allowed to remain in Germany, but also strengthened their perceptions of their own selves, their confidence to stand up for their rights. Peters recalls that the Korean nurses shortly after their arrival in Germany were asked to pick new first names for themselves, since their Korean ones seemed too difficult for their German colleagues and superiors. Ironically, Peters chooses not a German name, which was expected, but a Persian first name, Soraya. She had read about the Persian empress Soraya who was forced to divorce her husband because she was not able to bear him a son. Peters identifies with Soraya, as she feels sorry for her. Interestingly, even though still foreign to German ears, the Persian name seems less foreign than her Korean name, Jung-Ja:

Nachdem sie unsere Namen gehört hatte, entschied die Nonne, wir sollten uns eingängigere, neue Namen aussuchen. Unsere eigenen waren ihr anscheinend zu kompliziert oder auch einfach nicht wichtig. Als ich das Haus verließ, hieß ich „Soraya“. Ich hatte diesen Namen nicht aus heiterem Himmel erfunden, vielmehr hatte ich kurz vor meinem Abflug nach Deutschland einen Artikel über die persische Kaiserin Soraya gelesen, die gezwungen worden war, sich von ihrem Mann scheiden zu lassen, weil sie keinen Sohn gebären konnte. Die Kaiserin tat mir so leid, deshalb war mir ihr Name in Erinnerung geblieben.

[After she had heard our names, the nun decided that we should choose easier, new names. Apparently, our own names were too complicated for her or simply not important. When I left the house, my name was “Soraya.” I didn’t make up that name, but rather I had read an article shortly before my departure for Germany on the Persian empress Soraya who was forced to get divorced from her husband, because she wasn’t able to bear a son. I felt so sorry for the empress, that’s why

her name had stuck in my mind.] (*Zuhause*, p. 84)

One nurse, in a similar situation, admits that, prior to the group, she would not even have been able to recognize injustice or discriminatory behavior, such as calling her by a different (German) first name because her own Korean one seemed “too difficult” to pronounce. Back then, the nurse recalls that she did not object to her new name “Maria,” and to some this may not even seem such a bad insult. However, denying someone’s right to his or her given name by replacing it with a random substitute is thoughtless and de-individualizing and a prime example of “everyday racism.” It sends the message that the core of one’s being is not wanted. Hyun-Sook Song, not knowing how to resist such discriminatory acts, simply gave in, literally gave up by not insisting on her Korean name:

Am Anfang haben sie mich im Krankenhaus bei meinem Nachnamen gerufen, weil sie meinen koreanischen Namen zu schwierig fanden. ... Dann gab es auch eine Zeit, in der sie mir einfach einen anderen Namen gegeben haben, ebenfalls mit der Begründung, mein Name sei zu kompliziert. Dann hieß ich einfach Schwester Maria. Ich habe mich damals nicht gewehrt und nicht auf meinen richtigen Namen bestanden. Aber wenn ich jetzt daran denke, ist das so respektlos. Dass ich das jetzt so sehen und auch artikulieren kann, hat viel mit der koreanischen Frauengruppe zu tun, die mir die Augen geöffnet hat und mich in vieler Hinsicht gestärkt hat.

[In the beginning, in the hospital they called me by my last name, because they found my Korean name too difficult to pronounce.... Then there was a time, when they simply gave me another name, again with the justification that my name was too complicated. Then I was simply called Nurse Maria. I didn’t object and I didn’t insist on my real name. But when I now think about it, it is so disrespectful. The fact that I can

now see that and articulate it, that has a lot to do with the Korean women's group which opened my eyes and which made me strong in many ways.] (*Zuhause*, p. 28)

Because the Korean women's group in Germany was inspired in part by German reactions to societal oppression, Song's acknowledgement of the benefits she received from participation in the group amounts to at least an inadvertent admission of the positive impact German culture had had on the formation of her identity. The women's group literally "opened her eyes," and with this transformation she gained the ability to stand up for herself and object to treatment she once would have simply endured. Like so many in the Korean women's group, Song had become the new Korean-German woman.

## V. Conclusion

The narratives in *Zuhause* represent a link in the discursive chain between the Korean nurses' public and private images, because they had the opportunity to respond to earlier media representations of their life in Germany. They also took an active part in the creation of their own identity. In fact, their choice to create an identity separate from the one imposed on them by others (e.g., the media) is common throughout migrant literature. According to Lee (2008), who researches migrant (Chinese) identities in Hong Kong, literary representations have allowed migrants to create a "collective voice" that exhibited "both a break with imposed and inflicted identities of colonial selves, with an equally substantial movement to negotiate identities in relation to their 'motherland.'" (p. 207). The collective voice of the contributors to *Zuhause* gave rise to the hybrid identity they express with the aid of the German language. Their Korean backgrounds, struggles, and experiences with German culture and language led to the construction of a new identity. These women are examples of individuals whose identities shifted to such a degree that they could move back and forth between their various cultural personae or practice them simultaneously, depending on situational contexts. Dhingra (2007), who analyzes identity construction among Asian-Americans, has called this ability "lived hybridity"

and has defined it as the engagement “in practices and decision-making processes that brings together elements of [one’s] ethnic, racial, and American lifestyles, at times simultaneously, to form a distinctive way of being” (p. 8). In terms of the notion of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994), which he defines as a practice of subversion of political and cultural domination in colonial discourse, we can find instances of such hybridity, when for example, the Korean women go against social (German) discrimination and their own cultural background that demands submission and instead demand equal and fair treatment. Hybridity, according to Bhabha, was intended as a means to confront the dominant discourse with a voice that cannot be called a 100% authentic voice of the colonized other (Ha, 2005, p. 89). It describes a process in which mixed cultures were produced through encounters within colonial discourses. The Korean nurses created such a mixed culture and identity for themselves. In particular, *Zuhause* suggests that the Korean nurses employ such discursive instances of postcolonial strategies to resist and challenge discrimination by creating a new hybrid identity in their narratives.

The autobiographical accounts in *Zuhause* demonstrate the manner in which negative, discriminatory sentiment, “everyday racism,” and institutionalized discrimination toward the “Other,” in this case toward the foreign guestworker, caused the Korean women to question their self-worth in ways that ultimately led to a positive reformation of their identity along hybrid lines. Although their arrival in German hospitals was hailed as something positive, their experiences on the job tell a slightly more negative story. Nonetheless, the encounter with German culture allowed these women to question their position not only in Germany but also in their own native Korean culture, as well, especially vis-à-vis men. Their own culture had taught them that no one, particularly women, should criticize or voice one’s opinion, but in Germany they took a stance against discriminatory treatment from Germans and then created new behavioral patterns within their own small Korean guestworker community. In fact, the German language and emancipatory movements in German society enabled these Korean women to situate themselves between two worlds. As Korean-Germans emancipated from many of the expectations of their native culture, the nurses gained the right to remain in Germany after the completion of their contracts not only for themselves but also for Korean men. Even today, roughly

forty years later, many of the Korean-German women's group members live in Germany, and they meet annually (without their spouses) for weekend-workshops and get-togethers to continue learning, socialize, and talk about the second and third generation of Korean-Germans who are growing up in Germany, thanks to their efforts a couple of decades ago.

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