

**FROM SELF-OTHERIZATION TO SELF-SOLIDIFICATION:  
A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF PEOPLE'S VISIONS OF PEACE  
IN TAIWAN**

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**Abstract**

Discourse on peace and security in Taiwan has long been exclusively associated with national defense. Even after martial law was removed in 1987, peace is still a subject not to be talked about in public. Between 2003 and 2005, Taiwan came under tremendous pressure to commit to a multi-year weapons purchase deal of two hundred billion U.S. dollars to strengthen the island's national defense. To encourage commoners to speak out on the issue, the No War Homeland Alliance, a local non-government organization, held a series of open forums around the island in 2005. Based on the content analysis of the forum transcripts, this study constructs Taiwanese commoners' visions of peace and examines the discursive strategies used. Ordinary people in Taiwan communicated a more inclusive view of peace than that of the government and the media at the time. Men and women participants exhibited distinctive differences in their conceptualizations of peace and uses of valorization and resistance strategies while discussing a tabooed subject in a group context.

Peace has been embraced, almost cross-culturally, as an ideal state of human existence that people aspire to. Yet individuals' conceptualizations of peace vary in accordance with an array of factors such as life experiences, socio-cultural-natural, regional environment and current events (Boulding, 1988; Cavin, 1994; Jeong, 2000; Steinberg, 2004). To some, peace is an abstract, imagined utopia; to others, a political conundrum in the international arena -- so overwhelming that how to achieve it is beyond their capability. To those who are influenced by spiritual traditions in the East as well as in the West, peace is more primarily contended as a personal daily practice in the mundane world (Barash and Webel, 2009; Jeong, 2000). With individual idiosyncrasies

aside, women, in lay theories, are perceived to be more peaceful by nature, while men, more suitable for building (e.g., at negotiation tables) and defending peace (e.g., in battles and wars). Women, thereby, have not been included and sometimes have been excluded from the discursive field of peace and security, which is assumed to be masculine, like many other conventional public sectors (Boulding, 2000; Confortini, 2009; Kimble, 2004; Goldstein, 2001, 2002; Tickner, 2002).

The corresponding term of peace in Chinese is *he-ping*. According to the *National Language Dictionary* published by the Ministry of Education of Taiwan (The Republic of China) in 1997, the term “*he-ping*” is defined in three aspects:

1. harmonious, peaceful existence
2. a status of no war
3. gentleness, tenderness

“Calmness” and “tranquility” are listed as its synonyms while “war” and “voraciousness” as its antonyms. However, the entirely positive denotations associated with the literal meaning of the term *he-ping* do not afford the word its popularity in Taiwan. In fact, for a long period of time, discourse of peace and security in Taiwan, an island overshadowed by an unresolved dispute with China over its sovereignty in the past sixty years, has long been exclusively framed within the discourse of national defense, while any alternative discourses had been hushed and demeaned all throughout the 23 years of martial law ruling. Though today’s Taiwanese people have enjoyed one of Asia’s few functioning democracies and celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the removal of the martial law,<sup>1</sup> peace is still a subject not often talked about in the public discourse. This could be attributed to the fraught relationship filled with confrontations between Taiwan and China that has been looming over people’s psychological mindsets for so long. Taiwanese people are not accustomed to freely discussing peace-related issues in public without thinking of the recent rhetoric of China’s “peaceful rising” policy and its paradoxical placement of short-range ballistic missiles aimed at Taiwan. China’s latter “strategic action” is justified by its longstanding claim on the island as a breakaway province. If the Taiwanese people dare to advocate for across-the-strait peace, they are at real, serious risk of being labeled as persons who are “echoing China’s peace rhetoric” or even as “betraying Taiwan.”

The self-muted silence finally became unbearably stifling to the people in Taiwan when the Cabinet approved plans for a special arms purchase budget of 18 billion US dollars in June 2004 to cope with the increasing cross-strait military imbalance that goes

against Taiwan. Refusing to be forced to maintain a discreet silence on the issue and leave the peace/security discourse to government, the strong civil society in Taiwan organized large-scale protests and parades in 2003 and 2004. Twelve thousand people appeared on the street to show their objection against the arms deal; a petition of more than a million signatures was submitted to the Administrative Yuen (the Cabinet). These events together with the day-to-day media coverage of the arms deal prompted ordinary Taiwanese people to start talking about peace and security in Taiwan, which was a very rare phenomenon in the island's history. To further the impact of this unprecedented change in the society, the No War Homeland Alliance, a grass-root group derived from Taiwanese people's anti-weapon purchase campaign in 2003, traveled around the island and hosted a series of open forums in an informal town meeting format in urban and rural areas in 2005. The objective was to promote civil discussions over issues related to peace, war, and cross-strait relations in Taiwan. In these forums, ordinary people of all ages and ranks of life raised their concerns of the cross-strait situation and their hopes for the future of their homeland, including their conceptualizations of peace, a term that has been for a long time "otherized" in Taiwan's public discourse. Based on the analysis of these men's and women's discourse in the open forums, this paper intends to construct a people's vision of peace in Taiwan and to study the discursive process in which ordinary people wrestle with a subject marginalized in Taiwanese society for more than fifty years.

### *Talking about Peace: The Envisioning Process*

People generally feel uncomfortable talking about socially or culturally marginalized notions in public. When they are forced to talk about notions such as peace or security in Taiwan, the literature suggests that they may employ two very different discourse strategies to dispel their discomfort. One coping strategy is to valorize the existing marginal notion without critically examining the validity of the mainstream conceptualization; this way, the power structure is maintained and the dominant value system remains intact (e.g., Wolfensberger, 2002). The other strategy is to use the resistance discourse to challenge the status quo by either unclinking the mainstream myths that help marginalize the subject or reinventing the marginal notion with new constructs; thereby people would gain the legitimacy to talk about the de-marginalized notion and feel more comfortable in doing so (e.g., Viollet, 1988).

*Valorization Discourse*

When people have to speak about a marginalized notion, out of fear of being marginalized themselves, people consciously or unconsciously would explicitly identify with the official discourse and/ or the government position, and usually at the same time try to distance themselves from the marginalized voice. Commonly-used discursive practices include polarization, dehumanization, and demonization of “the other.” These practices procure a comforting sense of security by siding with the collective self in the “Us” vs. “Them” paradigm (Fairclough, 1992; Said, 1979; Wolfensberger, 2002). People may focus on, or even exaggerate, the differences between “us” and “them”, for example, with enemies during wartime. Or they may use some animal terminology to describe “them” so that any attempts to make the enemy more equal or similar to “us” are rendered less possible (Hart and Hassencahl, 2002; Kimble, 2004). By confirming and further perpetuating the mainstream interpretation of the phenomenon, people adopting this discourse relocate themselves to the center (rather than stay in the margins); however, they inevitably help to sustain the status quo and continue the cloaking of its real, sometimes exploitive, nature.

A more implicit way to valorize the dominant paradigm is usually referred to as “self- otherization,” whereby people internalize the mainstream representations of the group they belong to and exhibit the stereotypical behaviors or attributes as expected. Kubota (1999) depicts how Japanese have embraced the perceptions that they are different from the rest of the world. When people self-otherize themselves, they believe that because they have adopted the mainstream position, they are no longer marginalized and have thus secured their existing status, no matter how undesirable, in the system, be it international or interpersonal. In fact, they unconsciously validate and reinforce the stereotypes that have otherized them, and thereby further marginalize themselves (Palfreyman, 2002).

*Resistance Discourse*

To resist control of the dominant paradigm, people “in the margins” often resort to various discursive strategies while interacting with the mainstream position (Viollet, 1988; Weiner, 1994). Among them, decenterization and empowerment are two such strategies most frequently observed.

Decenterization is one prominent strategy to resist the dominant paradigm (Crenshaw, 1989; Rom and Moghaddam, 2003). To decenter a mainstream notion usually

starts with attempts to deconstruct any fixed meaning by exposing its relational character. That is, instead of focusing on only one or two features of the notion - such as the origin of activity - one needs to understand and reinterpret the related language/discourse used to interpret or simply talk about the notion (Lannamann, 1992). For example, only when peace discourse is not confined to notions of national security and weaponry but expanded to include human welfare and living standards, can more ordinary people, including women, join the discussion. (Galtung, 2002, 2007; Tickner, 1992, 2002). Their discourse is bound to enrich the concept of peace by the variety of experiences and perspectives they bring into the discourse. Through the process of decenterization, the meaning or significance of a notion is reconstructed, different from what the dominant paradigm assigned to the notion, and thus the notion is demarginalized. If the political mainstream conceptualizes peace as “no war” under the nation-state security paradigm, one way to decenter this tunnel vision of peace is to examine the language clustering around the term peace in common people’s discourse and weave together an alternative discursive representation of peace which will generate new relations to other notions in other discourse networks. This way can a marginal notion be relocated away from the margin and re-enter the mainstream frames of reference.

While decenterization places significant attention on the meanings and/or characters of the marginal as constructed through discourse, another resistance strategy derived from the empowerment ideology, focuses on the discursive practice itself. The empowerment ideology is based on the belief that human beings are capable of change and development to realize their potentials. Since power is, in this approach, associated with dignity, equality and pluralism, once the “power within” is developed, the person will be more confident and capable of more effectively engaging in social actions working for changes of a larger scope (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995; Rappaport, 1984; Rom and Moghaddam, 2003).

For this to be achieved, languages of collaboration, ownership, possibilities and solutions are used in the discursive field to empower the speakers during the communicative acts (Pollak 2000; Greene, Hoffpauir and Lee, 2005). The language of collaboration is often observed in shared negotiation and participatory group dynamics, such as mutual clarification, encouraging participation, and active listening. The language of ownership refers to usage of active voice, e.g. the “I” statement, and giving due credits (Passons, 1975; Sands, 1988). The language of possibilities occurs in an empowerment discourse, when speakers constantly reframe and reinterpret the subject in a plausible yet possible way to include and solicit more positive options and choices as alternatives. Rather than focus on problems, the language of solutions emphasizes identifying,

reinforcing existing strengths, competences, and resources as viable solutions to transform the status quo as well as to consolidate all of the marginalized voices (Berg and Miller, 1992).

Discursive strategy literature contends that language can be both a powerful instrument to perpetuate and strengthen the dominant paradigm and existing social institutions, as well as an empowering agent of change to reframe the reality and create inter-subjective novels. The common discursive strategies used to approach the marginalized notion “peace” are examined in this study to illuminate the tension between validation of and resistance to the mainstream position on an already otherized subject in a discursive field.

## **Research Method**

To understand how ordinary Taiwanese people phrase and interpret peace in the context of the cross-strait situation between Taiwan and China, all of the discourse data were collected in the forums organized by the No War Homeland Alliance from April to October 2005. The Alliance arranged these open forums through local community centers including regional community colleges and resident activity centers. Altogether twenty forums were held in seventeen towns and cities on the island of Taiwan as well as the three adjacent small islands (also part of the Taiwan territory). Each forum lasted for about two to three hours.

The men and women participants were Taiwanese citizens of all ages, coming from various professions and ethnic origins. Altogether, 64 men and 77 women participated in the forums (Table 1). They all consented to the audio-taping of the forums. The modest number of participants in each forum can be attributed to the fact of how people hesitated to attend such an event dedicated to sensitive issues of peace and the cross-strait relations. Even if they came, they did not directly speak out on the issue in most of the forums. However, the participants did manage to describe their visions of peace when asked by the facilitator(s) during the discussion.

The full recordings of the twenty forums were transcribed word-for-word, the researcher then coded the entire transcript and two assistants applied the content analysis conventions as outlined in Haney, Russell, Gulek and Fierros (1998). Content analysis has been defined as an inference-making technique needed to systematically identify themes and used characteristics of messages in a variety of forms of text, including written passages, drawings, and videos (Neuendorf, 2001; Stempher, 2001). This

technique enables researchers to discover and/or describe the locus of attention of individuals, or specified groups in large volumes of data. Recently, content analysis has been combined with discourse analysis so as to further contextualize the latter (Jütersonke and Stucki, 2007).

Table 1 Participants in the Twenty Forums

Location	Female Participants	Male Participants	Total
Kinmen (A)	2	4	6
Lanyu (B)	1	7	8
Taipei (C)	4	0	4
Yjonhe* (D)	2	2	4
Chunghe* (E)	5	1	6
Penghu (F)	0	6	6
Hsinchu* (G)	4	8	12
Miaoli* (H)	0	5	5
Yuanlin* (I)	7	3	10
Taichung (J)	6	0	6
Nantou (K)	4	4	8
Chiayi (L)	3	3	6
Tainan (M)	1	4	5
Kaohsiung (N)	0	2	2
Pingtung (O)	3	3	6
Taitung (P)	3	7	10
Hualien (Q)	3	5	8
Yilan (R)	5	5	10
Hsinchu (S)	10	5	15
Magong (T)	1	3	4
Total	64	77	141

\* The forum was held in the local community college.

In the current study, the researcher and two assistants independently reviewed the transcripts by looking for key words, recording them in their immediate contexts and producing a list of statements containing the key words. Key words were decided upon based on their frequency or intensity. Frequency refers to the repeated occurrence of

certain words in the transcripts, which may indicate a deliberate emphasis on the participant's communication, or a recurring idea in the thinking process. The intensity criterion is used to single out those words that represent a strong degree of feeling or commitment, whose removal would significantly change the nature of the discourse or the intention of the forum participants. In particular, the contemporary conceptualizations of peace, war and security, and peacebuilding strategies (Barash and Webel, 2009; Hans and Reardon, 2010; Jeong, 2000) were used as references while identifying key terms throughout the analysis.

The researcher and assistants, then, compared their notes and lists, reconciled differences, and consolidated a draft checklist. Next, the researcher checked the reliability of the coding and then revised the checklist in accordance. After the reliability of the coding was established<sup>2</sup>, the revised checklist was applied to the transcripts again to ensure a comprehensive and systematic coding. The second list of statements was then compiled. After a word-by-word reading of these statements, the researcher identified and categorized recurrent themes and concepts regarding peace and those pertinent to building or hindering the realization of peace in Taiwan. Then the researcher examined the discursive contexts in which the participants approximate the concept of peace in order to locate the discursive strategies employed by the forum participants with particular attention on the strategies of valorization and resistance. The researcher also compared the discourses of the two genders (biological sexes) in their conceptualizations of peace and their uses of discursive strategies. The results of these analyses are used to explore the following research questions:

1. How do ordinary people in Taiwan conceptualize "peace"?
2. How do they manage to talk about peace, a marginalized notion, in public?
3. Do men and women exhibit different discursive strategies when talking about peace and related issues?

### *Results and Analysis*

Almost all participants directly or indirectly expressed their visions of peace in the twenty forums. The content analysis of the transcribed recordings shows that the concept of peace is expressed in themes ranging from inner harmony in a person's mind to international dynamics among states. Men and women tend to agree only to some extent on what peace denotes. They also exhibit quite different discursive strategies while talking about peace and related issues in the open forums.



*Visions of Peace*

The content analysis of the participants' talk reveals that the concept of peace is operationalized in two categories of discourses on peace: their personal definitions of peace and the ways they perceive how peace can be achieved and wars prevented. The participants' descriptions of what peace means can be classified in the following typology of major categories in the order of frequency:

Table 2 A Typology of Taiwanese People's Visions of Peace

Operational Definitions of Peace		Frequency		
		M	F	Total/ Rank
Meaning of peace	Living a Life of Safety and Stability	22	42	61/1 <sup>st</sup>
	Harmony in Interpersonal Relations	32	24	56/2 <sup>nd</sup>
	Harmony in One's State of Mind	12	13	25/5 <sup>th</sup>
	No War/Conflict	17	2	19/9 <sup>th</sup>
	No Outer Threat/Invasion	12	3	15/10 <sup>th</sup>
	Harmony in Society	3	8	11/12 <sup>th</sup>
	No Discrimination	0	7	7/14 <sup>th</sup>
	Peaceful Coexistence between Nations	14	1	15/10 <sup>th</sup>
	Multicultural Values(mutual respect, trust)	8	14	22/6 <sup>th</sup>
	Considerations for Decedents	0	11	11/12 <sup>th</sup>
Means to peace	Good Communication	20	33	53/3 <sup>rd</sup>
	Upward Efforts from Individual	11	15	36/4 <sup>th</sup>
	Military Defense	17	4	21/7 <sup>th</sup>
	Downward Efforts from States	17	3	20/8 <sup>th</sup>
	No One-upmanship	3	12	15/10 <sup>th</sup>
	Economic Development	3	9	12//11 <sup>th</sup>
	Religious Beliefs	8	2	10/13 <sup>th</sup>
	Social Justice (Equal Rights Protection)	7	3	10/13 <sup>th</sup>
	Environmental Concerns	2	1	3/15 <sup>th</sup>

*Meanings of Peace*

Concerns for good living are most frequently mentioned when Taiwanese people ponder the subject of peace. This longing for security and stability in daily life has been echoed throughout the twenty forums:

Peace exists in (our) own lives. (F.2, p.3)

Peace to me is for the civilians to be able to live happily, safe and prosperous (economically developed). (G7, p. 6)

(Peace is) as long as everybody lives a peaceful and stable life. (I4, p.5)

(Peace) is the premier condition in our daily lives. (Q6, p.15)

Closely related to but slightly less mentioned than the concerns for a safe and stable life is the harmonious interaction with other people in everyday context: Husbands and wives, in-laws, parents and children, all live in harmony.” (F4, p.17)

When the concept of peace is embedded in daily lives and interpersonal relations, a set of core values of a multicultural society – which includes respect and trust - has been called upon as essential components of the meaning of peace: “We should respect others.” (B4, p.1) “(Peace means) mutual respect. Mutual benefits. Making a balance between benefiting self and benefiting others.” (I3, p.17)

Given that the interpersonal dimension is prominent in Taiwanese people’s conceptualization of peace, the importance of inner state of mind as peace also receives considerable amount of attention in the discourse. Some contend insisted love/compassion for self and/or for others. Some emphasized the balanced status of mind, body, and spirit as the foundation for peace. For example:

(Peace is) a matter of one’s mental status. (O4, p.3)

(Peace means that) you have to have love in your heart first. (M5, p.7)

(Peace is) a state of mind, body, and spirit in harmony. No incongruities nor conflicts. (F3, p. 2)

If everyone’s state of mind is peaceful, basically there will be no problems.” (F1, p. 3)

To other participants in the forums, peace is conceptualized on a larger scale defined in terms of societal harmony, economic development, or environment.

The true peace that Taiwan needs is not a peace with the opposite shore (China), but a peace of interactions among local people. (N2, p. 10)

With the current upheaval (in our society), I don't think we have peace at all. (G2, p.7)

When we talk about peace, we cannot avoid economy issues. (A3, p.9)

(If we) destroy the environment, we won't have peace. (B1, p.3)

Environmental protection is also important (to peace). (C3, p.6)

Both men and women participants tended to consider internal and interpersonal peace important as shown in Table 2. While women emphasized concerns for daily life security (which almost double those of men's), men more often discussed international wars and conflicts as criteria in defining peace:

(Peace means that) nations get along like friends. (B2, p.4)

No war is peace. (A3, p.2; Exact wording also I5, B4, L8)

(Peace), in the simple words, is like the Da-Tung (harmonious) World as our National Father. (P3, p.2)

Only a few women touched on the international dimension by saying: "Peacebuilding should start with individuals and then expand to each nation" (E2, p.1).

Obviously, the nation constitutes a top level of this female participant's conception of the peacebuilding spectrum, not the sole criterion.

On the other hand, many women but no men voiced their concerns about the welfare of future generations, when talking about peace:

Peace means protecting our children and grandchildren (B3, p.13)

Peace is for the security of the next generation. (B8, p.5)

(Peace means to) protect the next generation's security. (J3, p.10)

What about our future sons and daughters? (I14, p. 7)

Also, allusions to social justice are only found in women's definitions of peace in the study. One woman questioned the generally assumed "peaceful" status of Taiwan: "Is our country really peaceful? Not really. There are so many crimes and cases of suffering in our society that is reported in the newspaper everyday." (G2, p.17)

Some other women expressed concern about social discrimination as one major

cause leading to “non-peace”: “If you discriminate against someone, it is not very peaceful or equal.” (J4, p.6) “If there is no equality (in the society), then you can not have peace.” (E2, P.3)

A closer look at the data reveals that men and women may both use the same vocabulary to talk about peace, but they use the words in quite different, sometimes even opposite ways. For example, by using the term “the weak,” a man argues that “peace is what the weak always talk about” (E3, p.4), while a woman contends that “the hypocritical peace is muting the weak” (L2, p. 2). Here peace is, for women, conceptualized as a rather negative and undesirable notion, exclusive for “the weak” that are inferior in strength and character. On the other hand, whether “the weak” can have a say in the society becomes a criterion to judge for the genuineness of peace to the woman. If the weak are not allowed to speak out under the pressure of maintaining a peaceful façade for a larger or higher purpose, peace is more an oppression of the weak rather than what the term promises.

Another example is the discourse on “false peace.” Both men and women do talk about “false peace” but the term denotes different meanings. When men expressed their suspicions about peace, they referred to the mainstream conceptualization of peace, that is, no war in the international or cross-strait contexts:

(False) peace (between nations) is an easy way out (rather than really solving the problem) since it pleases everyone. (P3, p.5)

(Peace treaties) mean nothing. Is there ever a shortage of peace treaties in history? There’s no real peace afterwards. (A5, p.4)

To women, harmony on the surface is not enough for the realization of genuine peace. They are prone to question the myth that people live a peaceful life in today’s Taiwan by citing superficial politeness between people, furor, and scapegoating between major political parties, and increasing crimes such as verbal and physical violence against women.

The superficial harmony in any group is not a good sign of peace at all. It is false peace. (F6, p.5)

With so many events of rapes and sexual harassment on the news paper, I think there is no peace in my life, although people call it (the present) peace time. (D3, p.6)

While women and men seem to define peace in different ways to some extent and men tend to align more with the conventional thinking, by having such a wide range of notions associated with peace, the Taiwanese people have started to see peace in a more expanded, inclusive context, which is in line with the contemporary conceptualization of peace in the field of peace studies. A similar tendency can also be observed in Taiwanese people's approaches to peace.

### *Means to Peace*

In their attempt to verbalize what peace means to them, the participants often talked about what they think people should do to achieve peace (Table 2). Most of them asserted that good communication would lead to peace on the interpersonal, social and international levels:

Because (of) communication, there will be peace. (I5, p.5)

You have to use your rationality to communicate with others to achieve peace in your life. (S5, p.9)

If we encourage ourselves to communicate, we will get to understand even the other party in a conflict. (B3, p.5)

However, the realistic Taiwanese are not too idealistic about what communication can do in achieving peace; they show their prudence in recognizing the difficulty of good communication as in "Peaceful coexistence needs efforts. Sometimes it is very difficult to communicate" (C1, p.2). Being this realistic, both men and women in the study have asserted the importance of individual effort and contribution that will eventually lead to peace. "(Peace) starts with ourselves first and then we can diffuse it to the upper authorities." (B8, p.4) "Peace is only possible (if we start) from the person-to-person relationship." (M5, p.7)

While women were slightly more likely than men to show their preference for communication and individual efforts as means (Table 2), men and women do differ regarding the subject of peacebuilding along a similar line of their understanding of the rudiments of peace. Men tend to stress the menace of military threat and invasion as hindrance to peace and therefore, the importance of a strong military defense to deter the enemy, and the responsibility of the state/government: "Peace needs strong military (forces) (to support it) like Sweden." (O3, p.2) "Only with proper (military) defense, others will not attack us." (R3, p.10)

Women were more likely to mention the competitive mentality or one-upmanship as the root cause of why peace cannot be realized in Taiwan: “When everyone competes for the number one place, who wants to be number two? And here comes the endless conflicts.” (C2, p.2) “If we really want peace, we can’t stick to the Zero-sum paradigm.” (E2, p.7)

This difference inevitably leads to more men than women admitting their sense of powerlessness in working for peace as commoners in the nation: “We common people cannot object what the government decides to do.” (F2, p.8) “It’s not up to us small potatoes.” (G8, p.18)

Yet women seem to be more proactive, as expressed in their suggestions for peacebuilding through economic development and a change in attitude and action:

Once the economy is thriving, people will be less critical of others (and therefore the society will be at peace). (I9, p.10)

If we respect the multiple (sub)cultures in our society, peace can be realized much easier. (I5, p.15)

Change of (personal) attitude will have impacts upon people in our surroundings. (G9, p.14)

The result of the content analysis shows that Taiwanese people tend to conceptualize peace very closely to their personal daily life and the inner state of mind. The people’s vision of peace is quite different from what peace denotes in the public discourse in Taiwan, which always associates peace with a focus on national defense at the state level. This gap between the official discourse of peace and what ordinary people consider peace to be in Taiwan could be related to the semantic meanings of the two characters constituting the term peace “he-ping” . In the Chinese language, “he” refers to interpersonal or intrapersonal harmony and “ping” refers to leveling off differences or subsiding, which may find their roots in the culture dated back to the Confucian notion of peace from social harmony and equilibrium and Mo Tzu’s ideas of unconditional and all-embracing love in the 4th and 5th century B.C.E. (Barash and Webel, 2009). The commoners’ interpretations of peace are more in line with these meanings of the two characters in the Chinese language and culture. Also, their discourse on peace echoes the universal human yearning for an all-dimensional peace and human security, as reflected in the recent academic discussion on the nature of peace (Barash and Webel, 2009; Hans and Reardon, 2010; Galtung, 1996, 2007; Jeong, 2000). In particular, the strategies to achieve peace as identified here are quite similar to those listed in Barash and Webel

(2009) and Jeong (2000) except for international interventions. This may reflect the consequential impact of Taiwan's long-term exclusion from the international community – Taiwanese people are not familiar with the important peacebuilding contributions that have been made by international organizations during the past three decades.

Moreover, the Taiwanese people's visions of peace via the operational definitions and ways to obtain it are, to some extent, gendered. Men in the forums tended to position themselves closer to the mainstream media and political discourse; that is, more of them would associate the term "peace" with the conventional war vocabulary such as international conflict, external threat, military forces and weapons. Women, on the other hand, tended to express more socio-cultural concerns of inequality, sustainability, and multicultural value including respect and collaboration in both their definitions of peace and approaches to achieve peace. There are two possible explanations for the reasons behind this difference. One is that women are perhaps less bounded by the mainstream conceptualization of peace. Since they did not serve in the military and thus, are less brainwashed in the militarized, securitized framework, they can focus more on the social and interpersonal dimensions of peace. The other explanation could be related to the marginalized phenomenon known as self-otherization in which women, otherized in the discursive field of national affairs, may consciously or unconsciously shun themselves from speaking on state-level issues related to peace, thereby appealing to other dimensions of peace. The women's and men's self-otherization through their use of discursive strategies will be further discussed in the next section.

### *Discursive Strategies*

It has been observed that participants employed discursive strategies of valorization and resistance throughout the forums, which can be particularly discerning in discourse regarding peace between Taiwan and China. Perfectly aligning themselves with the mainstream position on cross-strait peace-related issues at the time, (That is, the official government position in Taiwan between 2000 and 2008) many participants have shown a strong inclination to otherize China and polarize one's own position against China. Yet also it has been found that there is a similarly strong effort to resist the "us" vs. "them" paradigm as postulated by the government. For example, the participants attempt to humanize China (and in particular, its people), which could make the move toward the commonly desired cross-strait peace more plausible.

*Valorization Discourse: Otherization and Self-Otherization Strategies*

The commonly used discursive strategies to valorize the mainstream position on the cross-strait relationship include otherization and self-otherization. The otherizing of China is most prominently evidenced through the metaphors used to describe the cross-strait reality. As metaphors serve as a structuring principle focusing on particular aspects of a phenomenon and hiding others, each metaphor signifies a specific interpretation of the reality (Foss, 1989; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). All metaphors of Taiwan-China relations located in the twenty forums are categorized in Table 3.

Table 3: Metaphors of Taiwan-China Relations

Character	Content	Frequency
(1) Animals		
	Sheep vs. Bad Wolf (P11, p. 9)	1
	Sheep vs. Devouring Tiger (N4, p. 7) (female)	2
(2) Humans		
	Land Owner vs. Bad Neighbor (looking for opportunities to take our land) (R23, p. 12)	1
	Younger Person vs. Elders, Country of Origin (K9, p. 8)	1
	Brothers (H2, p. 5)	1
	Young feeble woman being imprisoned (O6, p. 5)	1
	Daughter pursued by a rogue/rascal (not knowing where to find shelter or rescue) (R4, p.14) (female)	1

An obvious “us” vs. “them” paradigm underlines those metaphoric depictions of the cross-Taiwan strait situation, in which Taiwan is always portrayed as of inferior status or being threatened by China. With a superpower residing right next to the island and its insistence on “reunification,” Taiwanese people can certainly sense the menace of an attack from their neighbor and would naturally develop some self-protection efforts by casting dehumanizing images of ferocious animals such as wolf and tiger on China.



Given such symbolism, the age infiltration of the cross-strait relation metaphors is inevitably tilted toward the dwarfing of Taiwan in the face of China. Although the People's Republic of China was established thirty years later than Taiwan (the Republic of China), it is generally considered by the participants to be the "elders" and the "motherland." This metaphorical binding is in fact in accordance with the historical course of incessant one-way immigration from China to Taiwan and Taiwanese' longtime cultural linkage to the "mainland" China and the Chinese language.

When the cross-strait relation is engendered in the metaphors, Taiwan is always represented as a woman, feeble, passive, pursued by others, and incapable of protecting herself. Since women have been found to be usually be marginalized as "the other" in many public discursive fields, this metaphoric description by Taiwanese people's about Taiwan itself seems to subconsciously self-otherize the island in their discourse. Yet, more implicitly, with the familiar equal rights ideology that underscores many practices promoting social justice in Taiwan during the past twenty years, Taiwanese people use this self-as-other transmorphosis to legitimize their denouncement of the hegemonic threat they are faced with on an everyday basis and to justify Taiwan's struggle for the ultimate equity and coexistence between Taiwan and China as the basis for genuine cross-strait peace. This polarization of the meek and the strong is perfectly in tune with the official position of the Taiwanese government and these metaphors serve as a type of valorization strategy employed by the participants in envisioning a sensitive subject like peace in Taiwan.

Another valorization strategy that the Taiwanese people use to identify with the dominant paradigm that marginalized peace in the public discourse is to reinforce the idea that peace is a national security issue not suitable for ordinary people with limited "professional" backgrounds or no "adequate" political status to talk about it. Both men and women participating in the forums express an uneasiness immediately after being asked to talk about peace and war while other forum participants usually second these discourses by nodding<sup>3</sup> or responding "yes":

I hardly thought of war or peace. (C1, p. 2)

Wars are too distant a subject for me. (J10, p. 11)

I only heard (about wars) from textbooks and older people.( I have) no experiences at all so I am not the right person to talk about peace and war. (G2, p. 9)

This straightforward confession of lack of knowledge and qualification for speaking on peace and war is common among participants throughout all the forums. Yet

the discourse following the opening concession is found to be very different in the narratives by men and women. For women, admitting their lack of knowledge means that they do not have anything more to say and the floor is open to other discussants. Sometimes they would add remarks as humble as: “We are just small potatoes here as audience.” (P7, p.10) “(I am) only a very low (social)-level housewife.” (J7, p. 3) “I am here to learn more from you on this subject.” (P8, p. 6)

One woman simply delegates the subject away (to men): “After watching the movie (about wars), I was very worried and asked my boyfriend what we should do.” (Q5, p. 5)

After making such statements, these women either did not say anything on peace/war-related topics or simply remained silent until the end of the forum. Their self-exclusive, even self-deprecating remarks can be categorized as the “self-otherization” discourse in that they obviously estrange themselves from the discussion on peace and war. Through the self-otherization process, these women, consciously or not, have internalized the stereotypical depiction of women in the Taiwanese society that issues related to war, peace and national security are not appropriate territory for women. Probably influenced by the normative power of the militarized masculinity that bundles notions of peace/war and national security with men and strengthened by their mandatory military service experiences, women are considered and perhaps consider themselves lacking experience and expertise to be qualified discussants of the related issues. Their self-otherizing discourse through denial and self-depreciation represents a less explicit way to valorize the existing norms of how women should behave when peace/war is the subject of discussion.

Table 4 Frequency of Self-Depreciation as Valorization Strategy on War Related Subjects

Self-depreciation	Male	Women
As Opening	22/41*	32/38*
Embedded in Longer Discourse	14	1

\*Total number of men/women who were directly asked to speak on war/peace related subjects.

As for the men participants of the forums, by opening with humble admission to the lack of experience with war experience usually really serves its purpose to ease the way into real comments since this self-deprecating opening is generally followed by long monologues lasting for three to seven minutes in the recordings:

I only got my information from the movies. But you can certainly feel the way...it's like the tsunami in the Southeast Asia. To walk in others' shoe should be an ability that everyone has. (To be followed by a monologue of 4 minutes) (F3, p.2)

I do not have any deep understanding of the concept of peace. Yet to me ...(To be followed by a monologue of 5 minutes) (L7, p. 8)

I find it difficult to sense what peace is. (To be followed by a monologue of almost 6 minutes) (S13, p. 4)

The initial concession by these male discussants is only a modest lead to their full-length opinions on war and/or peace, completely different from women's discourse (Table 4). Despite the fact that these men participants - similar to the women - have no first-hand experiences of war, they appear to be no strangers to these issues. After the self-depreciatory remarks, they continue to elaborate on the subject based on the information they recollect from textbooks and movies in the monologues. Perhaps there is no need and, probably, space for them to genuinely self-otherize themselves since issues of peace and war are what men are supposed to know about and be capable of talking about, no matter how inexperienced they may be. Men's initial self-otherization to normalize themselves on a marginalized subject together with the subsequent long discourse, in this sense, can also be categorized as a type of valorization to confirm the existing gendered norm perpetuating cultural memory and personal identification in Taiwanese society. Further exploration is needed on whether or not this norm has exerted pressure on Taiwanese men to feel obliged to give long comments on peace and war-related issues in a small group context and why this double valorization strategy is only used by male participants. In the present study, self-otherization, though in different degrees and, perhaps, for different purposes, is preferred by both genders of forum participants as a discursive strategy to valorize the mainstream stereotyping of men and women in their peace/ war-related discourse.

## **Resistance Discourse: Empowering and Decenterization**

### *Empowering Strategies*

While discussing an otherized subject such as peace/war/national security, many

men and women in the study are prone to use the valorization discourse to side with the mainstream thinking and derived stereotypes. Yet, some forms of resistance to the dominant discourse have surfaced, in particular, in women's discourse throughout the twenty forums. Traditionally otherized in the peace and war discourse, women participants were the first to have shown attempts and efforts to increase their participation by employing a language of connection and collaboration to exert their voice and influence in the discursive field. While some of the women do self-otherize and shun themselves from the discussion by taking much shorter speaking turns and remaining silent for longer periods of time compared to their male counterparts, some women try to solidify themselves with more inclusive discursive strategies and language of collaboration whenever they have opportunities to do so. The many short exchanges among women come into sharp contrast to men's long monologues in the forums. The solidification devices used in women's discourse outnumber those in men's discourse (Table 5), including elaboration on each other, summarizing other women speakers' comments, support of other women speakers by giving examples or clarifications, and encouraging more women to join the floor during discussion: "(Taiwanese) You can say it yourself. Go ahead." (J9, p. 10) "I'm not sure about this. (To a woman) What do you think of it?" (J5, p. 6) "Would you two (women sitting together) like to say something?" (G2, P.13)

Table 5 Frequency of Solidification as Empowering Strategies on Peace/War Related Subjects

	Men		Women	
	To men	To women	To men	To women
Summary	0	3	0	6
Examples	2	1	3	8
Clarification	3	0	1	9
Solicitation	0	1	0	13
Mutual Elaborations	1	0	0	7
Total	6	5	5	43

They also managed to attach the language of ownership such as the "I" statement and active voice to the solidification discourse in furthering their sense of competence: "I would like to echo Wan-ling on that ..." (I2, p.3) "My opinion is pretty close to this elder sister participant's in that ..." (P5, p. 8)

These solidification strategies through the inclusive and sometimes communal discourse help women to break the grounds and gain more influence in the discursive field. Without resorting to the more male-preferred strategies such as refutation and confrontation, women empower themselves with discursive strategies familiar to women's speaking community (Wood, 2004) to broach the invisible barriers that deny their legitimate access to subjects such as war and cross-strait relations in the public discourse. The low frequency of men using solidification strategies may be related to the general masculine communication style, as commonly reported in the literature, that men are not used to the collaborative communication in a group context (for a review of masculine and feminine communication styles, see Wood, 2004).

### *Decenterization Strategies*

Another resistance attempt of the women participants in the study is to reinvent the subject of war and peace from a peacebuilding perspective, which is more humane than the mainstream "us vs. them" mentality in Taiwan. For a majority of the time, China is presented in a rather negative manner in predominant Taiwanese public discourse since a clear sympathy with China would be easily labeled as unpatriotic. However, many more women than men (11 to 2) in the forums chose to bring forth their sympathetic observation of the Chinese people living across the strait as those who are "just like us": "...They (Chinese) are the same with us – plain and down to earth." (E3, p. 2) "...(They are) speaking the same language and having similar living habits." (M5, p. 17) "...(They are) not that horrible as reported here on the Taiwanese media." (E6, p. 4)

Women also try to distinguish the Chinese leaders from the ordinary Chinese people, such as when one woman argued, "not all the Chinese are hateful. Most of those are the leaders with political powers" (I6, p. 16). Thereby the Chinese policy of unification by force is simply a position held only by a small group of leaders and most of the Chinese people can be perceived in a more humane way.

In line with their personal observations that counter the mainstream conceptions of the cross-strait relations, these women further point out methods to resolve the Gordian knot between Taiwanese and Chinese people: "(We) need to get to know the mainland in order to find the channel to communicate with them." (I6, p. 16) "Mutual understanding is a very good presupposition to build (a) lasting peace (with China)." (M5, p. 12)

Compared to many of the men participants who hold war as the bottom line, women's rehumanization discourse seems to pull the polarized neighbors closer and make war a less likely solution to the cross-strait situation. The rehumanization may also

contribute to the communitarian suggestions made solely by women participants concerning the future of Taiwan:

We (Taiwan) have so many(kinds of) strengths. Have we really no ability to create a new option in addition to the either-or controversy (referring to Taiwan's future as either unification with or independence from China)? (A1, p.3)

We should speak out our wish for peace and motivate more people to join the discussion and make this peace happen. (P1, p. 14)

Combining languages of possibilities and solutions (Greene, 2005), women reframe the military force imbalance across the Taiwan Strait and offer non-violent/ non-military options to challenge the prevailing discourse of polarization between Taiwan and China. This proactive and self-assertive discourse has also strongly influenced the discursive climate and subsequently encourages more positive creative solutions to be voiced in the forums.

By rehumanizing the Chinese commoners and distinguishing leader's political façade and the ordinary people's behaviors, women participants help to illustrate that the "other" does not always represent a source of fear, but the discourses built around it do. Since the State usually requires a discourse of danger to legitimize its power and secure its identity, these attempts to dehumanize the enemy is a brave move toward decentering the national discourse that renders the cross-strait relations the very conduit of fear in Taiwan. Thereby these women's discourse has reconstructed the notion of China into a more humane representation that enables more peaceful, violence-free relations with China not only possible but feasible in the official political and media discourse. No longer confined to the existing choices, women's proactive discursive efforts to decenterize the cross-strait dilemma allow for peaceful means and novel solutions to evolve. As part of the resistance women exhibit in struggling against the long-time otherization of women in the discursive field of national security, the rehumanization strategy may further the future peacebuilding for Taiwan, on the island and across the Strait.

## **Conclusion**

This study analyzed Taiwanese people's discourse on peace and related issues in the twenty forums held in 2005. The forum participants did not provide a coherent, unified framework of peace, but instead a diversified, range of envisioned possibilities,

which gradually evolved during the discursive process. When asked what they thought peace meant to them, they responded not only with the denotative or historical implications of the term, but also with observations and insights derived from their personal experiences in daily life contexts. Through the conscious or unconscious decenterization, Taiwanese commoners conceptualized peace in a spectrum ranging from inner and interpersonal peace in family, in society, to that between nations. They also conspired to the more constructive, proactive peace building approaches including communication, multicultural values, and a lack of the zero-sum mentality. Compared with the tunnel vision of peace in the official discourse at the time, their discursive representations of peace via languages of possibilities and solutions, further enriched by the metaphorical descriptions of contemporary Taiwan-China relations, might suggest more non-violent options to the mainstream militarily securitized conceptualization of peace across the Taiwan Strait since the 1950s.

Based on the analysis of the discourse data, this paper argues that common people in Taiwan conceptualize peace in a more constructive and all-dimensional way, in comparison with the militarized, internationally politicalized version favored by the government and the media. At a time when voices of militarized security and decontextualized rationality were dominant in Taiwanese society, people's visions of peace as constructed in the study may represent the beginning of a conceptual shift tilted toward the notions of positive peace and human security originated in the Western political framework. Yet a closer look at the intense and deeply-ingrained influences of the concepts of *ren* (gentleman's virtue including kindness, decorum)<sup>4</sup> and five interpersonal ethics<sup>5</sup> in Chinese cultures and societies in East Asia may help in understanding why Taiwanese people conceptualize peace in a more humane vocabulary than their government. The hybrid nature of their visions of peace is more of an integration of the Confucian cultural breeding and the recent peace education efforts from informal sectors in Taiwan. Attempts and opportunities to deconstruct the stigmatized notion of peace and to have locally evolved voices emerge, heard and gain momentum may be what people and the government in Taiwan need in the face of the rising China across the Taiwan Strait.

When asked to talk about a politically and culturally otherized notion (be it peace, war, security or cross-strait relation) in the forums, Taiwanese commoners are prone to use first a discourse of valorization and later a discourse of resistance. The discourse sequence seems to enable them to dissolve the initial reluctance and tension, thereby allowing them to solidify and empower themselves to speak out while entering the otherwise highly self-censored discursive fields on sensitive or even tabooed subjects.

Through the discursive process, the participants gradually become more confident in raising creative solutions for the existing conundrum between Taiwan and China, thus adding possibilities to the current polarized political positions and public opinions in Taiwanese society. More research on the dialectics of empowerment and solidification as resistance to the mainstream paradigm and its impact is needed to further verify the role of discourse in envisioning new possible realities beyond the existing structures, in particular with the combusive contextual specificity.

Given that women have conventionally been otherized in the national security discourse in Taiwan, the female participants in the forum initially appeared to be quite reserved in expressing their opinions. Though some women invoked conventional gender stereotypes such as “war is men’s territory” (P2, p. 2), as the forum proceeded, they gained support and strength from other women via the collaborative use of language of ownership and language of possibilities. These women have eventually managed to counter-position themselves in relation to the gendered expectation of Taiwanese society and bring forth a more future-oriented, down-to-earth and daily-life-focused vision of peace, compared to that of their male counterparts whose peace and war discourses reflected more traditional and mainstream influences. The women’s self-generated power derived from the discursive dynamics nonetheless contributes to the rich inventory of meanings of peace established in the forums. These versions of reality can be juxtaposed with the longstanding paradigm and its overbearing normative power, which must have nonetheless been propounded by the participants. In the current study, the communal self-solidifying and self-empowering effect seems to be more prominent in women than men discussants in that women were found to gradually evolve from self-otherization to certain degrees of group solidification in the forums. Once this interactive nature of discourse forming is recognized, then the much desired actions for promoting dialectics of empowerment in the future might initially include how to cultivate the self-empowering communication with solidification strategies within men’s or mix-sex groups to counter the dominant discourse in the public discursive field. Also important is how to translate women’s self-empowerment and their counter-national security envisioning of peace into feasible practices and even structures of state power in order for stable and sustainable peace to occur.

One thing that perhaps warrants more attention, which is yet lacking from the paper, is the potential for strategies of cross-strait peace building suggested by the relational metaphors and the rehumanization discourse which surfaced in the forums. As a substantial step toward deconstructing the mainstream culture of otherizing China, the rehumanization discourse helped to recast the public focus on the securitization of



peace-related issues in a new light of re-bordering discourse so that the subject of fear is re-conditioned, no longer reflecting our conception of the “enemy.” A continued public discussion employing the vocabulary of de-otherization and de-bordering, together with the relational metaphors of Taiwan-China situation, would call for more civil and friendly interactions between and recognitions of each other, since commoners on both sides are much alike, and China and Taiwan are already connected in certain relationships. This relational discourse not only signifies the unsevered connection embedded in today’s cross-strait dilemma faced by both Taiwan and China, but challenges the prevailing peace and security myths and the embedded zero-sum mentality of polarization in the dominant discourses astounded by both governments in the recent years. The ripple effect generated from the decentered notion of peace and the shift toward human wellness in everyday context should not be underestimated. If genuine peace can only be deep-rooted in a culture where different parties interact on equal terms, as exemplified in the forums, giving due emphasis to more of these open forums on specific peace/war/security topics at all levels will help foster such a culture in the long run. In addition, empathy and desire for mutual understanding could grow out of these forums and thus stabilize the peaceful co-existence of Taiwan and China. This exposition starting from the level of individual citizens, may one day find its way into that of the policy making and the mainstream discourse in Taiwan and, in turn, engineer more alternatives to the existing status of *Modus Vivendi* across the Strait; thereby initiating changes in the directions or even the course of history for Taiwan and China in the future.

## Notes

1. The rule of martial law was lifted in Taiwan in 1987.
2. The Cohen’s kappa reached .83.
3. The non-verbal nodding can be located by the verbal descriptions in the transcripts such as “Oh. People seem to agree with you by nodding their heads.” (G1, p.4)
4. The concept of *ren* has to be realized in interpersonal relationships since Confucius asserts that “*ren* is human” (Huang, 2005)
5. For harmony in the society, the Confucian teaching demands ethical behaviors in the traditional cardinal human relations: that between the ruler and the ruled; that between parents and children; that between siblings; that between husband and wife; and that between friends.

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