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ACCULTURATION AND SPOUSAL SUPPORT FOR FOREIGN WIVES: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE INTERNET BLOGS OF TAIWANESE WOMEN IN JAPAN

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ACCULTURATION AND SPOUSAL SUPPORT FOR FOREIGN WIVES:
A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE INTERNET BLOGS OF
TAIWANESE WOMEN IN JAPAN

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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This dissertation is dedicated to all of the foreign spouses

who have left what they've known behind

and migrated to the unknown for their love.

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Upon my tenth anniversary of being in the program, I finally finished this dissertation and completed the requirements for the degree. For the past four years, I have been living a completely different lifestyle with a new identity in Japan. I have been preoccupied with the search for my new self, and there have been times when I thought about giving up on pursuing my degree. However, because there are so many special people in my life, I have been able to achieve my dream.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ……iv

Abstract ……..vii

Chapter I: Introduction …….....1

Chapter II: Literature Review ……..6

Acculturation ……...6

Social Support ……13

Cultural Comparisons of Taiwan and Japan ……..16

Foreigners in Japan ……20

Summary ……24

The Present Study ……..25

Chapter III: Methods ……..28

Chapter IV: Results ……37

Support with Identifying as a Foreign Spouse in Japan …….37

Support with Maintaining Taiwanese Ethnic identity ……45

Support with Identifying with Martial Roles of Wife, Homemaker, and Mother

..…….. 47

Chapter V: Discussion ……54

Limitations …….....59

Clinical Implications for the Practice of Counseling Psychology ……..60

Future Directions ……61

Conclusion ……..62

References ……..64

Abstract

This study, a phenomenological inquiry of spousal support for foreign wives living in their husbands' country, examined the blogs of Taiwanese women in Japan. Eleven blogs written by 10 Taiwanese wives were purposefully selected from 235 blogs yielded by the initial search, all of which were available in the public domain. Three core categories with eight themes in total emerged from triangulation: support with identifying as a foreign spouse in Japan; support with maintaining Taiwanese ethnic identity; and support with identifying with the marital roles of wife, homemaker, and mother. The first category included help connecting with Japan, help connecting with Japanese people, and empathy and patience regarding homesickness and acculturative stress. The second involved support of contact with Taiwanese friends and support for relationships with families of origin. Finally, the third included expressions of love, care, and acceptance; participation in housework and/or childrearing; and financial support. Future research is needed to further explore foreign wives' strategies of acculturation and their relationships to spousal support and adaptation outcomes.

Chapter I: Introduction

Science and technology are changing the world, allowing people to perform tasks that used to be impossible and reach places that were previously unreachable. Economic development and globalization also provide opportunities for international mobility, which affects human relationships and increases the number of international marriages (Imamura, 1990).

In Taiwan, the number of international marriages peaked in 2003, when 32% of marriages involved a foreign spouse (Ministry of the Interior, Taiwan, 2010). Although this number decreased in the following years due to a government regulation set to prevent illegal immigration via sham marriages, 14% and almost 19% of Taiwanese citizens were married to non-Taiwanese partners in 2008 and 2009, respectively. Among the international marriages that occurred in 2009, 83% involved a non-Taiwanese wife, and 93% of these foreign wives were from China or Southeastern Asia. On the other hand, among the marriages that included a non-native husband, the majority of foreign husbands were from Japan.

The author of the present study, a Taiwanese woman, married a Japanese man in 2007 and moved to Japan with her husband the following year. In order to help prepare herself to adjust to life in Japan, the author began conducting online searches on life in Japan for women in her position two years prior to her move. During that search, she found numerous web blogs written by Taiwanese women married to Japanese men and living in Japan. Over the past six years, she has read thousands of blog entries written by hundreds of Taiwanese women documenting their lives in Japan and their relationships with their Japanese husbands.

According to the blogs, generally, there are three ways in which Taiwanese women and Japanese men start a relationship. First, some meet in Taiwan when the man travels there to learn the language or to work in a Taiwanese branch. Second, some meet in Japan when the woman is studying or working after having completed her education there. Third, some meet in a third country (e.g., Canada or the United States) while both are studying or working there. Regardless of how they begin the relationship, all these women live in Japan for their marriage and need to face acculturation both in their daily lives in Japanese society and within their marriages to their Japanese husbands.

Taiwan and Japan are two closely related nations in terms of geography, history, economy, culture, and strategic alignment in politics and business (Chu, Spires, Farn, & Sueyoshi, 2005; Lam, 2004). Taiwan, which is approximately one-tenth the size of Japan, was a Japanese colony from 1895 to 1945 (Sun, 2007); thus, in addition to being rooted in Confucianism, Taiwanese culture is also greatly influenced by Japan. Although Taiwan and Japan share many cultural similarities, the majority of the blog authors reported various degrees of distress over living in Japan. With respect to the level of difficulty, it was noticed that the Taiwanese wives who had lived in Japan prior to marrying their Japanese husbands reported fewer problems. When previous experiences in Japan were taken into account, spousal support appeared to be the major contributing factor determining the Taiwanese wives' acculturation and adjustment in Japan.

The results generated from multiple studies have consistently indicated a positive relationship between social support and acculturation outcomes across different

acculturating groups (Berry, 1997). Among various sources of social support, spousal support is described to be not only "qualitatively different and sometimes superior to other types of support, but when crises occur the spouse is often the first person sought for support" (Dehle, Larsen, & Landers, 2001, p. 308). Therefore, spousal support can also be more influential on acculturation outcome than other forms of social support for married individuals. However, a review of the literature on acculturation and married couples reveals that very little is known about spousal support in particular. On the other hand, studies examining married immigrants have directed much attention to problematic spousal interactions, such as spousal abuse or domestic violence. This gap suggests a need to examine acculturation targeting the positive aspects of the spousal relationship.

The current study qualitatively explores spousal support for foreign wives who live in their husbands' home country by analyzing blogs written by Taiwanese women married to Japanese men and living in Japan. The first purpose of this research is to help identify and build the strengths of cross-national marriages. Spousal support is found to be positively associated with marital satisfaction and physical and mental functioning in studies of domestic couples (Dehle et al., 2001). Compared with domestic marriages, cross-national marriages require more effort for the couple to overcome the challenges resulting from language, value, and cultural differences, which indicates a critical role of spousal support in the cross-national relationship. Counseling psychology values human strengths (American Psychological Association, 2012) and helps clients to identify strengths within them and build strengths for themselves. Spousal support is the strength within the marriage, so studying spousal support in

cross-national couples can help the couples generate self-help strategies. In addition, switching the research focus from spousal distress to spousal support helps the spouse emphasize what one can do to promote a healthier marital relationship and more successful acculturation rather than what one should avoid.

The second purpose of this research is to gather qualitative information on social support and acculturation. Most previous research has been conducted quantitatively, providing group tendencies and generalizations, related to these two areas. On the other hand, qualitative methods emphasize individuals' subjective experiences (Berg, 1995), which is one of the essential elements in counseling. Counseling psychologists need to understand the presenting issues through the client's subjective reality in order to produce more effective treatment outcomes, and this is particularly true for multicultural counseling. This study attempts to be a pioneer in exploring spousal support and acculturation in cross-national marriages by providing rich textual descriptions for an in-depth understanding through the subjective experiences of foreign wives.

Berry (2005) indicated that most acculturation and adaptation theories were generated from research conducted in North America, Australia, and New Zealand where the societies receive immigrants. There is a great need for studying adaptation taking place in other parts of the world, especially in Asia. Taiwan and Japan are both Asian countries, and the acculturation described in this study occurred in Asia. By conducting this study, the author hopes to contribute to the cross-cultural psychology literature targeting cross-national marriages and acculturation between members from two closely related Asian cultures.

Further, as a Taiwanese woman married to a Japanese man and living in Japan, the author hopes the information and insights gained through this study will help increase Japanese husbands' awareness of the dynamics and various aspects of spousal support for their foreign wives. It is also hoped that it will help both Japanese husbands and their Taiwanese wives build stronger marriages, which will further improve the wives' acculturation and adaptation in Japan.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The current chapter reviews the literature on acculturation and adaptation theories and outcomes, social support, cultural comparisons of Taiwan and Japan, and foreigners in Japan. This is followed by a section informing the current study.

Acculturation

The term "acculturation" was first introduced by American anthropologist J. W. Powell in 1880 to describe changes in Native American languages as a result of contact with Europeans (Rudmin, 2003; Sayegh & Lasry, 1993). Nowadays, there are two major perspectives on cross-cultural adaptation: One focuses on assimilation, whereas the other emphasizes ethnic plurality (Laroche, Kim, Hui, & Joy, 1996; Nguyen, Messe, & Stollak, 1999). Assimilation theorists often view acculturation and assimilation synonymously (Nguyen et al., 1999) and believe that a heritage culture will become similar to the dominant host culture or eventually disappear (Laroche et al., 1996). However, with the increasing number of immigrants to different societies, social scientists started shifting the focus of cross-cultural adaption theories from a linear model to more of a multidimensional perspective of change, resulting in changes in theories of acculturation over time (Laroche et al., 1996; Nguyen et al., 1999). Cultural pluralism suggests that individuals or groups adapt to mainstream culture "selectively and disparately across different sociocultural spheres" (Laroche et al., 1996, p. 115). Within the multidimensional perspective, cross-cultural psychology scholar John Berry presented a two-dimensional acculturation model that has influenced the cross-cultural psychology field profoundly (Laroche et al., 1996; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999).

Berry's Model of Acculturation

Concept. Berry (1997) noted that, due to the increasing influx of immigrants in different countries, members of different cultures come to live together and form culturally plural societies. In such societies, acculturation, referred to as "the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (Berry, 2005, p. 698), is likely to occur. However, these cultural groups are often unequal in numerical, economic, and/or political power (Berry, 1997), and most changes as a result of acculturation are observed in the non-dominant (migrating) group rather than in the dominant (host) group due to the influence of the mainstream power (Berry, 1992).

Berry (2005) stated that in order to understand the group (cultural) level change, it is necessary to understand the characteristics of both cultural groups prior to the major contact, the nature of the contact relationship, and the changes in both groups after the contact and the emergent groups during the acculturation process. At the micro level, psychological changes among individual group members and eventual adaptation to the new host society should be considered. Both cultural and psychological changes can be minor or substantial, ranging from relatively easy behavioral shifts through cultural learning to highly disruptive (Berry, 1997). For most individuals, positive adaptation to the new environment will take place over time (Beiser, et al., 1988, as cited in Berry, 1997).

Acculturation Strategies. Berry (1997) proposed two basic issues all acculturating individuals must face: cultural maintenance (i.e., the extent to which individuals value maintaining their ethnic identity and heritage in the new host society)

and contact with the dominant culture (i.e., the degree of desirability of interacting with the host culture and establishing relationships with its members). Based on these two issues, four acculturation strategies can be generated: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. In assimilation, individuals are only interested in participating in the host society and have no intention of maintaining their cultural identity. In contrast, in separation, individuals hold on to strong connections with their heritage while attempting to avoid interaction with the dominant group. In integration, individuals show interest in both maintaining their ethnic identity and seeking opportunities to participate in the host culture. Finally, in marginalization, individuals have limited opportunities or interest in maintaining their heritage and little interest in establishing contact with the dominant society (Berry, 1997).

Berry (2005) noted that these strategies are based on the assumption that the non-dominant group and its members can freely choose how they wish to acculturate, but clearly, this assumption does not apply to all societies. Particularly, integration can only occur in a society that is pre-conditioned to support multiculturalism (Berry & Kalin, 1995). On the other hand, enforced cultural loss and exclusion (or discrimination) often lead to marginalization; individuals rarely choose this strategy based on their own free will (Berry, 2005).

Findings of empirical studies on various types of acculturating groups consistently indicate a relationship between acculturation strategies and positive adaptation outcomes (Berry, 1997). The integration strategy appears to yield the most successful adaptation outcomes, while marginalization is the least successful strategy, with the assimilation and separation strategies falling somewhere in between (Berry &

Sam, 1996). A consistent pattern has also been found among immigrant youths. Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Vedder (2006) conducted a large international study of the acculturation and adaptation of immigrant adolescents living in 13 countries using a sample of nearly 8,000 from 23 cultural backgrounds. Their results indicated that youths who adopted the integrative style had the best psychological and sociocultural adaptation outcomes, while the diffuse or marginal group had the worst outcomes.

Adaptation. According to Berry's definition (2005), adaptation refers to "the relatively stable changes that take place in an individual or group in response to external demands" (p. 709). It should be noted that Berry's definition of adaptation is not equivalent to assimilating to the new setting and does not imply a necessarily positive relationship with the dominant group. That is, it may or may not improve the "fit" between the individual and the society of settlement, and it may involve negative or avoidant attitudes toward the host environment (Berry, 2005).

Acculturation is multifaceted (Berry, 2005), and Ward and colleagues (e.g., Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Searle, 1991; Ward & Kennedy, 1992, 1993) drew the first distinction between psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Psychological adaptation refers to psychological or emotional well-being in a new host culture, whereas sociocultural adaptation indicates social competence in interacting with the new environment in daily life. According to Berry (2005), although the two adjustments are moderately related empirically, the predictors and time courses are usually different. Factors that contribute to positive psychological adaptation include personality variables, life changes, and social support, while sociocultural adjustment is related to cultural knowledge, frequency of contact with the host group, and positive

intergroup attitudes. Psychological and sociocultural difficulties are usually the greatest when individuals enter the new environment, followed by a general decrease over time; however, sociocultural problems tend to have a linear improvement, whereas psychological improvement is more variable (Berry, 2005; Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998).

Regarding the relationship between Berry's acculturation strategies and psychological and sociocultural adjustment, Ward and Kennedy (1994) examined New Zealand sojourners and found that integrated sojourners experienced less psychological stress than assimilated individuals did. The separated group experienced the greatest number of social difficulties, while the assimilated and integrated groups experienced the least, with the marginalized group falling in between. These findings support Berry's (1997) notion that the integration strategy is associated with better adaptation outcomes. Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999) also examined the relationship between adjustment and the four acculturation orientations in sojourners in a non-Western society (Nepal). Subjects who reported the integrative style were identified as suffering significantly fewer psychological difficulties, whereas those who adopted the assimilation orientation experienced fewer social problems.

Acculturative Stress. When the intensity of cultural conflicts surpasses the point at which individuals can easily adjust, acculturative stress occurs (Berry, 1997). Berry, Kim, Minde, and Mok (1987) indicated that acculturative stress occurs when the source of stressors are from the process of acculturation, and the stress behaviors can often be evidenced in "lowered mental health status (specifically confusion, anxiety,

and depression), feeling of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptom level, and identity confusion" (p. 492).

Berry (1997) noted that acculturative stress and the older and famous term "culture shock" (Oberg, 1960) are synonymous. According to Oberg (1960), culture shock indicates the loss of familiar cultural signs and symbols (cues) of social intercourse when individuals enter a new society and is accompanied by feelings of anxiety, frustration, and helplessness. Although the term "culture shock" has widespread popular acceptance, Berry (1997, 2005) noted the following reasons that the conceptualization of acculturative stress better reflects the process and nature of acculturation. First, the concept of stress includes both positive and negative elements, just as acculturation experiences can be either positive or negative, whereas shock includes only the negative experiences. Second, stress has a well-established theoretical framework (i.e., "stress-coping-adaptation", Berry, 2005, p. 708). Third, the underlying stress is not about the culture itself but rather the interaction of cultures.

Berry (2005) noted that most of the established research on acculturation has taken place in countries with immigrants (Chun, Balls-Organista, & Marin, 2003, as cited in Berry, 2005), since it is an issue of concern in such countries. However, with the rapid growth in cross-cultural contact as a result of globalization, the issue of acculturation has become increasingly important in other parts of the world (Berry, 2005). In particular, Berry pointed out that there is a great need to study acculturation in Asia to help expand the knowledge.

Common Factors Affecting Acculturation

First, age has been identified as being negatively related to positive acculturation

(e.g., Park, Paik, Skinner, Ok, & Spindler, 2003). Although numerous studies have indicated that women have a higher risk than men of acculturating poorly (e.g., Lorenzo-Blanco, Unger, Ritt-Olson, Soto, & Baezconde-Garbanati, 2011), Choi and Thomas's (2009) review reported inconsistent results for gender. Berry (1997) pointed out that the gender effect may depend on the ways in which women are treated in the heritage and host cultures.

Higher education and higher socioeconomic status also predict better acculturation outcomes (e.g., Cuéllar & Roberts, 1997; Guinn, Vincent, Wang, & Villas, 2011). However, according to Berry's review (1997), immigrants tend to experience a combination of status loss and limited status mobility (Aycan & Berry, 1996) because their previous educational and work experiences are often devalued (Cumming, Lee, & Oreopoulos, 1989). A positive relationship between language acquisition ability and acculturation has been identified in numerous studies of a wide range of acculturating groups (e.g., Bernstein, Park, Shin, Cho, & Park, 2011; Zhang & Goodson, 2011).

Berry et al. (1987) suggested the effect of the motivation for migration. The groups that voluntarily choose acculturation may experience less difficulty acculturating than those groups that have little or no choice. Length of residence in the new host country has been identified as one of the predictors of acculturation (e.g., Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Some studies have further suggested the relationship between acculturation outcomes and neighborhood ethnic composition and length of residence (Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005; Hochhausen, Perry, & Le, 2010).

The significant relationship between social support and acculturation outcomes

has been reported across studies. Maintaining contact with the heritage culture (e.g., Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997) and establishing relationships with members of the dominant group (e.g., Zhang & Goodson, 2011) are both predictors of positive adaptation. Berry (1997) noted that receiving support from both the societies of origin and settlement are most predictive of positive acculturation outcomes (Berry, et al., 1987).

Cultural distance indicates the dissimilarity of two cultures (Berry, 1997). It can be measured by language, social structure, economic structure, religion, political system, educational level, standards of what constitutes truth, and aesthetic standards (Triandis, 1995). The smaller the cultural distance between two societies is, the more easily members of one can adjust to the other (Ward & Kennedy, 1992). Berry (1997) indicated that greater cultural distance demands greater adjustment, and it may also trigger negativities toward other cultural groups, resulting in disharmony.

Berry (1997) noted that researchers have examined the relationships between individual factors (e.g., locus of control and introversion/extroversion (Ward & Kennedy, 1992) and acculturation, but the results have not been consistent. Berry indicated the inconsistency may reflect the fact that acculturation is not about any one factor but is more about whether a "fit" exists with a particular new cultural environment.

Social Support

A large number of studies have found that social support is positively related to psychological and physical well-being (e.g., Thoits, 1986; Orth-Gomer, Rosengren, & Wilhelmsen, 1993). Social support is also a significant factor in life expectancy

(Berkman & Syme, 1979). Research has further shown that regardless of its sources and types, social support, even support received from strangers, can significantly contribute to mental and physical health outcomes (Albrecht & Goldsmith, 2003). According to Sarason, Levine, Basham, and Sarason (1983), social support is "the existence or availability of people on whom we can rely, people who let us know that they care about, value, and love us" (p. 127). Scholars have distinguished different types of social support. House (1981) noted four types of social support: emotional support (e.g., empathy, caring, and trust), appraisal support (affirmation, feedback, and social comparison, which are useful for self-evaluation), information support (e.g., advice, suggestions, and information), and instrumental support (e.g., tangible aid and services that directly help people). Cutrona and Suhr (1992) suggested five types of social support: informational support, emotional support, esteem support, tangible aid, and social network support. In Thorstad, Anderson, Hall, Willingham, and Carruthers' (2006) review, social support can be narrowed into two general categories: instrumental/practical and emotional types of support (Beehr, 1985).

Spousal Support

For married people, the spouse is likely to be the first person from whom support is sought during a crisis (e.g., Beach, Marin, Blum, & Roman, 1993). Support from other sources cannot compensate for a lack of spousal support (Coyne & DeLong, 1986). Evidence has shown a relationship between spousal support and marital satisfaction (Dehle et al. 2001) and physical and psychological functioning (Khan et al., 2009; Rogers, 1987; Schiaffion & Revenson, 1995).

With respect to gender, spousal support is a stronger predictor of marital satisfaction for women than for men (Acitelli & Antonucci, 1994; Julien & Markman, 1991), which reflects the fact that women value intimacy in relationships (Mickelson, Claffey, & Williams, 2006). Women also desire a significantly greater amount of spousal support than men do (Xu & Burleson, 2001); however, the types of spousal support experienced by men and women do not appear to differ in quantity. In fact, according to Mickelson and colleagues' (2006) review, females receive less emotional support from their husbands than males do from their spouses (e.g., Vinokur & Vinokur-Kaplan, 1990). Schwarzer and Gutierrez-Dona (2005) identified a negative relationship between the age of the women and the support they received from their husbands.

Researchers have also examined the effect of emotional and instrumental support on married people. Erickson (1993) found that regardless of the hours of wives work outside the home, emotional support from their husbands could predict marital satisfaction better than instrumental spousal support (i.e., housework and childcare). Gender differences also predict support outcomes. Mickelson et al. (2006) indicated that emotional spousal support contributes to higher marital quality and less conflict for traditional women and egalitarian men, whereas both instrumental and emotional spousal support link to better marital satisfaction for egalitarian women and traditional men.

Acculturation and Spousal Support

In the last decade, scholars began to propose an adaptation model by adding the aspect of marriage to Searle and Ward's (1990) model of psychological and

sociocultural adaptation to better address acculturation and adjustment. James, Hunsley, Navara, and Alles (2004) examined the adjustment of sojourners and confirmed that marital variables significantly contributed to the prediction of adjustment even after psychological and sociocultural factors were taken into account. A similar result was evidenced in a study on Hispanic women that found an independent link between acculturative stress and marital distress (Negy, Hammons, Reig-Ferrer, & Carper, 2010). In addition, Ataca and Berry (2002) also suggested a distinction between marital adaptation and psychological or sociocultural adaptation.

Although previous research has investigated the relationship between acculturation and marriage for immigrants and sojourners (e.g., Flores, Tschann, Marin, & Pantoja, 2004; James et al., 2004; Liao, 2006), not only is little known about spousal support but also almost no detailed descriptive information is available to help better understand spousal support and acculturation. Compared with domestic marriages or acculturating couples from the same ethnic backgrounds as used in the above research, cross-national couples must expend more effort to overcome the challenges that result from differences between the heritage and the host cultures both within and outside the marriage, which indicates a critical role of spousal support in the cross-national relationship. With the increasing number of cross-cultural marriages (Imamura, 1990), information specifically targeting this area has become more and more important.

Cultural Comparisons of Taiwan and Japan

Collectivism

People in both Taiwan and Japan generally demonstrate collectivistic tendencies (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991); however, there are distinctions within collectivistic cultures

(Miyahara, Kim, Shin, & Yoon, 1998). As reviewed in Chu et al. (2005), Taiwanese collectivism is based on family and values self as well as family interests, whereas Japanese collectivism permeates the entire society and values organizational interests (Chiu, 1994; Hsu, 1975, as cited in Chu et al., 2005). Thus, Japan appears to be more collectivistic than Taiwan (Chu et al., 2005).

As in other ethnically Chinese countries, Confucianism has had a great influence on Taiwanese cultural values. Family is the foundation of Taiwanese society, and filial piety (i.e., respect, care, and obedience toward one's parents and ancestors) is still at the core of this value system in modern Taiwan (Gu, 2010). According to Asai and Kameoka (2005), although Japan used to share the traditional Asian value of respecting the elderly, filial piety is no longer important for the Japanese. More than one study has reported the surprising finding that Japanese attitudes toward supporting one's parents are weaker than those of Americans (Hashizume, 1998; Maeda & Sussman, 1980, as cited in Asai & Kameoka, 2005).

Sekentei and Face

American anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1946) wrote one of the most influential books about Japan and the notion of a shame culture. The word *sekentei* in Japanese translates to the "eyes" of other people who observe an individual's behaviors (Miyake & Yamazaki, 1995, as cited in Asai & Kameoka, 2005). Specifically, it refers to "an individual's concerns about behaving in a socially acceptable manner as judged by others" (Asai & Kameoka, 2005, p. 114). In the same review, Asai and Kameoka (2005) also indicate that the Japanese have not historically believed in a god, so they developed social norms to guide daily behaviors (Inoue, 1977). *Sekentei* is one of the fundamental

elements of Japanese culture; by internalizing *sekentei*, people learn the appropriate actions to take to avoid shame (Asai & Kameoka, 2005).

A concept comparable to *sekentei* in Taiwanese culture is "face" (Glass, Chen, Hwang, Ono, & Nahapetyan, 2010). One major teaching from Confucianism is the importance of harmony (Zhang, Lin, Nonaka, & Beom, 2005); thus, saving the face of others is a virtue and influences social behaviors and decision-making in Taiwan. A study that compared two dimensions of face maintenance (i.e., self and other) with interpersonal conflict styles (Ting-Toomey, et al., 1991) indicated that a Taiwanese group reported a significantly higher degree of other-face maintenance compared with a Japanese group, whereas the Japanese group reported a higher degree of self-face maintenance compared with the Taiwanese group.

Tight and Loose Cultures

Cultural tightness or looseness is a major contributing factor in describing the degree of collectivism or individualism within a society (Triandis, 1995). Cultural tightness requires group agreement regarding norms, and it is usually associated with homogeneity, cultural isolation, and high population density (Triandis, 2004). In particular, tightness functions well in societies with high population densities, because it can help regulate member behaviors and reduce interpersonal conflicts. In tight cultures, people must follow the standards, rules, and norms of the group; the tolerance for breaking these rules is low and can result in criticism and even death (Triandis, 2004). On the other hand, members of loose cultures have few rules to follow, and attitudes toward conforming are more flexible.

Although Japan and Taiwan are both island countries, Japan has never been colonized by another country, and the Japanese Imperial Family has descended from the same blood kinship family (according to The Imperial Household Agency of Japan (2012), the current Japanese emperor is the 125th). However, Taiwan has been historically controlled or governed by the Netherlands, Spain, China, and Japan (Executive Yuan, Taiwan, 2012), and its traditional values have been influenced by its colonial experiences and westernization. Considering the rigidity of its norms, its homogeneity, and their concern over how they look in the eyes of others (Japanese *sekentei*), with regard to cultural tightness, Japan is culturally tighter than Taiwan (Keeley, 2001).

Gender Roles

Studies that have examined gender inequality in Taiwan and Japan have suggested that it is greater in Japan than in Taiwan (Chang & England, 2011; Hsu, 2009). Hofstede (1996) also suggested that social gender role stereotypes are greater in Japan than in Taiwan. However, in a study of household decision dominance, Chen, Lai, and Tarn (1999) concluded that Japanese wives have more power in their families than Taiwanese wives have in their families. In contrast to the traditional distinction of gender roles, Vogel (1978, as cited in Lee, Tufis, & Alwin, 2010) offered a unique perspective on Japanese gender roles. Japanese women and men are "separate but equal," and the wife's role "is different from a man's, but she holds the power within her sphere" (Vogel, 1978, p. 42, as cited in Lee et al., 2010).

Vogel (1986) indicated that Japanese wives are usually in charge of all domestic-related matters, including providing emotional support to and meeting the

daily needs of their husbands. Japanese men are expected to not only be the breadwinners but also to fully devote themselves to work. Yu (2006) indicated that almost half of Japanese fathers of young children do not come home from work until after 9 pm (MHAL, Japan, 2003). According to Lee and Ono (2008), in most Japanese households, wives have full control of the salaries that their husbands earn, and they provide their husbands with a set allowance (Kimura, 2001; Lebra, 1984). The economic power in the families of the Japanese wives distinguishes their division of household labor from that in the United States (Lee & Ono, 2008) and challenges the belief that Japanese housewives are equivalent to those who are financially dependent on their husbands in other societies. Onishi and Gjered (2002) concluded that Japanese women receive both assets and credentials in their role as housewife. Modern Japanese women view the role of housewife as autonomous rather than oppressive (Lee et al., 2010). On the other hand, the housewife role in Taiwan is often minimized (Lu, 1994).

Foreigners in Japan

According to Olson (1985), Director of Tokyo English Life Line (TELL), common problems foreigners encounter in Japan include long working hours and late-night entertainment with customers, long commutes for children in the sprawling metropolis, and daily frustrations of coping with alien signs and labels. Acculturative stress was often the major factor that contributed to their problems. According to Peltokorpi (2008), studies focused on Western expatriates in Japan have concluded that factors influencing the adjustment were communication, gender, language skills, and social integration (Black, 1988; Napier & Taylor, 1995). Olson (1985) noted that the unique aspects of Japanese communication are difficult for foreigners to grasp:

> The intuitive, indirect communication of the Japanese values consensus, respect for status, and nonconfrontiveness. To the Westerner it may seem inconclusive, ambiguous, and cowardly. The foreigner's direct, logical approach may be perceived by the Japanese as discourteous, argumentative, and threatening. (p. 191)

Peltokorpi (2008) noted that the vertical structure in Japanese culture and the strong distinction of ingroups and outgroups in Japanese collectivism (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001) may contribute to the adjustment of Western expatriates.

In terms of foreigners' psychological and sociocultural adaptation, Tsai (1995) investigated attitudes toward Japan, nativism (a sense of superiority over the host culture), the host culture as a model, and the social alienation of sojourners in Japan by studying 321 foreign residents from 44 countries. The results indicated that foreigners' attitudes toward Japanese society do not necessarily improve even if they have the skills and knowledge to function in the host society. In fact, both attitudes toward Japanese society and the heritage culture worsened throughout the first three years of habitation and showed almost no significant improvement thereafter. Further, the findings indicated that possessing higher Japanese language abilities and/or a cultural background similar to that of the host society was negatively associated with attitudes toward Japan. These findings were contrary to Western theories and studies conducted in immigrants receiving societies and also contradictory to the concept of cultural distance (Berry, 1997).

Foreign Wives of Japanese Husbands in Japan

Imamura (1990) examined the marginality of foreign wives in Japan and Nigeria.

For the Japanese participants, Imamura distributed an open-ended questionnaire to 94 respondents (members of the Association of Foreign Wives of Japanese (AFWJ)) and conducted 55 in-depth interviews between 1981 and 1983. The interviewees included individuals with different lengths of residence in Japan, individuals who were ethnically similar to or different from their husbands, and individuals who were members or non-members of the AFWJ (Imamura, 1990). Questions were asked on interviewees' relationships with both the Japanese and heritage cultures. Most participants in the study had met their Japanese husbands in a Western setting.

The findings suggested three major issues with the spouse role (Imamura, 1990): 1) discrepancies in the expectations toward the marriage partnership; 2) a lack of communication from the Japanese husband; and 3) the inability to cope with a family system that differed significantly from that of the heritage of the foreign wife. One great disappointment for foreign wives was when their Japanese husbands became increasingly less communicative shortly after getting married, which may have been influenced by separated gender spheres that limited the sharing of feelings and activities between spouses. However, this change may leave her socially and culturally isolated and alienated, because the Japanese husband served as the first connection between the foreign wife and the local culture. It was noted that the discrepancies between the culture of the foreign wife and the Japanese husband can complicate the process of the wife finding a place just for herself, particularly when the social environment consistently places the expectations of her husband above her own (Imamura, 1990).

With regard to mothering in a new society, the foreign wife faced the internal cultural dilemma and the marital pressures in discrepancies in the instruction language

and education principles. Besides the maternal cultural norms and values, language proficiency affects the ability of the foreign wife to establish a local social network and use local resources to assist in childrearing. Further, when the child enters school, the Japanese school system may challenge the beliefs of the foreign wife concerning education, and she may be surprised by the expectations placed on her (e.g., sewing dust cloths and helping to clean the school) (Imamura, 1990).

Employment helps the foreign wife's adaptation process by increasing local contact with the culture and people and establishing a personal identity in the new host culture (Imamura, 1990). However, due to language barriers, licensing requirements, and the qualified local personnel, the available occupations for foreign wives in Japan are limited, a fact that was particularly frustrating for those who planned to follow a specific career. Although becoming a language teacher is a possibility for foreign wives who speak English, the one who was qualified in her homeland but could not practice other professions in Japan reported that teaching languages was a "loss of status" (Imamura, 1990, pp. 185-186).

Friendship and a social support network were among the primary needs reported (Imamura, 1990). Instead of their husbands, these wives relied on female networks for social support and cultural learning; however, they reported difficulty building deep relationships with local friends and described local friends as acting differently from their friends in their homeland. Overall, the closest friends to the foreign wives tended to be other foreign wives who were most likely from the same homeland. The AFWJ is an organization that provides both networking and assistance with daily life problems. Using their services was identified as a copying strategy for the foreign wives in Japan.

Summary

Acculturation is a process of cultural and psychological change that results when two or more cultures make contact (Berry, 2005). Based on two basic issues faced in acculturation, ethnic identity maintenance and new culture contact (Berry, 1997), four acculturative strategies can be formed. Findings of empirical studies on various types of acculturating groups consistently indicate a relationship between the four strategies and positive adaptation outcomes (Berry & Sam, 1996; Berry, et al., 2006). The integration strategy is associated with the most successful adaptation, while marginalization is the least successful strategy, with the assimilation and separation strategies falling somewhere in between (Berry & Sam, 1996).

With respect to factors contributing to positive acculturation outcomes, social support has been found to produce successful outcomes across studies. Maintaining contact with the heritage culture (Phinney et al., 1997), establishing relationships with members of the dominant group (Zhang & Goodson, 2011), and receiving support from the societies of origin and settlement (Berry, 1997) are all predictors of positive adaptation among different acculturating groups. Among the various sources of social support, spousal support has been identified to be superior to others (Coyne & DeLong, 1986). It is also related to marital satisfaction (Dehle et al., 2001) and mental and physical health (Khan et al., 2009; Rogers, 1987; Schiaffion & Revenson, 1995). Scholars have begun focusing on the effect of marital variables on adaptation and have suggested adding such factors to Searle and Ward's (1990) model of psychological and sociocultural adaptation (Ataca & Berry, 2002; James, et. al., 2004). However, a review of the current literature reveals that not only is little known about acculturation and

spousal support in particular but almost no attention is directed at spousal support in cross-national marriages, in which acculturation takes place both at home and in the society.

Most established research in acculturation has focused on adaptation in countries with immigrants (Chun, Balls-Organista, & Marin, 2003, as cited in Berry, 2005). Berry (2005) stressed the importance of conducting acculturation research in Asian countries in order to help expand the knowledge. A quantitative study on sojourners' adjustment in Japan revealed results that were inconsistent with the findings of studies conducted in Western societies (Tsai, 1995), which suggests that acculturation and adaptation in a homogenous society may have unique features that cannot be captured by Western theories.

The Present Study

This study, a phenomenological inquiry of spousal support for foreign wives living in their husbands' country, examines the blogs of Taiwanese women in Japan. The purpose is to bridge the gap in the existing literature on acculturation and marriage. According to Berg (1995), "Qualitative procedures provide a means of accessing unquantifiable facts about the actual people researchers observe and talk to or people represented by their personal traces (such as letters, photographs, newspaper accounts, diaries, and so on)" (p. 7).

Among the qualitative techniques, phenomenology is the study of the shared meaning of a phenomenon experienced by a group of individuals (Moustakas, 1994, as cited in McCaslin & Scott, 2003). Phenomenological researchers work to reduce the original lengthy descriptions of shared experiences of a phenomenon to a central

essence. Phenomenology has been commonly used in studies of specific ethnic groups. For example, Cho (2003) conducted a study of seriously mentally ill Korean immigrants, Nwabab (2007) explored the leadership experiences of female Nigerian immigrants, and Barrientos (2010) focused on the social and academic adjustment of Hispanic immigrant youths. Kim (2012) interviewed the spouses of Korean international students and identified three themes relevant to their coping with acculturative stress: challenging life experiences and barriers as immigrants, emotional and psychological distress and stress, and new family structures. The phenomenological inquiry helps researchers to understand how others construct their realities and give meaning to their lives. Thus, it is an appropriate approach in the current study, which aims to explore foreign wives' experiences of spousal support.

Diaries have been used by social scientists to collect data on daily life (Berg, 1995). As noted by Hookway (2008), the rising increase in the use of "on-line dairies," blogs, or "self-narratives" has provided researchers an alternative. In 1999, roughly 50 blogs had been established, but the medium was not yet the well-known phenomenon it is today (Johnson, Kaye, Bichard, & Wong, 2007). By 2006, nearly 30% of American internet surfers visited blogs (Lenhart & Fox, 2006); however, the number rapidly increased, with 80% of Americans being aware of blogs and nearly half of people having accessed blogs (Prestipino, 2007). A blog (or weblog) refers to an "on-line journal or diary organized typically in reverse chronological order, consisting of user-generated content in the primary form of writing" (Tan, 2008, p. 144). Blogs allow users to update the entry/content periodically and are relatively easy to use. Blogs provide links to other blogs and a comments section through which bloggers and their

readers can interact (Chau & Xu, 2007). Bloggers can choose their desired degree of privacy, ranging from invisible sites to publicly accessible sites; however, the vast majority of blogs are in the public domain (Lenhart & Fox, 2006).

Research on blogs reveals that more than 70% (Herring, Scheidt, Wright, & Bonus, 2005) of blogs are personal diaries in which bloggers share their daily lives, thoughts, and feelings, revealing a great amount of self-disclosure (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). Individuals use blogging to express themselves, connect socially, share experiences with others, have an emotional outlet, help/inform others, pass time, archive/store important information, professionalism, and get feedback (Fullwood, Sheehan, & Nicholls, 2009; Hollenbaugh, 2011; Lenhart & Fox, 2006). The healing power of writing is well documented (Boniel-Nissim & Barak, 2011), and one survey showed that nearly 50% of bloggers use blog as a form of self-therapy (Business Wire, 2005).

Hookway (2008) noted that blogs offer substantial benefits to qualitative diary research. Blogs provide an easy-access, low-cost method of collecting data, especially for geographically removed populations or research on sensitive issues. Blog materials, given their rich textual form, can be immediately created to data. Blogs are pre-established prior to the research and are less likely to feed into the researchers' views or impression management toward moral issues. The content of blogs, documentation of daily life, provides great resources for qualitative researchers aiming to access bloggers' realities. Moreover, the archival nature of blogs provides a channel to observe changes in social processes over time (Hookway, 2008).

Chapter III: Methods

Data Sources

Data was collected from Internet blogs written by Taiwanese women married to Japanese men and living in Japan. Because all blog authors needed to experience the phenomenon being studied (i.e., spousal support), the criterion method in purposeful sampling (Creswell, 1998; Patten, 1990) was employed to choose data sources.

The selection began with blogs that the author of this study had been following regularly for years. The followed blogs were initially identified from an Internet search on the Taiwanese Internet search engines Yahoo Taiwan (雅虎奇摩) and Google Taiwan and on the major Taiwanese blog service providers: 痞客邦 Pixnet, 天空 Yam, 無名 Wretch, and 隨意窩 Xuite. Keywords used in the original search to locate these blogs included 在日台灣太太 (Taiwanese wife living in Japan), 日本先生 (Japanese husband), 台日聯姻/台日國際婚 (international marriage between Taiwanese and Japanese), and 在日生活 (living in Japan). Bloggers often provide links to other blogs via recommendations as well as links to the blogs of guests who leave comments. In addition to the followed blogs, the linked blogs were also investigated. A total of 235 blogs were identified during the initial search, all of which were available in the public domain (i.e., no password or membership was required to access the blogs).

The second stage involved confirming the identities of the blog authors through their self-introductory online profiles or cues revealed in the textual or visual content of the blog entries to ensure that all blogs were in fact written by Taiwanese women married to Japanese men who were living in (or had previously lived in) Japan. It is common for Japanese companies to relocate their employees every few years, including

to overseas branches; therefore, the selection at this stage included blogs written by authors on their experiences when they were living in Japan. Twelve blogs were eliminated after the examination.

Further, two criteria were used to narrow down the data. The first and most important criterion was that the blogs be in a diary/journal format documenting the authors' experiences, thoughts, and/or feelings. In particular, they needed to include descriptions of their husbands related to spousal interaction, spousal support, and marital quality as well as parenting or childrearing if applicable. The second criterion was the number of blog entries. Blogs that had significantly fewer entries and less information on spousal support were removed. Among the 55 blogs that remained after this step, experiences in Japan before the marriage, Japanese language skills prior to the marriage or the move, and the location where the couple first met were added as the third criterion for the last selection round. Finally, 11 blogs written by 10 authors were chosen as data sources.

Participants

Annie. Annie, the author of "There is Only Green Tea and Annie" (只有綠茶跟安妮 at http://www.wretch.cc/blog/sakuto1027), came to Japan for advanced education in 2007 at the age of 26. She met her husband while tutoring him in Chinese and married him in early 2009. The couple has a son.

Arisa. Arisa writes "The Life of Arisa, the Wife of a Japanese Man, in Shiga" (Arisa の日本人妻生活 in 滋賀 at http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/jw!w\HPHvvqAHwSsKVKDfdM8Fa7t2g--/). She successfully passed the most advanced Japanese language test in Taiwan and came to Japan for advanced education in late 2006. She

met her husband when she was working in Japan and married him after turning 30 in 2009. The couple's son is nearly two years old now.

Ahruru. Ahruru's blog is titled "Cherishing All I Have Now" (珍惜現在幸福的一切 at http://ahruru.pixnet.net/blog). Ahruru met her husband in Austria in 1999 while studying abroad and began a long-distance relationship with him in 2004. She married him and moved to Japan in 2007, and they now have a son. Ahruru is most likely in her early thirties now.

Coco. Coco, the author of "There is a Japanese Boss in My Family" (我家有個日本老大 at http://www.wretch.cc/blog/lovelycoco), met her husband in Taiwan and got married in 2008 when she was in her early twenties. The couple lived in Taiwan for a year and then moved to Japan with their baby. Coco's Japanese language skills were very limited when she first arrived in Japan.

Gao-Gao. "The Married Life in a Foreign Country" (異國的婚姻生活 at http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/rennie-fujimura/) is the blog written by Gao-Gao who met her husband through work in Taiwan. Before she moved to Japan in 2008, the couple had maintained a long-distance marriage for more than a year. She and her husband were both in their forties when they married. Gao-Gao's Japanese skills were lacking upon her arrival.

Judy. Judy, the author of "Baby Iida" (飯田 Baby at ttp://www.babyhome.com.tw/bb/166817), met her husband in New York in 2004 and married him two years later when she was 28. Before moving to Japan at the end of 2007, she gave birth to their first child in Taiwan and maintained a long-distance marriage while her husband was in New York.

Ling. Ling writes "This Place is about Yoi and Me" (這裡記錄了我和陽一 at http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/jw!4sH5MquWBRpZR_m7XhWh5MYxYbWOn A--/). She met Yoi, her husband, in Canada while they were attending the same school. She started learning Japanese in Taiwan before moving to Japan in 2006 after they married. Ling is most likely in her early thirties now.

Sao-Gue. Two blogs written by Sao-Gue were found: "Me, Baby, and Hubby in Japan" (我-樂寶貝-小黑老頭 in 日本 at http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/jw!CMa66y.BS EaegOpNaDZx/archive?l=a&page=1) and "Sao-Gue's Happy Life in Japan with Hubby and Daughter" (小鬼在日努力生活之幸福三人行 at http://s813012.pixnet.net/blog). Born in 1983, she met her Chinese-speaking husband (who is 14 years her senior) in Taiwan when she was in college. The couple was married at the end of 2006 and moved to Japan in 2007. Sao-Gue's Japanese skills were lacking when she moved to Japan. The couple has a daughter.

Vicky. In 2004, Vicky, the author of "The Sun Channel~ Broadcasting Happiness" (太陽頻道~幸福 TV 放送台 at http://qy7292107.pixnet.net/blog), met her husband in the U.S. when they were both international students. They maintained a long-distance relationship until she moved to Japan to attend a language school in 2008. Vicky married him the following year at 26. The couple has a daughter.

Wendy. Wendy writes about her marriage and children on "Happy Smiles" (幸せな笑顔 at http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/wendy-masami/). She met her husband through work in Taiwan and married him and moved to Japan in 2008. She had learned Japanese prior to the move. Wendy has two children and is likely to be in her early thirties now.

The participants ranged in age from mid-twenties to mid-forties, with most of them in their early thirties as of this year. Four of them met their husbands in a Western setting (the US, Canada, and Australia), another four met their husbands in Taiwan, and the remaining two couples met in Japan. As of this year, the average length of residence of the participants was 4.7 years, with a range of 3–6 years; however, the collected data included entries written from the first day to the fourth anniversary. With respect to motherhood, eight participants had one or two children, all of whom were preschool age or younger. Four wives had lived in Taiwan with their husbands or in long-distance marriages for at least a year. Among these four women, three of them moved to Japan with a child. It should be noted that although general characteristics were observed among these wives, qualitative research values the subjective experiences of each individual.

Data Collection

The selected blogs were divided into two groups: 1) those with more than 100 entries posted and 2) those with less than 100. For the first group, the data was collected by examining related categories for blogs that had sorted entries into detail categories allowing readers to clearly distinguish the description under each category, whereas the random purposeful sampling (Patten, 1990) was employed for blogs that had general or no categories. For the second group that had less than 100 posts, all blog entries were examined from the point of marriage.

Annie, Gao-Gao, and Sao-Gue established their blogs after they were already married and living in Japan, so their examinations started from the first blog entries. For Annie's blog, the selections were entries posted in the first two months, the

thirteenth month, and the most recent month. Additionally, the first and the five most recent entries from the two categories related to her husband were examined. Gao-Gao's blog and Sao-Gue's first blog were both examined completely. Sao-Gue's second blog is divided into distinct categories, so five categories related to her husband, her thoughts and feelings, and her life in Japan were reviewed.

Judy began writing her blog while she was pregnant in Taiwan and her husband was in New York. Her blog contains a significantly higher number of entries than the other nine blogs. The first five entries from each month plus additional entries in the month with titles appearing to relate to her husband or her settlement were examined. This ranged from her husband moving back to Japan and preparing the move for her and their baby to one month before the first anniversary of her move. For her second and third anniversaries in Japan, the same random collection stated above applied for entries posted one month before and after the anniversary and in the anniversary month. The most recent blog entries posted near her fourth anniversary were examined as well.

Authors of the remaining six blogs established the blogs prior to their marriage, so they were examined from the date of marriage. Ahruru and Arisa's blogs were examined completely from the date of marriage. For Coco's blog, the one category containing entries related to her life in Japan was examined completely. Categories with entries concerning her spousal relationship and her thoughts and feelings were investigated from the point at which she arrived in Japan until the end of the categories. Further, categories about Coco's two children were examined: The first five posts from the first, second, and third years concerned her first child, while only one post referred to her second baby.

Entries written in the first to third, the sixth, and the eighth months after Ling's arrival in Japan were examined. The posts in the months of the first and second anniversaries and the months preceding and following the two anniversaries were investigated. Moreover, the three entries in which Ling reflected on her thoughts on the first, third, and fourth anniversaries as well as the most recent 10 posts were examined. For Vicky, five subcategories containing entries related to her life in Japan, her spousal relationship, and her spouse were investigated. The investigation also included her blog entries written in the most recent three months. The examination of Wendy's posts included the first three months after her marriage (while she was still living in Taiwan) as well as her first two months and fifth month in Japan. It also included months when she was pregnant in Japan, the time during which she gave birth in Taiwan, the month following her second anniversary, and the six most recent entries.

A total of 1080 blog entries from the 11 blogs were examined to select data for analysis. These blog entries written by 10 different authors were posted online between August of 2006 and August of 2012 and collected by the author of this study between July and early September of 2012. This study employed saturation for data collection, and it reached the point of saturation within these 1080 blog entries. No more new information was found, and the data collection was ceased (Creswell, 1998).

After the sample blog entries were collected, the author of this study closely examined each entry and the interactive comments written by the blog owners and guests multiple times to identify paragraphs or entire entries containing any textual descriptions involving the spouse. These included spousal roles (i.e., of husband, father (if applicable), and son-in-law), spousal interactions, spousal relationships, marriage

and family life, and the spouse himself. The selected texts were translated into English by the author of the present study, who is fluent in Chinese and English.

Role of the Researchers

The author of this study, also the primary researcher, has a background in counseling psychology and is particularly interested in family, child, marital, and multicultural counseling. She is a Taiwanese woman who has been married to a Japanese man and living in Japan since 2008, and thus, her perception of spousal support may be influenced by her marriage. Her husband is very caring and supportive. In particular, he shares a strong connection with her, which she believes has been vital to overcoming the challenges they have faced.

The second researcher is the chair of the primary researcher's dissertation committee and the supervisor of the current study. He holds a Ph.D. in counseling psychology and is an expert in the qualitative design of phenomenological research.

The third researcher is the Japanese husband of the primary researcher. He was educated in America where he received his Ph.D. degree in intercultural communication. He and the author have been together for 15 years and married for five years.

Data Analysis

The analysis of this study was guided by Moustakas's (1994) approach, which was reviewed by Creswell (1998). Triangulation was also employed for more rigorous data analysis.

Although the author was not involved in the process of writing the blogs and did not have any contact with the participants, prior to conducting the blog search the author began the analysis procedure by writing extensive descriptions of her personal

experiences of spousal support with her Japanese husband. This step was to bracket her "preconceptions" about spousal support and to help develop an understanding of the views of others experiencing this phenomenon (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

After the data was translated, three researchers separately read and examined the translated manuscripts to identify significant statements (individual words, phrases, or sentences; Burks & Robbins, 2012) on spousal support written by the blog authors. Next, the significant statements were underlined and listed separately to horizontalize the data, and repetitive or overlapping statements were compiled. Moreover, the first and third researchers worked together to cluster or group similar statements they identified individually into larger "meaning units." Thirty-two themes under three domains/core categories were generated. After the second researcher reviewed the results, the researchers worked together to further cluster the similar themes into eight major themes under the three same core categories.

Throughout the analyses, the three researchers worked independently and collaboratively. Ongoing and extensive discussions were to help the researchers understand, clarify, aggregate, eliminate, redefine, and negotiate to reach a mutual agreement in identifying the underlying themes and core categories. Notes were taken to assist the process. The minor themes and statements that did not fit under the three core categories and major themes were revisited and re-discussed.

Chapter IV: Results

Three core categories containing eight themes in total were identified. The first core category reflected the support husbands provided to help wives settle and acculturate in Japan. The second core category emerged from themes related to husbands' support of their wives' connection to Taiwanese people. The last core category consisted of themes describing husbands' support of wives in the marriage in general.

Support with Identifying as a Foreign Spouse in Japan

Help connecting with Japan. Of the 10 blog authors, seven wrote about how their husbands helped during their arrival and settlement in their new environment. This process sometimes began prior to the wives' departure from Taiwan. Ahruru, Judy, and Ling noted how their husbands independently prepared the housing for their arrival. The following statements were taken from a letter written by Judy when her husband had moved back home from New York while she and their baby were in Taiwan:

> Dear Son, although Daddy has only moved back to Japan for a few days, he has been looking for a future home for us non-stop… It seems like he has found one… Your daddy kept stressing that the neighborhood is very safe and will be great for your growth… Dear hubby, thank you for everything you have done for us.

In the letter, Judy acknowledged her husband's roles (i.e. a father and a protector and explorer for the sake of his family) and expressed her appreciation for his unrelenting efforts to create a nesting place for her and their child. A home in Japan represented a

connection between the Taiwanese wives and the new land, and it was also a symbol of belonging and security for the future of these women and their children.

Help with legal documents was another form of support that husbands offered sometimes prior to the arrival of these women. As non-residents, foreign wives are required to go through legal procedures in order to receive and maintain permission to live in Japan lawfully. Judy, Ling, Vicky, and Wendy reported that they received help from their husbands in both obtaining and submitting legal documents. Vicky mentioned her husband "always takes care of all the paperwork and legal documents, including those for [her] language school application, [their] marriage, and the birth of [their] baby" and that this was him "making every effort to help [her] adjust in Japan." On the other hand, in Annie's blog, this type of support was found to be desired but lacking. She noted, "I very much envy those who have husbands that help take care of legal documents and procedures… I always need to investigate all the information, translate the documents, and run around with our baby on my back to apply for or renew legal documents."

Legal documents reflected a lawful connection between Taiwanese wives and Japan, but the process of researching information, collecting and translating the supplementary documents, filling out the paperwork, and submitting the application packages could be overwhelming. Having a husband that provided relief from or at least support in the procedures appeared to contribute greatly to relieving the anxiety or stress that may accompany the process of establishing a legal connection with the new country.

Husbands exposing wives to the local activities was also identified as a major means of helping them connect to the new society. Attending summer fireworks festivals, seeing the *sakura* flowers in April, visiting a grape farm in autumn, and attending a baseball game were examples written in the blogs of Ahruru, Gao-Gao, Ling, and Wendy, and most of them described the experiences as special and enjoyable. In particular, Ling shared that her husband attempted to help her dress in a *yukata* (a traditional Japanese garment) during her first experience attending a fireworks festival in Japan and noted that they had a great time. Leisure activities involved the local culture; thus, encouraging wives to participate in local activities created opportunities for wives to explore and learn about the new culture in a more relaxed and/or fun atmosphere. Hence, taking wives to attend such activities was beneficial for both the wives' acculturation and the couple's relationship.

Regarding support with adapting to the natural environment in Japan, the cold weather appeared to be an issue for a few blog authors during the first year. Judy described how her husband helped her adapt to the weather and put her at ease as a mother by providing direct suggestions. On the other hand, both Coco and Ahruru reported that support from their husbands in dealing with difficulties associated with the weather was inadequate or inconsistent. The statement below refers to a fight Ahruru had with her husband over the weather one week after she had come back from a month-long stay in Taiwan:

> The weather in Japan is still very cold. I never like winter, and I have been trying to adjust to this freezing cold here… One Sunday afternoon… I again talked about how cold this place is. However, my husband got mad at what I

said: "Why do you keep complaining about the cold weather? Because you live in Japan, you can see snow, which is rarely seen in Taiwan. You should be grateful for it. You keep saying you are very cold, but there is nothing I can do to help…" Blah blah blah. *What the hell? I am not saying I'm cold for you to do something for me. It is simply my natural reaction. I was born and raised in warm Taiwan. How can you expect me to get used to this freezing-cold temperature immediately?*

The above comments reflect the complexity of providing support to an individual settling into another country. Many husbands may feel great responsibilities to help their wives adapt to the new environment; however, without an understanding of their wives' adjustment pace and style, the advice of husbands is not always perceived as beneficial. Ahruru still seemed to have a soft spot for Taiwan in her heart, and she appeared to need more time to adjust to the winter weather in Japan. However, her husband did not understand that her complaining was her way of coping and felt there was a problem he needed to solve. Unlike some other acculturative stressors, her husband had no control over the weather and could not fix the fact that she was cold, so he attempted to solve her problem by providing advice that was unwanted and created more distress.

Help connecting with Japanese people. Of the 10 blog authors, nine described their husbands' support related to this theme from helping with communication to helping with establishing contact with local people. For communication, translation is particularly important for wives who had with limited language skills. Gao-Gao could not speak Japanese upon her arrival, so she needed to rely on her husband to

communicate with others. In one entry, she described her frustration over her inability to express herself and the way in which her husband extended his support to her:

> I am used to being independent, so counting on someone makes me feel very uncomfortable. However, my husband is really patient with me. Even if I ask something that a Japanese person would not, he still translates for me, although I can tell he is embarrassed. This part of him really moves me.

Coco also gave examples indicating the importance of having her husband help with translation, especially since she needed to live with her mother-in-law in Japan. The first example described her desperation when her husband did not help her on her first night in Japan:

> Upon arriving at my new home with my mother-in-law in Japan, I found great difficulties understanding her… I was going to bathe our baby, but I did not know how to use the bath and did not want to mess it up… While my husband was translating between my mother-in-law and me to address my questions, he suddenly told me, "I cannot translate everything for you" and left me hanging just like that. I was so mad, but I did not know what to do. I had no choice but to do it in my way… At that moment, I felt like crying, but I held back my tears.

The second example indicated how her husband was able to help her resolve her conflict with her mother-in-law:

> My son knocked over my soup bowl and spilled the soup all over the table… I was so mad that I went to do the dishes. My mother-in-law approached me and indicated she would do the dishes and I should go prepare the bath for my baby and me. I told her that I was angry now so I should do the dishes to help me

> calm down. Perhaps she did not understand what I meant… She started nagging, and my son started to cry. I began to realize that she seemed to be scolding me; however, my Japanese was too poor to understand. I felt so powerless. I did not know how to discipline my child or how to talk to my mother-in-law. As I took my son upstairs, I started crying out of frustration. My mother-in-law kept shouting from downstairs, "Aren't you taking a bath? If not, I will go ahead!" Then she came upstairs to scold me… It was so frustrating, because I could not explain myself to her. So all I could do was keep sobbing… When my husband came back from work that night, he said he had heard the situation from my mother-in-law. I said, "You only listened to her side of the story. You do not know what has really happened." Then I told him my side of the story while crying. After hearing my side of the story, my husband went to talk to my mother-in-law and let her know how I felt.

In addition, Ahruru, Coco, Gao-Gao, Ling, and Wendy were introduced to their husbands' friends and/or coworkers to help them connect with the local people. Sao-Gue and Vicky's husbands also indirectly helped them build relationships and make new friends locally. Because of her husband's encouragement, Sao-Gue was able to attend a party held by Japanese mothers from her daughter's kindergarten. At the party, she had a great time and gained confidence in interacting with Japanese people. Vicky's husband took the initiative to prepare a cake when she invited her first Japanese friend home as well as a gift for her to bring to her friend's home.

The examples enumerated indicate the powerlessness of these Taiwanese wives due to their inability to fully relate to others with words. The examples also show that

their husbands' help with translation not only helped bridge communication gaps, but also helped bridge relationship gaps. Besides the language barrier, the lack of confidence and social network also appeared to make it more difficult for these women to create opportunities to establish relationships with the local people. It required enormous awareness, empathy, sensitivity, and patience for husbands to help their wives gain power and greater autonomy while simultaneously maintaining their dignity. Although this form of help was needed and appreciated, some husbands at times may find themselves having to choose to either meet local cultural expectations or support their wives. This decision may be particularly challenging due to the tight culture in Japan, which requires members to follow group norms.

Empathy and patience regarding homesickness and acculturative stress. The vast majority of the blog authors reported various degrees of homesickness, loneliness, and/or acculturative stress, and most of them noted that they received support from their husbands in dealing with this challenge. For instance, Sao-Gue did not have any friends and could not speak Japanese when moving from Taiwan with her husband and their baby. She was also faced with the challenge of learning to take care of her daughter on her own. She described herself at that time as being distressed and easily angered. In one blog entry, she noted how her husband showed empathy and took an active role in helping her deal with her acculturative stress at that time:

> My husband tried to relieve my stress by taking us out often, but that did not help my mood at all. He figured that perhaps I needed some time away from him and our daughter, so he took the initiative to call a Taiwanese friend of his and arranged for her and me to go out. I was very surprised when I heard his

> plan. At that time, my husband had never taken care of our six-month-old daughter alone for an entire day, so I was uncertain of whether he would be able to handle her. However, he assured me he would be fine and told me to feel free to go out and have fun (I was really touched by what he did).

In addition, several of the blog authors used words such as "patient" and/or "good-tempered" to describe their husbands' tolerance of their problems adapting to their new environment. For example, Ahruru indicated that her husband "had been patient" with her adjustment difficulties over the past six months and stated that "when [she was] being unreasonable, [he would] listen instead of criticizing." Gao-Gao described her husband as being unbelievably patient and tolerating of her when she took her frustration over learning Japanese out on him. She noted, "No matter how nasty my words are or how terrible my attitude is, he always just listens." Further, Wendy tended to have emotional difficulties after coming back from Taiwan. In the following excerpt, she describes her difficulty upon returning and her husband's supportive attitude toward her distress:

> I am sorry for my poor husband. I have been taking my emotions out on him these past few days. I tend to be very moody and down a few days before and after leaving my family in Taiwan. If my husband asks what I want to eat, I respond, "Whatever," since I cannot get any of the Taiwanese foods I like to eat in Japan. I also get angry with him very easily. My husband is very understanding of my difficulties readjusting. He prepares breakfast and lunch for me and watches our baby so I can have some time to go online to stay connected with my friends in Taiwan.

These comments reflect the value that these Taiwanese wives placed on their husbands' understanding and acceptance of their difficulties in adjusting as well as their husbands' efforts to help them cope with the situations. These women seemed to particularly cherish the moments when their husbands listened to their frustrations and received the brunt of their anger without judging. The support and emotional strength provided by husbands appeared to be a great source of relief for the wives.

Support with Maintaining Taiwanese Ethnic Identity

Support of contact with Taiwanese friends. Of the 10 blog authors, eight indicated their husbands supported and/or participated in their connection with Taiwanese friends in Taiwan and/or in Japan. Arisa, Gao-Gao, Judy, Ling, and Vicky mentioned their husbands socialized with their Taiwanese friends they met in Japan or friends they knew from Taiwan. Arisa indicated her husband supported her in throwing a Taiwanese party at home by making curry for her and her friends. Vicky noted her husband being "excited and [starting] moving things around and cleaning" in order to make sure their living room was child friendly, because her friends were going to bring children to their home. Judy used the phrase "he is the best" to express her appreciation toward her husband and noted he always took her and their son to meet her friends and got along great with everybody. Further, some husbands showed their support for their wives' contact with Taiwanese individuals by creating the opportunities. Annie, Sao-Gue, and Wendy all indicated their husbands would watch their children for them so that they would have time to meet their Taiwanese friends face to face or online.

In addition to helping wives connect with their new country, the above remarks indicate that the husbands were also supportive of them maintaining Taiwanese

connections. The wives not only appreciated the support their husbands provided for interacting with people of their culture, they were also grateful for their active participation and enthusiasm.

Support for relationships with families of origin. The vast majority of the blog authors mentioned their husbands had gone to Taiwan to visit their families. Several of them further noted their husbands extended the love and care they felt for them to their families of origin. Wendy indicated that her husband took excellent care of her father when her father visited them and noted that her husband got along very well with her family members and even made a special trip to Taiwan for her mother's birthday.

In one entry, Vicky described how she was touched by the way her husband treated her parents when they visited Japan:

> When I woke up in the morning, I saw that my husband had already made breakfast for my parents and me. He indeed is a perfect son-in-law. Today, we took my parents out to sightsee and visit friends… When my husband was driving, from the back seat, I saw him trying hard to use his poor Chinese and non-verbal language to communicate with my father who sat next to him in the passenger's seat. Although my mother and I did not know whether my father understood, we were touched by my husband's effort.

Gao-Gao also indicated her husband showed care toward her parents through his thoughts and actions:

> My husband bought a new van… There are only two of us, so we do not need such a big car. However, he said when my father came to visit and sat in his old

car last time, he felt sorry for him because the old car was too small for him to sit comfortably. My mother is another reason for him purchasing the van. He said he wishes one day, my mother, who has trouble with mobility, could come to Japan to visit us. Therefore, he bought a van that can take her wheelchair.

The above statements show how the women expressed great appreciation for their husbands' genuinely thoughtful behaviors and the way in which they attempted to connect with their families and facilitate the relationship. Their husbands' authentic actions contributed to feelings of connection and belonging that transcended culture. In particular, as family is a core value of the Taiwanese, the husbands' adoption of this value indicated their acceptance of their wives.

Support with Identifying with Marital Roles of Wife, Homemaker, and Mother

Expressions of love, care, and acceptance. This theme, observed across 10 blogs, reflected husbands' support of the blog authors' role of wife (i.e. romantic partner) in the marriage. A significant number of statements describing husbands showing affection, expressing appreciation and admiration, putting their wives first, and tolerating their wives' shortcomings were identified. Arisa noted how her husband attended to her and put her first, including taking the initiative to grow tomatoes for her despite the fact that he hated tomatoes, in several of her blog entries. In the following example, she describes how her husband took care of her even when he was asleep:

> Lately, because of back pain, I have not been sleeping well… [Last night,] I tried to roll over, but my back hurt badly, so I moaned in pain when I turned… My husband should have been sleeping deeply, but he appeared to notice my pain. He pulled me over and flipped my body for me… Although I was half-

> asleep, I still felt his care… It is just a small thing between us, and I feel embarrassed to share it, but I want my family and friends in Taiwan to know I am fine in Japan because I have him.

Vicky frequently acknowledged her husband's love and care in her blog. After her second anniversary in Japan, she noted, "I have never regretted marrying my Japanese husband. He never lets me down. He is truthful, and he accepts me. He pampers me… and he is reliable and attentive to detail." She disclosed many incidents in which she was touched by the way her husband showed her she was important. For instance, in one entry, she wrote that her husband had made her so happy by surprising her with something she had dreamed of years ago that she "started jumping up and down." She noted that she could not believe her husband had kept his promise after it had been so long and she had almost forgotten about it. She specifically indicated her appreciation for her husband remembering what she had said even though it was of minor importance.

Judy also repeatedly noted her husband's affection and attentiveness in her marriage. One experience she shared involved her husband blacking out the prices on a takeout menu they kept at home so she could feel free to choose from the menu without worrying about the cost. Judy wrote the following statement during a very busy time for the couple to express her appreciation for him valuing her and their family:

> Everybody around me knows almost all of my name-brand handbags were gifts from my husband. Whenever I return from Taiwan, there are gifts at home waiting for our son and me… However, what touches me the most is not those handbags or presents. Honey, I wish you could read and understand each word

> written in my blog. I want to use written expression to let you know how happy I am that you remember all the little details in our life… No matter how busy you are, you always have your way of letting me know you care about the family we're building… Thank you… I am in heaven because of you.

In addition, several blog authors indicated their husbands praised and appreciated them for what they did at home. For instance, Annie indicated that every day after dinner, her husband would say to her, "The dinner was very tasty. Thank you for cooking for me." Further, half of the blog authors noted their husbands were accepting of their shortcomings. Ling indicated that she was the bossy and controlling one in the marriage and her husband usually gave in during conflicts. Sao-Gue described her husband's best quality as "his patience toward [her]." She noted that she could be difficult sometimes but that "he always tolerat[ed] [her]."

As in any marital relationship, the love and care provided by the husbands warmed the hearts of these Taiwanese women and brought them joy. They recognized and appreciated the transcendent moments in their relationships that could help them overcome the daily difficulties they encountered. Those moments not only encouraged the wives to continue the rigorous adjustment process, but also contributed to improving the marital relationship.

Participation in housework and/or childrearing. All 10 blog authors noted their husbands participated in the housework and/or childrearing. Several of the wives noted that their husbands sometimes cooked during their off time. Other women mentioned that their husbands actively participated in the housework. For example, Gao-Gao noted that although her senior Taiwanese male friend who had been living in

Japan for decades suggested she take care of the housework because Japanese homemakers were usually responsible for all domestic work, her husband believed men should share the domestic chores.

With respect to childrearing, the husbands' involvement sometimes began as early as pregnancy. For instance, Ahruru noted she gave birth in Taiwan and her husband flew there to participate in the delivery. She indicated he held her hand and practiced the breathing technique with her when contractions hit. Vicky also noted her husband started taking an active role in the childrearing during her pregnancy:

> Since I became pregnant with our daughter, you have been there to participate in and support our parenthood. You sang and talked to our unborn daughter every day. You held my hand and gave me courage during my labor. After we became new parents, you learned to cope with the lack of sleep together with me… Thank you for your company in this journey.

Additionally, Coco, Judy, Sao-Gue, and Wendy indicated their husbands helped with childrearing by bathing, feeding, and/or playing with their children. Sao-Gue described her husband as a "very reliable" caregiver and noted that she felt completely free to leave their daughter with him. In addition to bathing, feeding, and playing, Judy noted her husband was good at teaching their son. She indicated that her husband was more patient with her son than she was and that she should learn from him.

It should be noted that although husbands provided support in childrearing, not all support was appreciated. Annie described her husband as a good father: "He bath[ed] [their] baby every day. He change[d] diapers, play[ed] with [their] child, and [was] always the one to carry [their] child when [they] went out." However, Annie reported

several concerns with his childcare. For example, on one occasion, she noted that he gave her incorrect instructions for making baby formula. In the following statement, Annie describes one of the conflicts she had with her husband over childcare:

> I do not know where he learned about childrearing. I am really having a hard time. He believes babies can stand cold, so he only puts thin clothes on our baby. If I put a jacket on our son to prevent him from catching a cold at night (the temperature drops greatly after dark in Japan), he gets upset about it. He complained about me not believing in what he says about babies. He also said our son is a boy, so he should not wear too much.

Although men are not expected to participate in domestic matters in traditional Japanese culture, husbands of all these Taiwanese women shared the childcare and/or housekeeping responsibilities. Their participation may have been particularly important for the wives since they were the first source of advice on life in Japan. However, one might speculate that when views on childcare were inconsistent between the husband and wife, the wife may have been more defended since childcare may have been one of the few areas in which she had established some self-identity and control. Still, other participants suggested that help with such activities not only provided them with a welcome relief from arduous tasks, but also promoted bonding.

Financial support. As with most Japanese families, all of the 10 husbands were the breadwinners in the marriage. In addition to bringing home income, some blog authors noted their husbands were generous with them. For instance, Annie indicated she appreciated her husband working hard to support the family. In particular, she mentioned, “Although we are not rich, he tries his best to satisfy my needs.” Sao-

Gue, who had no interest in financial management, also described her husband's generosity with money and their money management:

> Managing money would give me a headache… Thus, I only know how much my husband makes, but I do not control our family budget. My husband is very nice. He does not limit my spending, and he never interferes with how I spend the money he provides, for which I think I am very lucky… He always pays when we go out and often gives me additional money for my personal shopping… I would like to continue this way, never needing to worry about managing the family budget.

Wendy was one of the blog authors who expressed feelings of insecurity prior to and upon her arrival over losing personal income due to becoming unemployed after marrying her husband. However, in the following excerpt, she describes how she actually maintained control over the money in her marriage:

> I appreciate the fact that my husband works hard so I can stay home to take care of my health and raise our future child. I often thank him for keeping a job to support us… We have equal allowances. Even if he is the one to withdraw the cash we need for living expenses, he always hands over the entire amount to me and later receives his allowance from me.

The blog entries alluded to in this section reflect a unique equality in these couples' relationships. It is common for married women to continue their careers and to make an independent income in Taiwan. However, these blog authors all adopted the traditional Japanese family style in which the women are the homemakers and the men are the breadwinners. Although these wives had no personal income, their husbands

believed they were entitled to share their salaries as in most Japanese marriages. While some participants appreciated being free from the worries of financial management, others preferred having control over the family budget. The blogs suggest that husbands' respect for participants' preferences promoted positive relationships.

Chapter V: Discussion

This study sought to understand spousal support provided by husbands in cross-national marriages. Three core categories of spousal support were generated from analyzing the blogs of Taiwanese women living in Japan: 1) support with identifying as a foreign spouse in Japan; 2) support with maintaining Taiwanese ethnic identity; and 3) support with identifying with the marital roles of wife, homemaker, and mother. These identified themes suggest that spousal support for foreign wives included both cultural (the first two core categories) and marital (the third category) domains.

With respect to the cultural domain, Japanese husbands not only helped their Taiwanese wives establish connections with the new land and people but also actively participated in their wives' contact with other Taiwanese individuals. This bi-cultural approach was consistent with Berry's (1997) integration acculturative strategy (i.e., engaging in both cultural identity maintenance and host cultural contact), which has been identified to produce the most positive acculturation outcomes among different acculturating groups (Berry, 1997). However, members of the tight Japanese culture (Triandis, 2004), which emphasizes the strict adherence to group rules and norms, may not support the practice of integration in their society. Therefore, husbands supporting their foreign wives' ethnic identity at least in the marriage can be particularly important, because ethnic identity is related to the self-esteem and well-being of acculturating individuals (e.g., Phinney et al., 1997).

Participants received cultural support in the following areas: establishing housing, handling legal procedures, adjusting to the new climate, absorbing the new culture, communicating, learning the new language, making new friends, dealing with

homesickness and distress over trouble adjusting, and coping with the separation from family members and friends. These are consistent with common stressors for immigrants/migrants identified in previous research (Asakura & Murata, 2006; Ying, 2005). They also appear to be reflected in Ward and colleagues' predictions of psychological and sociocultural adjustment (e.g., Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1992), suggesting husbands supported wives' emotional well-being as well as wives' acquire the skills and knowledge required to function in the society.

In terms of support in the marital domain, the Japanese husbands were affectionate toward, attentive to, and accepting of their wives. They took the initiative to participate in domestic and/or childcare responsibilities as well as provided financial support through their employment. Although the wives recognized and appreciated all of the forms of marital support, the times in their relationships when they were touched by their husbands' love and care were noted as helpful for both their marital relationships and the adjustment process. Biehle and Michelson (2012) defined emotional spousal support as "expression of interest, caring and understanding, and receiving empathy from one's spouse" (p. 244). As observed in the study, the emotional spousal support provided by the participants' husbands was mentioned to be helpful for the wives' marital satisfaction and adaptation outcomes. This finding seems to be echoed in evidence found in previous studies on the marital satisfaction of women in America and Japan. Both Erickson (1993) and Yamato (2008) concluded that emotional support from husbands better predicts wives' marital satisfaction than support in housework and childcare matters. Additionally, in the last decade, scholars have tested Searle and Ward's (1990) adaptation model and suggested adding marital factors,

as they significantly predict adjustment outcomes even after taking psychological and sociocultural factors into account (e.g., James et al., 2004). The notion of including marital variables appears to be supported by the findings of the current study, in that the emotional support identified specifically provided for participants' marital roles was described as helpful to the acculturation of wives.

It was noted that all participants adopted the Japanese gender role and became homemakers after entering marriage. In Yu's (2006) review, it is suggested that it is relatively easy for women in Taiwan to maintain a balance between career and family roles. However, the societal expectations of women as mothers, employment system and overall long working hours for full time employments, inadequate childcare support system, and lack of spousal support with housekeeping responsibilities are all obstacles to married women in Japan taking on both family and work responsibilities (Yu, 2006). Employment is one of the acculturative stressors (Ying, 2005), and combined with the challenges specific to the labor force in Japan, the chances of foreign wives maintaining a career appear to be low. On the other hand, one of the benefits that comes with employment is social contact (Jahoda, 1981), which helps to reduce isolation and increase knowledge about the new culture. In Imamura's (1990) study on foreign wives in Japan, she also pointed out that having an occupational role could help women establish a personal identity in the new society, speed up the adaptation process, and extend the support system to outside the home. Thus, while some or all of the participants in the current study may actually enjoy being housewives, employment would likely benefit their ability to acculturate and adapt.

Despite the fact that participants took on the homemaker role as in most other Japanese marriages, the spousal interactions observed in the current study appeared to be inconsistent with those in typical Japanese marriages described in earlier research. For example, the husbands of the participants were described as romantic and attentive, actively participating in the domestic and childrearing responsibilities and spending quality time with their wives. On the other hand, according to Greenberg and Goldman's (2008) review, after marrying and having children, the pragmatic concerns of Japanese couples tend to override interest in romantic love (DeVos, 1985; Iwao, 1993). Lebra (1984) indicated that because Japanese husbands and wives are "viewed as being *ittai* (fused into one body), it would be unnecessary to display love and intimacy between them" (p. 125, as cited in Kamo, 1993). Yamato (2008) noted that as Japanese husbands are the main breadwinners, they rarely participate in the housework. Moreover, Vogel (1986) stated that married Japanese couples have separate social worlds; instead of spending time with their spouses, they tend to spend more time with family members, people in the community, and colleagues (Kamo, 1993). The above inconsistency could be due to the small number of participants in the current study, the fact that foreign spouses have unique needs that husbands need to attend to, or the possibility that men who marry foreign wives are less traditional.

In both cultural and marital support, participants noted their husbands accepted and tolerated their negative emotions resulting from acculturative stressors and/or personal shortcomings and were patient toward them. They particularly appreciated it when their husbands listened without reacting negatively and gave in during conflicts. Acceptance on a day-to-day basis promotes satisfaction in relationships over time for

both perceivers and partners (Murray, Griffin, Rose, & Bellavia, 2006). This implies that husbands' displays of emotional strength not only benefit wives but also eventually lead to reciprocated acceptance. Husbands' acceptance of their wives is likely to create a win-win situation in terms of the wives' adaptation and the marriage in general. On the other hand, Greenberg and Goldman (2008) stated that in intimate Japanese relationships, "direct complaints signal the end of the relationship" (p. 114). This suggests that some Japanese husbands may avoid reacting to their wives' emotions in order to prevent further conflicts or the termination of the relationship. If this applies to any of the husbands in the current study, their long-term marital satisfaction could be at risk if frustrations are left to build up and surpass a certain threshold.

Khan et al. (2009) indicated that problematic support refers to "interactions that are perceived by recipients as insensitive and includes minimizing the stressful situation, criticizing the recipients' coping efforts, or providing unwanted advice" (p. 28). In the current study, examples of such problematic support included Ahruru's husband failing to empathize with her difficulty adjusting to the cold weather and Coco's husband stopping translating in the middle of a conversation between her and her mother-in-law. For Ahruru, gender differences might have contributed to the problem. According to Parker's (1999) review, women build relationships through verbal communication, so they have a tendency to share experiences and feelings (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1987). However, men are socialized to solve problems, so if they hear a woman sharing a problem, they perceive it as an issue that needs to be fixed (Tannen, 1990). Ahruru was simply sharing her feelings, but since she mentioned it repeatedly, her husband might have perceived it as her blaming him for not being able to solve an issue he had no

control over (the weather). His interpretation might have been the cause of his anger upon hearing Ahruru's complaint again. As for Coco, she was unable to speak Japanese, so she had to rely on her husband to translate, even for conversations her husband viewed as trivial. Unfortunately, her husband was insensitive to her needs at the time. Foreign wives' frustration with their husbands over not helping with communication was also identified in Imamura (1990). Translation is particularly important for foreign wives facing language barriers, because it not only helps bridge communication gaps but can sometimes help bridge relationship gaps as well.

The overall findings suggest that the spousal support that is appreciated and that contributes to positive marital relationships and adaptation processes appears to be the type of support that reflects acceptance of who the foreign wives are rather than who they should be. Thus, empathy and acceptance seem to play a large role in this type of support.

Limitations

The present study employed a qualitative design, allowing the researcher to understand how the individuals made sense of their lives rather than providing generalizability. However, several limitations may have interfered with the researcher's ability to analyze and construct the essence of the shared experience targeted in the study. First, data was collected through blogs, and thus the data only included experiences of individuals who were willing to share online. Second, there were few reports on the experiences of wives who had lived in Japan for many years. Throughout the blog search, it was noticed that the blog owners tended to write more at the beginning of the relationship or in the early stages of life in Japan and gradually

reduced the frequency or eventfully stopped updating the blog. As a result, no data was available for analysis on individuals four or more years after arrival among the selected blogs. Taiwanese women who live in Japan longer will inevitably encounter broader issues. For instance, they may need to learn about a new education system when their children enter school or learn to cope with the empty nest stage with their husbands. These women may provide more extensive experiences that could help researchers' understanding of the phenomena. Another limitation is that the identities of the blog authors could not be completely confirmed. Although the author of the study performed detailed identity checks—through not only the online profiles but also the textual and visual cues sought in the blog contents and guest comments—without personally meeting and knowing the blog authors, the blog authors' identities were not guaranteed. Further, the blogs were pre-established, which was beneficial, in that it avoided contamination by the researcher (Hookway, 2008). However, the researcher was unable to ask follow-up questions or perform the member checking for verification.

Clinical Implications for the Practice of Counseling Psychology

Although the current study does not provide generalizability and has limitations, several clinical implications were generated from the findings that may benefit practitioners assisting couples with acculturation issues. First, adaptation includes psychological, sociocultural, and marital facets (Ataca & Berry, 2002; James et al., 2004), so the therapist should address marital variables when dealing with acculturative stress, since positive spousal interaction can facilitate positive acculturation processes and adaptation outcomes. The therapist can assist the couple to focus on the relationship itself and develop fondness and admiration (Driver, Tabares, Shapiro, &

Gottman, 2012) that is likely to help build and maintain a stronger intimate relationship over time. Second, when addressing cultural issues, helping the couple to appreciate each other's culture, particularly that of the individual removed from his/her culture, is likely to promote a win-win situation for both partners. Third, the therapist should emphasize the effect of gender and culture on the couple's communication in order to promote a better and more in-depth understanding of the underlying meaning of the spouse's behaviors. This step can be particularly important for long-term satisfaction. Fourth, helping the couple to learn to develop emotional strength as well as empathy and acceptance will help to improve acculturation and reduce marital conflicts. Fifth, with respect to the therapy model, Greenberg and Goldman's (2008) Emotion-Focused Couples Therapy (EFCT) proposed the importance of supporting each other's identity, attachment, and emotional aspects in marriage. This is similar to the finding of the current study that spousal support involves supporting wives' identities with the host culture, cultural heritage, and marital roles. The practice of EFCT may help the couple to validate each other's identities and develop self-soothing abilities for emotional regulation.

Future Directions

This study identified categories and themes of foreign wives' spousal support experiences, but the actual relationships between spousal support and their acculturation outcomes remain unknown. Future attention could be directed to examining such relationships, incorporating the findings of the current study. Specifically, the independent variables could distinguish between the cultural and marital domains of support. Second, the husbands' support identified in the present study included

supporting wives' contact with both cultures, which is reflected in Berry's (1997) integration acculturative strategy. Future research could investigate the acculturative strategies employed by foreign wives in Japan and assess the relationships between the four strategies and successful adaptation. Third, in addition to the support receiver, the simultaneous contribution of the support provider would further benefit cross-national marriages. One way to achieve this would be to hold interviews or focus groups targeting spousal support with both foreign wives and their husbands. Fourth, one of the limitations of the current study is the lack of information four years after arrival. Future research in this area could expand recruitment to include participants who have resided in Japan and been married for longer periods of time. Fifth, although it was not the focus of the current study, all of the 10 blog owners were observed to use their blogs as support by interacting with other Taiwanese wives via the comment section. There were frequently suggestions made to help the blog owners to deal with marital and/or acculturative stress. Examining online support and its relationship to marital satisfaction could help to clarify the support systems of foreign wives.

Conclusion

The current study extends the existing literature on acculturation and marriage, as it is one of the first to explore the positive marital support provided to foreign wives living in the home country of their husbands. Switching the focus in previous research from spousal distress to spousal support was intended to help identify and build self-help strategies for cross-cultural marriages. The categories and themes identified suggested the importance of cultural and marital support. Specifically with the cultural support, Berry's (1980) two issues of cultural identity maintenance and host cultural

contact were reflected in the support, whereas marital emotional support was observed in the marital quality and the adaptation process of wives. Future research is needed to further explore foreign wives' strategies of acculturation and their relationships to spousal support and adaptation outcomes.

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