

2015

Acculturation in Marital Satisfaction Among Mixed Caucasian and Asian American Heterosexual Couples

Lotes Nelson
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Counselor Education & Supervision

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Lotes Nelson

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Review Committee

Dr. Rhonda Neswald-Potter, Committee Chairperson, Counselor Education and
Supervision Faculty

Dr. Jason Patton, Committee Member, Counselor Education and Supervision Faculty
Dr. Shelley Jackson, University Reviewer, Counselor Education and Supervision Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2015

Abstract

Acculturation in Marital Satisfaction Among Mixed Caucasian and Asian American

Heterosexual Couples

by

Lotes Nelson

MS, Walden University, 2011

BS, Montreat College, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Counselor Education and Supervision

Walden University

November 2015

Abstract

The growing population of the United States is linked to the increasing migration of individuals from other countries. With migration comes the development of cross-cultural and interracial romantic relationships, many leading to marriages. This qualitative grounded theory study sought to understand how a migrant partner's adjustment process, acculturation, contributes to cross-cultural marriages. The main research question and purpose of this study was to investigate the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples. This study utilized multiple data sources and a purposive sampling of 11 mixed Asian and Caucasian heterosexual married couples, with one partner who identified themselves as being Caucasian and U.S. born, and the other as Asian American and an immigrant to the United States. Data were coded and analyzed to identify themes and patterns that emerged from the participants' experiences. The study revealed the following emergent themes representing the couples' common acculturative stressors: (a) challenges related to English language proficiency, (b) communication styles differences, (c) cultural learning, and (d) difficulties due to the lack of social support. The findings of this study provide marriage and family counselors with important data related to how married couples experience acculturation as well as the unique stressors associated with a migrating partner's process. Implications for positive social change include information related to the development of interventions to address common acculturative stressors identified during this study, as well as data to support clinicians and clients when identifying appropriate coping strategies.

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Dedication

This research project is dedicated to all individuals who have had to go through the acculturation process in moving from one place to another, whether it is domestically or internationally. Relocating to a new area requires individuals to adapt to their new environment, and sometimes the acclimatization progression is not easy. This research is dedicated to those who graciously contributed to this study and for sharing intimate details about your acculturation experience and for allowing me to learn from you. You have been made to feel different than others at times, but your perseverance and determination to triumph is commendable. I celebrate your courage for sharing your story so others can have a better adjustment experience in the future.

This dissertation is also dedicated to all immigrants who doubt the possibility of success. I was only 14 years old when I migrated to the United States, and never did I imagine that attaining my PhD was a possibility. Keep your head high and stay focused to reach your goals. The opportunities are endless when you put your mind to what you want to achieve.

Lastly, I dedicate my doctoral degree to my late father and mother. They were people with so little but yet so full of encouragement. They instilled in me the value of education, motivation, and determination to follow my dreams. They forever left a mark in my heart, and I thank both of them for the legacy of willpower and courage.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Globalization, the interaction and integration among people, companies, and governments of different nations, is a prominent process (Panarin, 2014). Increased immigration, job training and opportunity, study abroad, and tourism also increasingly create opportunities for platonic and romantic relationships to develop between individuals who are culturally different. According to the United States Census Bureau (2013), the migrant population continues to grow. Foreign-born individuals account for about 13% of the population in the United States, representing approximately 40 million people (United States Census Bureau, 2013).

A relationship is defined as cross-cultural when each partner comes from a different culture, with divergent cultural backgrounds and values (Ibrahim & Schroeder, 1990). In fact, 10% of married couples living in the United States in 2010 were in interracial relationships (U.S. Census, 2010). This statistic indicates a significant increase from only 2% in 1970 (U. S. Census, 2010), supporting the need for increased research investigating dynamics of cross-cultural marriages. Moreover, with the increasing number of immigrants in the United States, the opportunity for individuals to engage in cross-cultural relationships in which one member of the couple has migrated to the United States is unprecedented (Frame, 2004).

Cultural concerns will inevitably develop in cross-cultural marriages (Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004) because each partner holds his or her individual understanding of the world and how it works. For example, a migrating partner may bring concepts to the

relationship that are unfamiliar to the other partner. Likewise, the nonmigrating partner may engage in cultural practices that the immigrating individual may find incomprehensible. The couple may also face challenges about how they conduct their marital responsibilities, such as parenting styles, negotiation of domestic responsibilities, and navigating through religious practices. Communication styles may vary between each member of the couple. For example, the migrating partner may hold beliefs about open expression, such as Asian women who may be perceived to have a lack of voice (Jing, 2009) which can create problems in effectively building a common viewpoint with a partner who may expect the open communication.

While many migrating individuals have positive experiences during their relocation, others experience difficulties related to psychological struggles, such as depression, anxiety, and self-esteem issues (Gupta, Leong, Valentine, 2013; Hsu et al., 2012; Yoon et al., 2013). Acculturation is the process in which individuals experience their transition from their native culture to the host culture (Berry, 1987; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Vidrio Baron, Rebolledo Mendoza, & Ochoa Rios, 2014). Berry (1987) explained in his theory of acculturation four ways that individuals may identify their transition into the host culture: separation, assimilation, integration, and marginalization.

While acculturation may present significant challenges to individuals (Berry, 1987; Gupta et al., 2013; Junhyoung, Wonseok, Sooyeon, & Himanshi, 2012; Park, Kim, Chiang, & Ju, 2010) couples may also experience unique acculturation challenges that may cause them more stress than couples who are not managing dynamics of acculturation. Much of this stress appears to be associated with varying expectations and

assumptions by each member of the couple (Frame, 2004). One of the most notable variables in cross cultural relationships and communication includes differences in worldview between the couples (Ibrahim & Schroeder, 1990). Recent studies have documented unique challenges couples experience when navigating the acculturation of one partner to his or her partner's culture and norms. Specific areas of examination include cultural adaptation stress (Liao & Wei, 2014), misunderstanding of expectations (Helms et al., 2014), value differences (Frame, 2004; & Fryer, 2007), and the development of psychological distress (Gupta et al., 2013; Lee, O'Neill, Ihara, & Chae, 2013) as a result of an adverse adjustment process (Chance, Costigan, & Leadbeater, 2014), all of which can have lasting effects on the individual and in turn affect the individual's significant relationships.

This present study investigated the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples. The married couples participating in this study consisted of one partner having migrated to the United States and one who was a natural born citizen of the United States. Given that one of the partners was from a different cultural background than most of the individuals he or she was in contact with after moving to the United States, considerations must be given to the integration process of the individual, including potential difficulties in adjusting to the mainstream culture. All couples experience challenges in their marital relationship, and the unique dynamics of intercultural couples' relationships can intensify the challenges within the relationship (Frame, 2004). Acculturation can also present relational distress due to communication challenges or conflicts between unique cultural practices, such as

religious observances or the role of extended family members (Frame, 2004). Many studies have linked acculturation to psychological distress, such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and stress, all of which can have lasting effects on the individuals as well as his or her relationships (Gupta et al., 2013; Ruzek, Nguyen, & Herzog, 2011).

Social Implications

The study of acculturation and how it influences marital satisfaction is important not only to clients who may benefit from future research, but also in terms of expanding the knowledge base of the counseling field. Additionally, the development of theory will be advantageous in further understanding the nature of acculturation, and specifically how it influences the marital satisfaction of Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples. This study provides data that may assist future counselors in developing interventions for working with cross-cultural couples, specifically mixed Asian American and Caucasian American couples.

Frame (2004) discussed how couples in cross-cultural relationships may experience challenges as they navigate through their relationship. While acculturation offers opportunities for cross-cultural couples to learn from one another's contrasting cultural practices, the couple can also experience unique acculturative stressors (Helms et al., 2014). Other researchers detailed specific concerns such as differences in cultural practices (Deng & Walker, 2007; Helms et al., 2014), differing holiday practices (Amer & Hovey, 2010), and communication methods (Kisselev, Brown, & Brown, 2010). Negy, Hammons, Reig-Ferrer, and Carper (2010) stated that although cross-cultural

couples pursue their relationship with matching passions, the couples could experience marital distress due to the varying cultural demands.

This present study focused on the influence of acculturation as experienced by mixed Asian American and Caucasian couples in which the Asian partner migrated to the United States, examining specifically how the couple's marital satisfaction was affected by acculturation. While not originally intended, all participant couples who participated in the study included male U.S., born Caucasian partners and female Asian born partners who immigrated to the United States. The Asian born partner's integration to the mainstream was examined to identify whether acculturation was a factor in how she and her spouse interacted with each other, and whether acculturation factors influenced marital satisfaction for either member of the couple. Important acculturation factors such as perceptions of family members, expectations of love and marriage and communication difficulties (Inman et al., 2011) were examined. The results of this study will assist clinicians in effectively serving cross-cultural couples by adding to the knowledge base of mental health concerns that may affect clients who are in the process of acculturation. The knowledge base will additionally enhance competencies of mental health counselors and marriage, couples and family counselors working with clients from differing cultural backgrounds. These findings may also be useful to clinicians in developing appropriate counseling interventions and identification of coping strategies to support cross-cultural couples. In addition to adding to the current base of knowledge and practice, this study will hopefully encourage future research in cross-cultural couples counseling.

The major topics that will be covered in this chapter are the background of the study, gaps and deficiencies of the topic, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical foundations, nature of the study, definition of terms, assumptions, scope/delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

The background of the study will discuss the existing research addressing acculturation and its impact on the psychological well-being of migrating individuals. The gaps and deficiencies include important background about psychological concerns such as depression and anxiety, as well as the scant research available documenting how marital satisfaction of mixed Caucasian and Asian American couples have been affected by acculturation. The problem statement explains the importance of this study, as exemplified by the increasing immigration population in the United States and the escalating number of cross-cultural relationships. The purpose of the study explains the goal in conducting this study, which was to better understand the role of acculturative stress in marital satisfaction of mixed Caucasian and Asian American relationships. The research questions outline the central question that was answered while conducting this study. Subquestions that served to guide the interview process with the research participants are also included. The theoretical foundations describe the use of social learning theory, behavioral theory, and Berry's acculturation framework as the fundamental theoretical orientation which are later employed to explain the findings of this study. The nature of the study discusses the research design and the research methodology used to study the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples. This segment will describe the

methods in which the data were collected. In the Definition of Terms I explain unfamiliar terminologies used throughout this study. The research assumptions, scope/delimitations, and limitations outline the essential details that were considered when managing the accuracy and relevancy of the research. I also illustrate actions taken to mitigate the elements that presented weaknesses to this study. Lastly, the significance of the study reiterates the goal of the study, which was to develop theory about how acculturation influences marital satisfaction for couples from mixed Asian American and Caucasian marriages.

Background of the Study

Chang, Tracey, and Moore (2005) argued that the process by which individuals change to embrace or reject the host culture's values, beliefs, and practices are indicative of the acculturation progression. Researchers in the area of acculturation have examined the relationship between acculturative stressors and psychological distress (Torres, Dirscoll, & Voell, 2012; Wie, Liao, Heppner, Chao, & Ku, 2012). These stressors, such as the language barrier, climate, and social support have been researched to identify how acculturation its impacts psychological distress such as depressive symptoms. For example, Xu and Chi (2013) found that both internal and external environment stressors affect the physical and psychological well-being of a person. External factors include the individual's social contact or support, as well as cultural differences between the home and host country of the individuals. Interpersonal factors include social supports or negative relationships with relatives and friends that have been found to contribute to the psychological welfare of Asian American immigrants.

Negy, Hammons, Reig-Ferrer, and Carper (2010) investigated the effects of acculturative stress in marital therapy with Hispanic immigrant women, and found the presence of higher levels of marital distress as a result of acculturative stress. The researchers explained that some Hispanic women feel pressure to adapt to the host culture's values and norms, including moving away from their familiar cultural norms of domestic household responsibilities to become a part of the working class in the United States (Negy et al., 2010). Similarly, Helms et al. (2014) described the development of depression as a consequence of acclimating to the host country's norms. Leidy, Parke, Cladis, Coltrane, and Duffy (2009) postulated that cultural differences among married couples affect positive marital quality and that each member of the couple's various relationship behaviors and attributes can be related to cultural variance. The researchers found that different cultural practices and expectations result in different family processes (Leidy et al., 2009). Additionally, the concept of childrearing can vary between the naturally born U.S. citizen and the migrant partner (Vanassche, Swicegood, & Matthjis, 2013).

The stress that individuals experience when adjusting to the host culture can also be associated with physical, social, or psychological adaptation (Leidy et al., 2009). As Gupta et al. (2013) explained, depression has been deemed one of the major psychological impacts of acculturation. A physical consequence attributed to acculturation can also be seen through the physique changes of the migrant individuals, as a result of a body image issues (Warren & Rios, 2013). The migrant individual may struggle with Western appearance based media, where body image is of importance, and

as a result, the individual may begin altering his or her practices related to his or her diet or clothing choices, to imitate the perceived physical expectation (Warren & Rios, 2013).

Other adjustments, such as developing language proficiency, building social relationships, or negotiating religious practices must also be managed by an individual immigrating to the United States, and these adjustments can impede the development of relationships. For example, while the Caucasian partner in a cross-cultural marriage may be excited to move forward, develop community, and to overcome psycho-social stressors such as language barrier, lack of social support, and difficulties balancing the native traditions with the host country's customs, the Asian American partner may still be navigating the differences between the originating and host culture's practices and traditions.

Gaps and Deficiencies in Prior Research

Acculturation and its role in psychological distresses have been studied widely (Gupta et al., 2013; Sirikantraporn, 2013; Thai, Connell, & Tebes, 2010). However, relatively few studies have examined the role of acculturation and marital satisfaction (Kisselev, Brown, & Brown, 2013; Park & Park, 2013). Even less information exists about the marital satisfaction of mixed Caucasian and Asian American couples as a result of acculturation. One researcher discussed the prediction of acculturation in Russian-speaking immigrant couples in the United States. (Kisselev et al., 2010), while Nagy and Snyder (1997) researched acculturation in Mexican American couples using the marital satisfaction inventory. However, no known empirical research examined the effects of

acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American couples.

Problem Statement

The United States continues to show growth in its multicultural make-up. According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2011 there were 40.4 million foreign-born persons, representing 13% of the total population living in the United States. As more foreign-born people migrate to the United States., counselors will need to develop awareness about the acculturation of the growing population. Acculturation is a multidimensional process individuals or groups of individuals may experience when adapting to another culture (Murray, Klonoff, Garcini, Ullman, Wall, & Myers 2013). Individuals who migrate to the United States from other countries may undergo cultural adjustments related to language barriers, social support, familial expectations, and balancing the originating and host culture's rooted beliefs and traditions (Ruzek, Nguyen, & Herzog, 2011). Moreover, with the diverse ethnic composition of the U.S. population, cross-cultural relationships and marriages are inevitable. Acculturative stressors, such as language barriers, social support, familial expectations, and other identified phenomenon, should be explored to understand how they may affect marital satisfaction in mixed race relationships and cross-cultural marriages.

Only a handful of previous studies have been conducted measuring the acculturation process of migrating individuals and how acculturation may impact individuals socially and emotionally. Gupta, Leong, Valentine, and Canada (2013) conducted a study on the relationship between acculturation and depression among Asian

Americans. They found that ethnic identification with a specific culture serves as a “protective factor” and counters against negative health outcomes (Gupta et al., 2013, p. 382). While Gupta et al. discussed how the complexity of acculturation has also been linked to depression, they also noted as acculturating individuals continue to participate in the culture of the United States, they experience lower levels of depression. In a separate study, Kisselev, Brown, and Brown (2010) studied the prediction in language acculturation in marital satisfaction among Russian-speaking immigrant couples in the United States. Aside from this scant research, there appears to be little research available that examines the effect of acculturation on the relationship of couples from mixed cultural backgrounds. Moreover, even less research exists which examines marital satisfaction specific to mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual married people. The purpose of this study was to bridge the gap in literature by examining the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples.

Purpose of the Study

The goal in conducting this research was to provide an explanation of the role of acculturative stress in the marital satisfaction of mixed Caucasian and Asian American relationships. The purpose of this study was to generate a theory that can help explain how acculturation influences marriages of mixed Caucasian and Asian American couples. Research on understanding the elements of acculturative stress can help to counselors improve the adaptation process of the migrant individuals into their environment, which can also assist in improving the couple’s marital satisfaction level. The result of this

research study can also supplement the current counseling intervention and protective factor literature to support multicultural families.

Research Question

Central Question:

What is the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among Mixed Caucasian and Asian American Heterosexual couples?

Sub questions:

1. How is the process of acculturation perceived by the Asian American partner and the Caucasian partner?
2. What acculturative stressors are experienced by the immigrant partner? (for example, language barrier, social support, acculturating/assimilating/or adapting to both culture's values and traditions).
3. How does the Caucasian partner feel about the acculturative stressors, such as, language barrier, social support, acculturating/assimilating/or adapting to both culture's values and traditions?
4. What experiences have both partners encountered because of misunderstanding or misinterpretation due to language barrier or cultural beliefs or traditions?
5. How do the acculturative stressors affect the marital satisfaction of the couple?

Theoretical Foundation

When working with diverse populations, Chavis (2012) postulated the appropriateness of social learning and behavioral theories. In this study, social learning and behavioral theory served as a foundation for understanding and explaining

acculturation. These evidence-based theories have been integral to researchers investigating cultural considerations with individuals adapting to new cultural practices and beliefs. They also provided a strong foundation for understanding how individual behaviors are affected by the social context. Behavioral theory provided an understanding of learned behaviors that occur in the new settings of migrating individuals (Chavis, 2012). Social learning theory helped explain how culture shapes human behavior and further contributed to the understanding of individuals' and families' positive or negative experiences (Corey, 2009). Social learning theory suggests that the migrating individual's behaviors are indicative of the host country's influences. For example, the acculturating individual's language competency will likely be a reflection of learning from others around them. Moreover, actions displayed by the migrant individual can be learned behaviors through his or her interactions within the mainstream. Thus, the migrating individual's mannerisms within the couple's marriage may represent the host country's predisposition. Bandura (1979) affirmed that individuals function based on their prior knowledge and experiences. Therefore, as acculturating individuals intersect more and more with the U.S. population, they acquire new skills and characteristics and in turn exhibit those qualities through their actions.

Berry's acculturation framework (1997) also informed this study. This framework explains situational variables affecting psychological functioning of the group or individual (Berry, 1997). The purpose of this framework is to identify variables affecting acculturation (Berry, 1997). This framework assisted the researcher when illustrating the acculturation process of participants. According to the acculturation

framework, different situational and personal factors shape the individual or group's acculturation or adaptation development, providing a guideline in which one interprets the phenomena (Liu, 2011). The use of the model provides researchers with an understanding of the psychological processes and behavior particular to migrating individuals as they engage in different social and cultural milieus (Liu, 2011).

The main mechanism of the acculturation framework is understanding the development of the individual's adaption to the new cultural environment. Ataca and Berry (2002) discuss two perspectives that explain the complex process of acculturation: unidimensional and bidimensional models. A unidimensional model illustrates the adaption process as linear, without the acculturating group influencing the modifying dominant culture, while bidimensional models postulate the maintenance of the culture of origin, while adapting to the host culture (Ataca & Berry, 2002). Individuals who exhibit reluctance to step out of their comfort zone and reject learning about the host country's customs and traditions, such as speaking the English language, may be demonstrating the unidimensional model of acculturation. Language barriers may represent challenges as immigrants interact with the local citizens, which may also contribute to difficulties in their social advancement in the new environment. Subsequently, immigrants that incorporate the host country's practices or demonstrate the willingness to learn about the dominant country's traditions, values, or principles, may experience an easier transition, as illustrated in the bidimensional model of acculturation. The migrant individuals' acceptance of the host country's functions has been attributed to their broader cross-cultural interactions, which results in smoother transitions (Liu, 2011).

Nature of Study

Qualitative Paradigm

Qualitative research is an interpretive approach to studying natural phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research is generally conducted in the natural setting of the research participants, and researchers enter the setting with a broad assumption of the individual or group's human or social problems (Creswell, 2013). The study of acculturation and the role in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples is interpretive in nature, and required the investigator to be in a natural setting to fully gain understanding of the people and their understanding of the role of acculturation on the satisfaction of their marriages.

Design

This study sought to develop a substantive theory specific to the identified population using grounded theory. According to Creswell (2013), the intent of grounded theory is to develop a theory that has been grounded by the research participants. "Generating a theory from the data means that most concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research" (Patton, 2002, p. 125). Grounded theory moves the researchers closer to the participants' real world by identifying patterns in the data that are then arranged into categories to help answer the research question by constructing meanings of the phenomenon. When employing grounded theory, researchers leave with a specific theoretical understanding based on the participants' experiences. Glaser and Strauss (1967) explained that grounded theory investigates the actualities in the real world and

analyzes the data with no predetermined ideas. According to Lawrence and Tar (2013) grounded theory supports the phenomenon under study by its discovery, development, and verification through methodical data collection. In sum, grounded theory is often used in discovering the participants' main concerns and how they continually try to resolve them based on the collected participants' experiences (Glaser, 1992).

Types and Sources of Data

A combination of methods was utilized in gathering data to study the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples. This study initially aimed to utilize interviews, observational data, and a researcher's reflexive journal.

Interview Data

This study used interviews as one of the primary methods in collecting data to investigate the participants' perception of the meaning of acculturation. The migrant partner was asked to describe his or her acculturative experience, and outline any successes and challenges related to their transition into the host country. Subquestion 2 was "What acculturative stressors are experienced by the immigrant partner?" Subquestion number two was also answered by interview data, because the immigrant partners were asked to describe the acculturative stressors. The research participants presented varying acculturative stressors, from language barrier, lack of social support, acculturating, assimilating, or adapting to both cultural values and traditions. The interview facilitated a dialogue to gain understanding of the expressed acculturative stressors. The use of interview data also answered Subquestion 3 about understanding

the Caucasian partner's feelings about how acculturative stressors affected the relationship. The Caucasian partner was asked to give examples of the stressors that were faced within the relationship. Subquestion 5, "How do the acculturative stressors affect the marital satisfaction of the couple," was also answered during interviews, when couples were asked to explain their perceptions of the influence of acculturative stressors in their marital satisfaction.

Observation Data

Observation data provides the researcher the opportunity to gain in-depth illustrations of the research participants' experiences (Patton, 2002). Observations can be executed via formal and informal methods (Patton, 2002) and may be conducted in the participants' home settings, work settings or in the local community such as during community church, or school events. Subquestions 2, "What acculturative stressors are experienced by the immigrant partner?," and Subquestion 3, "How does the Caucasian partner feel about the acculturative stressors?" were answered using observational data. I observed the participants in their natural setting, mainly in their homes during the interview and looked for social interactions indicative of acculturative stressors. Observational data also captured nonverbal communication or specific non-verbal communication patterns during the interviews that appeared to contribute or detract from marital satisfaction.

Researcher's Journal

I maintained a researcher's journal throughout the study in order to capture my own understandings, reactions and responses to the content and process of this study. I

bring a unique perspective to this subject matter, being an Asian American married to a Caucasian husband and was aware that I entered the setting with my own ideas and assumptions about how acculturation may influence marital satisfaction. According to Patton (2002) qualitative researchers should engage in such a reflexive practice to remain cognizant of their own lens from which they perceive the world.

Critical Friend

The employment of a critical friend in qualitative research is also encouraged in order to challenge me in my own interpretations of the data. Throughout this study, I met monthly with a critical friend who reviewed my own biases when beginning the study, as well as challenged the accuracy of my self-assessments and interpretations of the data.

Demographic Questionnaire

A demographic questionnaire was used to gather personal information related to each participant's age, the couple's income level, number of years married, number of times married, number of children, education level, and occupation. Additional questions were asked, to document the participants' other general demographic information. The couple's socioeconomic level was used for descriptive purposes. The number of years and times that the couple had been married was used to connect the investigation of the couple's acculturative stressors and its influence in their marital satisfaction over time. The information around the number of children was linked to gain insight of the couple's acculturative experiences, to obtain information around any cultural differences related to raising children and how it may have affected the marital satisfaction of the couple.

Lastly, the education level and occupation of the couple were used to better comprehend those contributing factors and their role in the marital relationship.

Methodology

Participants and Site

The target population of this study was heterosexual married couples, who were mixed Caucasian and Asian American. The Asian American partner needed to have been an immigrant to the United States, while the Caucasian partner must have been a naturalized citizen of the United States. The research participants were at least 18 years of age. Approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board was obtained prior to selecting participants and collection of data. I recruited samples using both online tools and personal contacts. Online tools used were emails through several listserves, academic and social groups with the potential of reaching mixed Caucasian and Asian married couples. Once the participants were secured, I selected a place to conduct the study. Qualitative study suggests that the data collection process is collected at the participants' natural setting, like their home. Therefore, I offered all participants the option of meeting in their homes for the interviews or in another place of their choosing. All selected their homes for the interviews and observations which captured the quintessence of the participants' experiences.

Definition of Terms

Adaptation: The process of establishing and maintaining a relatively stable reciprocal relationship with human, social, or interpersonal environment (Brody, 1970).

Asian: Those having origins with people in any of the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the subcontinent of India (U.S. Census, 2010).

Asian Americans: People deriving from an Asian continent who have migrated to the United States (Burriss, Ayman, Che, & Min, 2013).

Asian mixed couples: Married couples consisting of an Asian and a non-Asian partner.

Assimilation: When individuals adapt to host culture and disregard the native culture (Berry, 2003; Silverstein, 2000)

Acculturation: The process in which individuals or groups adapt to cultural beliefs and behaviors of another group as a result of contact (Berry, 1987). Nelson-Jones (2002) referred to acculturation as the behavioral and psychological changes that occur in individuals as a result of their interaction with a different culture.

Acculturative stress: The psychological stress as a response to life events as presented by the cultural differences (Berry, 1997; Sam & Berry, 2006).

Acculturating strategies: A person's dynamic way to negotiate their experiences between multiple cultural contexts (Miller et al., 2013).

Caucasian: People having origins in any of the people of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who identify their race as "White" (U.S. Census, 2010).

Coping strategies: The approach in which the individual subscribes to problem solving, planning, active acceptance, or cognitive restructuring (Livneh & Martz, 2014).

Country of origin: The originating or native country in which a person came from (Kanas & Van Tubergen, 2009).

Cross cultural couples: Couples who marry across cultures in terms of their individual ethnicity, culture, religion, social class, educational level, or geographical and regional differences (Ibrahim & Schroeder, 1990).

Cultural beliefs: One's impression, influences, and attitude toward their environment (Hosokawa, 2012).

Culture: A socially transmitted or socially constructed constellation consisting of factors such as practices, competencies, ideas, schemas, symbols, values, norms, institutions, goals, constitutive rules, artifacts, and modifications of the physical environment (Cohen, 2009; Sue & Sue, 1990).

Ethnicity: Refers to a culture in which people of a common heritage come to share mutual values and customs (Frame, 2004).

Ethnic identity: A part of social identity based on cultural group connection (Syed & Juang, 2014).

Globalization: Refers to the fact that the world is increasingly a connected on a global level (Nelson-Jones, 2002).

Host country: The country in which individuals or organizations from other countries are visiting or residing (Nesdale & Mak, 2000).

Immigrants: A person who is not a U.S. citizen at birth (U.S. Census, 2014).

Integration: When the individual or group adopts to the host culture and retains the native culture (Berry, 1997).

Interracial marriage: Refers to a marriage between two individuals from different ethnicities or racial groups (the term racial and ethnic are interchangeable) (Wong, 2009).

Marginalization: When the individual or group rejects or fails to connect with both the host culture and the native culture (Berry, 1997).

Marriage: The legal union between two persons (Monsma, 2014).

Marital satisfaction: The state that reflects the perceived fulfillment of marriage to a particular person (Dennison, Koerner, & Segrin, 2014).

Mental health status: The presence of psychological distress; impairment in psychological, social, or occupational functioning; or, any disorder that is associated with an increased risk of suffering death, pain, disability, or loss of freedom (Boyd & Nihart, 1998, p. 1129).

Plural societies: A community with two or more cultural groups living together. It is a society who blends different ethnic backgrounds in the same space (Merry, 2012).

Separation: When individuals retain the native culture and reject the host culture (Berry, 1997).

Social support: The social resources as identified by the individual. It is resources received by the individual through informal helping relationships and/or formal support groups (Banks & Weems, 2014).

Stress: The reaction of events or situations that have direct effects on different components of our emotional experience: physiologically, expression, and subjective feelings (Mortillaro & Scherer, 2014).

Values: The person's belief system and behavior to define what is wrong or right, true or false, important or not (Frame, 2004).

Assumptions

In this study I interviewed and observed 11 couples. An assumption was made that participants would respond to the interaction with me openly and candidly, and would answer the interview questions to the best of their knowledge and ability. The purposive sampling procedure used in this study restricted the generalizability of the findings. The present study relied on the information shared by the research participants.

Scope and Delimitations

Delimitations of research studies are the boundaries set forth to make the study better and to help identify the potential constraints of the study (Patton, 2002). This includes the deliberate inclusionary and exclusionary decisions made during the development of the research plan. Among these are the choice of objectives and questions, participant selection, the setting in which the data collection will take place, the implementation of the interview protocol, and the selection of the theoretical framework that were adapted.

Limitations

Limitations in research are complications and occurrences that are out of the researcher's control (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). The limitation associated with this study was the participants' mortality. I was unable to control the participants' desire to follow through with the completion of the research process. The participants' maturation can also present limitations in this study. Naturally, research participants can experience

life events and experiences such as aging, developing depression, or becoming tired that can alter not only their desire to continue to participate in the study, but also present factors that potentially influence the dynamic of their engagement. The participants' current circumstances such as environmental traumas, or health concerns such as pregnancy can act as limitations to this study. Moreover, the collection of data in the participant's natural setting can present biases. The transferability (the degree to which the results can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings) of this study can be a concern.

Significance of Study

The research will contribute to the field by providing a potential explanation of how acculturation can affect the level of marital satisfaction for couples from mixed couples Asian and Caucasian marriages. It is hoped that findings will establish a counseling framework suitable for addressing the unique needs of mixed Caucasian and Asian American couples in couples and family therapy and will support the mental health needs of the population. The study was important, not only in the development of theory, but also to practitioners providing counseling services to mixed Caucasian and Asian American couples who may be experiencing conflict or distress in their marriages due to the acculturation progression. The findings of this research could also support the development of counseling strategies designed to assist the migrant population in developing relevant stress-coping mechanisms and problem-solving skills.

Summary

The increasing multicultural make-up of the United States continues to present the opportunity to build cross-cultural relationships (Frame, 2004). The acculturation process of the migrant individual is important to consider in a marriage with divergent cultural beliefs and tradition. Acculturation itself can contribute to psychological distress (Gupta et al., 2013). The acculturative stress that may surface in marital relationships may be derived from the cultural differences and practices among the couples as the migrating partner adjusts into the mainstream (Frame, 2004). In this study I was guided by social learning theory, behavioral theory, and Berry's acculturation theoretical framework (1997) to examine the acculturation process of the migrant individual, and how it influenced the mixed couples' marital satisfaction.

The second chapter of this dissertation includes a review of the existing literature as it relates to the current study. The third chapter presents the methodology used to conduct the empirical research study. Chapter 4 will cover the findings of the study, including the results. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the dissertation, the conclusion, and recommendations of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The United States' migrant population continues to grow, and hence the numbers of multicultural couples in the US increases. The foreign-born population of the United States increased by five percent over the last three decades, rising from 7.9 in 1997 to 12.9 percent in 2010 (U.S. Census, 2010). Hirschman (2014) found that the migrating community currently accounts for almost one of four Americans. Forty million immigrants living in the United States in 2010 relocated from another continent (U.S. Census, 2010). Transcontinental relocation occurs when an individual migrates from one continent to another. Transcontinental relocation can include unique social, cultural, and psychological challenges as the migrating individual adjusts from the home country to the host country. This process of adjustment is known as the acculturation experience of the individual. Many studies have been conducted to identify differing acculturative stressors experienced by migrating individuals (Kiang, Grzywacz, Marin, Arcury, & Quandt, 2010; Schwartz et al., 2014). Gupta et al., (2013) highlighted potential mental health consequences, such as depression, that individuals encounter during the transitional period. Pokhrel, Herzog, Sun, Rohrbach, & Sussman (2013) highlighted the influence of acculturation on substance abuse among the Hispanic population. Other studies such as Lee, O'Neill, Ihara, and Chae (2013) documented the effects of acculturation on the immigrant's decline in health.

While there are many studies supporting the relationship between acculturation and an individual's wellbeing, minimal studies have been found that investigate the role

of acculturation in the marital satisfaction among mixed race relationships, where one member of the couple is from the United States, and the other member of the couple relocated to the United States from a different continent. However, as more individuals migrate to the United States, the country becomes increasingly diverse. This increased diversity presents opportunities for interracial unions to be established and maintained, including marriages between individuals born in the United States, and those who migrated to the U.S. from other countries. The nature of relationships among individuals from varying cultural backgrounds such as these may be complex, based on each individual's personal and familial beliefs and values.

The purpose of this study was to provide an explanation of the role of acculturation in the marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples in the United States. This study identified participant's acculturative stressors, particularly those that contributed to or detracted from their marital satisfaction. The goal of this study was to generate theory that explains the relationship between acculturative stressors and its influences on the marital satisfaction between mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples. Findings from this research will further contribute to the current interventions and protective factor literature to support multicultural families.

This literature review consists of three major sections: The first section will cover the topic of immigration; the second section will discuss the concept of acculturation; and the third section will address marriage.

Asian American Immigration Trend

Many researchers have studied reasoning and desire behind Asian migration to the United States (Hirschman, 2014). For example, Giulietti (2014) questioned if the potential for improved earnings encourages people to move to the United States. Other scholars highlighted differing determinants such as attaining advanced educational experiences, yearning for an American identity, and accessing improved healthcare (Akresh, 2009), strengthening family ties (Kerber, 2013; Piacenti, 2009), or seeking better civil and legal rights (Ruiz, Gallardo, & Delgado-Romero, 2013). Undoubtedly, there are many factors supporting the Asian population's move to the United States. Some migrants may present their need to improve their economic wellbeing, and predict that their financial situation will improve in the U.S., while others may seek out the opportunity to receive improved health care (Akresh, 2009). Simply put, foreign-born individuals view America as the land of opportunity, and therefore, many migrating individuals feel optimistic about the potential for a better way of life and more freedom of expression.

Though Asian immigrants may have a primary reason for migrating into the United States, their family and cultural values remain an important part of foundational identity as they adjust in their new environment (Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2013). Values guide behaviors, which are largely influenced by “cultural distinctions among groups of people, nations, and individuals” (Morillo, Capuno, & Mendoza, 2013, p. 5). As Asian immigrants navigate through their daily activities in the United States, fundamental Asian family values, such as the nature of authoritarian parenting style, perceived emotional

detachment from their children, and the expectation that children are expected to comply with parental demands are notable influences in how the individual thinks and acts (Park, Kim, Chiang, & Ju, 2010).

Asian Population Trend

The growing Asian migrant population continues to provide diversity in the racial and ethnic composition of the United States by representing a multitude of language groups and has many different counties of origin (Mutchler, Burr, & Prakash, 2007). These individuals can originate from different Asian countries, such as China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, or the islands of the Philippines, as well as from different regions within those countries. What all of them have in common is that they speak different languages and often dialects, within the language. For example, people from China may speak the official language of Standard Mandarin, while Japanese is the official language in Japan. Likewise the native language of Korea is Korean, and Vietnamese is traditionally spoken in Vietnam. The citizens of the Philippines speak the country's national language of Tagalog with many of the islands possessing their own dialect. As Li and Suen (2013) postulated, the Asian countries have their own linguistic practices, which may include a national language, spoken by most citizens, and dialects, which are regional sublanguages.

History of Asian Migrants in the United States

Asian migrants have been relocating to the United States for centuries, but for a long time they were largely invisible as a unique segment of the U.S. population. In the 1860s, approximately 20,000 Chinese workers were instrumental in the Transcontinental

Railroad project (Transcontinental Railroad, 2002). The railroad project linked the western spur of the Central Pacific railroad across treacherous terrain. The laborers were exposed to dangerous elements and weather to access the sites. The most notable success of this project was when “the railroad reached an elevation of 8,236 ft., which for many years was the highest point accessible by rail anywhere in the United States” (Transcontinental Railroad, 2002, p. 101). Likewise, Asian Indians, Japanese, and Chinese immigrants labored in lumber camps in the West during the mid-to-late- 19th century. The California gold rush in 1849 also attracted Asian pioneers hoping to take advantage of the opportunities brought on by the discovery of gold (Hamilton, 1932). The chance to make money from the gold rush attracted the Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian immigrants to come to the West Coast of the United States. Moreover, Koreans, Japanese, Filipinos, and Chinese worked in the agricultural industries in Hawaii and California, harvesting bell peppers, lettuce, celery, artichoke, and asparagus crops in the 1950s.

While the Asian immigrant population has been a notable influence for over a century in the economic and industrial development of the United States, during much of the 20th century, migrant Asian groups were not given the opportunity to identify their specific ethnicity. When completing the U.S. census, the response available for Asian groups to select was “other.” In 1990, the “write in” area was introduced on U.S. Census forms, and Asian people were able to classify their own ethnic identification, and in 2000, the U.S. Census survey included multiple Asian ethnicities as options, such as Asian Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, etc. The 2010 United

States Census revealed that the Asian population grew faster than any other race group in the United States between 2000 and 2010 (U.S. Census, 2010), experiencing a forty-three percent increase. Smith (2011) explained that one of the many reasons that Asians come to the United States is for better job opportunities. The opportunity for better employment follows the trend that commenced in the 1800s with the first great wave of Asian immigration. Currently persons who identify themselves as Asian can be found across the U.S. with the majority living primarily in the Western part of the United States, and an additional 22 percent living in the South, 20 percent in the Northeast, and 12 percent in the Midwest (U.S. Census, 2010).

Asian Family Values

The characteristic of a traditional Asian family is hierarchical in structure, in which males and older kin possess a higher status (Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2013). From a gender perspective, males are often more highly valued and couples historically prefer having male children to carry on the family name. Consequently, males historically have the responsibility to provide for the family, while the role of females in a traditional Asian family is to be passive and subservient to the male, and to perform household chores (Fong, 1994). The collectivism belief, the dismissal of one's goals to the goals of a larger organization or group, is prominent in the Asian culture (Fong, 1994; McCarthy, 2005). Children learn at a very young age that family is the central and primary unit. Additionally, the behaviors of each family member are a reflection of the entire family.

A strong Asian cultural belief is for individuals to avoid public display of their emotions. Failure to comply with this belief can be shameful to the family. Therefore,

Asian children are taught to behave appropriately with discretion in public and to maintain respect at all times, saving the family face by controlling “deviant” behaviors (Han, Operario, & Choi, 2011; Liu, Li, Lu, Liu, & Zhang, 2010). Circumvention of embarrassment and shame to the family is a constant objective to preserve the family’s dignity. Asian individuals guard their behaviors in order to continue to protect the family name and to avoid dishonoring their elders (Fong, 1994).

Much of the regard toward aging in the Asian culture is rooted fundamentally in the value of respecting their elders (Nichols, 2013). The younger members of the family have the obligation to respect and show reverence towards the elders in the community or anyone in authoritative figure (Nichols, 2013), while exhibiting the opposite behavior can bring shame to their ancestors.

These strong values may not always translate well to U.S. mainstream culture and may cause struggles for Asian people adjusting to the U.S. culture, or attempting to manage conflict between traditional Asian culture and social mores and values consistent with mainstream U.S. culture. Many Asian parents’ expectations of their children include filial piety (such as, unconditional obedience to parents) and continued focus on family priorities over their own personal interests. These are some of the examples of values conflicts between traditional Asian culture and dominant U.S. culture that may arise within a migrant Asian family (Park, Kim, Chiang, & Ju, 2010). For acculturating children, traditional Asian beliefs may differ from their need for autonomy and to fit in with peer groups and they may struggle as they attempt to honor Asian traditions to satisfy their elders, while acculturating within mainstream culture of the U.S. (Han,

Operario, & Choi, 2011). Some individuals will suppress thoughts, emotions or personal preferences to avoid hurting family member's feelings or to avoid going against the family's traditional practices (Han et al., 2011). Additional challenges can occur when acculturating individuals experience negative psychological or emotional consequences as a result of "valuing harmony over contestation" (Jenco, 2013, p. 237).

Acculturation

As a result of immigration, the United States has become a plural society. Pluralism describes the circumstance of multiple cultural values or systems dwelling in the same political space (Merry, 2012). Plural societies possess varying traditional beliefs, and often exhibit various ways in which they interact socially. Often times, migrant individuals find themselves negotiating their roles in the dominant country in order to better adapt and move between their traditional cultural values and those of mainstream U.S. culture. Reportedly, individuals who are able to connect with both cultural groups have a better experience in managing the adjustment process (Berry, 2011). As previously mentioned, foreign-born individuals account for about 13% of the entire population of the United States and the act of migration from one country to another is a stressful experience (Xu & Chi, 2013). An estimated 29% of Asian individuals living in the U.S. have experienced the process of migration during their lifetimes. This experience of migration to another host country involves the process of acculturation to the new country's norms and values. Acculturation is defined as this adjustment that occurs as a result of contact between individuals and groups from contrasting cultural backgrounds (Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). The process of

acculturation is different for each person because when an individual arrives in the U.S. from his or her host country, he or she brings along diverging cultural expectations, standards, and practices that influence and mold that individual's experience of acculturating to the host country.

Berry's (1997) work investigating acculturation includes the examination of cultural influences in the development and display of behaviors as individuals migrate cross-culturally. Berry was also particularly interested in understanding what happens psychologically to individuals as they endeavor to inhabit a new culture. Berry (1997) found that despite individual differences in how people adjust to a new culture, all seem to follow a similar pattern of adaptation. Berry explained that while the study of acculturation continues to grow and individual differences need to be taken into account, there are common factors that contribute to the acculturation process.

Acculturation Process

Berry (1997) identified four possible responses to acculturation: (a) separation, (b) assimilation, (c) integration, and (d) marginalization. Separation occurs when the individual maintains his or her own cultural identity when migrating to a new country and rejects involvement with the host culture. For example, a Japanese immigrant may move to the U.S. but choose to primarily interact with Japanese culture, rejecting U.S. culture. He or she might choose to shop only at Asian markets, and may seek to work only within the Asian community. Assimilation is when the individual gives up his or her own cultural identity and becomes immersed into the dominant host culture, adopting the host culture language, social traditions, values, and rituals (Stoessel, Titzman, & Silbereisen,

2012). For instance, a Chinese immigrant who fully accepts the U.S. culture and disregards his or her native traditions, might cease speaking Chinese and would seek out individuals who spoke only the host culture's language. Integration is when the individual maintains his or her own cultural identity, while at the same time becoming an active participant in the culture of the host country. For example, a Filipino immigrant participating in the host country's customs and celebrating U.S. holidays such as the 4th of July and Thanksgiving, and at the same time maintaining the Filipino tradition of All Saints Day on November 1st where they remember the dead and celebrating the Christmas holiday by attending a worship service at midnight, therefore greeting Christmas. Marginalization occurs when the individual does not identify with either his or her own culture or the host culture. For instance, following immigration, a Russian immigrant does not connect with the host country or maintain his or her native country's practices and customs. Individuals experiencing marginalization may tend to isolate from the general public, exhibiting little to no interest in engaging with the host culture or maintaining native practices. The identification of an individual's acculturation mode can assist counselors in recognizing specific factors that the client may be experiencing as he or she transitions from the culture of origin to the host culture. It is important to note that migrating individuals will experience the acculturation process differently from one another and each of these possibilities presents unique psychological and emotional challenges.

Biculturalism. Miller et al. (2013) cited studies showing individuals who use a bicultural strategy (the adaptation of the original culture and the second or host culture),

such as speaking both the language of their heritage and the dominant culture's language; reading online articles, magazine, or newspapers that are printed in both languages, and maintaining his or her friendships with individuals from the originating country and making new friends in the dominant country, tend to have better mental health than those who use other acculturation strategies. This strategy is similar to what Berry (1997) described as integration. Individuals adapting to bicultural schemas function in their cultural origin, and adapt and integrate into the host country's traditions and norms. By broadening their worldview, these individuals tend to experience a sense of belonging in their new environment more quickly than other acculturating individuals (Chen, Benet-Martinez, Wu, Lam, & bond, 2013). Managing two cultural identities can be challenging however because it requires managing the language barrier as well as having to make decisions to continue to operate in their native beliefs or assimilating or integrating to the host domain (Chen et al., 2013). Inevitably, contradictions between both sets of cultures may arise, and managing those contradictions can be overwhelming or confusing to the individual (Berry 1987; Chen et al., 2013; Gupta et al., 2013; Junhyoung, Wonseok, Sooyeon, & Himanshi, 2012; Park, Kim, Chiang, & Ju, 2010).

Chen et al. (2013) conducted five studies applying the concept of naïve dialecticism. Naïve dialecticism represents the set of East Asian's lay beliefs founded by lenience for contradiction, meaning that there is flexibility in one's varying beliefs and can be accepted as an alternative concept providing different perspective. Chen et al. (2013) examined the concept of naïve dialecticism and the relationship to the psychological wellbeing across various acculturating groups. A questionnaire measuring

the dialectical self (one of the different ways an individual understands and experiences himself or herself), bicultural identity (the presence of two different cultures in the same country) integration, and overall wellbeing was administered to two groups of Chinese individuals, 213 Hong Kong Chinese and 239 Mainland Chinese. The researchers extended the study to include 173 Hong Kong Chinese, 67 Mainland China, and 153 Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong. The five studies combined showed that psychological adjustment was positively related to bicultural identity integration. This work supported Miller et al.'s (2012) argument that individuals who use the biculturalism strategy, or integration described by Berry (1987) are better adjusted psychologically compared to those who acculturate in other ways.

Asian American Acculturation. Within the Asian and Asian American population, acculturation has been related to a variety of behavioral, attitudinal, and psychological variables, such as family conflicts, relationships, mental health symptoms, levels of perceived prejudice, and emotional experiences (Fong, 1994; Han et al., 2011; Jenco, 2013). An individual's perception about integration, the person's choice between the native culture and the mainstream culture, as well as whether immigrants display native cultural practices in their new environment (Lu, Samaratunge, & Hartel, 2013), is critical for understanding the unique experiences of each individual.

Several behavioral health issues, such as the development of depression (Gupta et al., 2013), anxiety, and sense of self-discrepancy or one's negative self-belief (Levinson & Rodebaugh, 2013), have been associated with acculturation or with the process in which individuals adjust to the host country's new culture. Many of the Asian

immigrants in the United States have had to navigate through the new culture by learning a new language, comprehending different norms and values, searching for new employment, and acquiring a new set of survival skills. However, it is important to note that many Asian people, such as those who are refugees, who may have left their home countries unwillingly, may still have a strong connection to their native culture and thus may experience difficulty in developing positive attitudes toward the American culture. Many Asian American parents continue to value their cultures of origin, maintaining their beliefs grounded in Confucian ethics that revolve around the strong “family connectedness, personal sacrifice for important others, self-perfection through education, and hardworking” (Chao, 1995; Chao & Tseng 2002; Yee et al., 2007).

Miller et al. (2013) tested a domain-specific acculturation strategy hypothesis, to examine whether Asian Americans used the same or different acculturation strategies across behavioral and values domains. Domain-specific acculturation includes: (a) behavioral domains that include the language and communication methods (the individual’s preference to read, write, or speak); (b) social interactions (understanding social norms, protocol, family, and peer relationships); (c) daily living habits (i.e. preferences for food, entertainment, recreational activities); (d) values (including the belief systems, worldviews, and political philosophies). The researchers’ goal was to learn if Asian Americans evidenced Berry’s (1997) acculturation responses of assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. The study showed that foreign-born individuals, as compared to those individuals that were born in the U.S., were overrepresented in the bicultural-behavioral (the practice of integrating both culture in

one's day to day) cluster and in separation (the practice in which the individual maintains his or her originating cultural identity and rejects the host culture) cluster, and underrepresented in the assimilated-behavioral cluster (in which the individual gives up the originating culture and immerses himself or herself to the dominant culture). The results of the study indicated that individuals in the separated-behavioral cluster reported significantly higher levels of acculturative stress than those in the assimilated-behavioral and marginalized-behavioral clusters, meaning people who reject the host culture experience higher levels of stress than those who adapt to the host culture. The study concluded that 67% to 72% of all participants from three independent samples used different acculturation strategies for behavioral domain, and utilized other strategies for values domain. The authors noted that approximately one third of all participants did not use the same acculturation strategies.

The authors explained that a probable justification of why some individual's use the same acculturation strategies and others do not might be due to bicultural identity integration (Miller et al., 2013). Bicultural identity integration is the individual's interpretation of whether the native culture intersects or not with the host culture (Miller et al., 2013). Miller et al. (2013) established that individuals who are able to integrate their originating culture to the new culture experience less problematic transition, and are able to apply varying acculturating strategies, such as socialization with members of the community, or learning the host country's native language for ease of communication, and engagement in religious or spiritual activities. On the contrary, individuals who are less able to integrate their own culture with the new/host culture will likely not utilize the

same acculturation strategies, instead relying on family support, the use of one's native country's language, and ethnic affiliation (Miller et al., 2013).

Acculturative Stress. Differing challenges, such as the individual's inability to conform to the social norms due to value differences between the originating and host culture, difficulties with understanding and learning the mainstream culture's language, or a lack of self-efficacy (Hsu, Woody, Lee, Peng, Zhou, & Ryder, 2012) can contribute to acculturative stress. Moreover, maintaining exclusively native cultural norms and practices, such as the use of only one's native language and social supports can hinder individuals from fully immersing themselves in their new environment.

Yu et al. (2014) shared the negative health consequences of international students experiencing acculturation stress after their transition to a new environment in China. The researchers used 567 participants who came from 94 different countries to study in China. Through the study, the researchers "found three risk and protective factors of acculturative stress: lack of preparedness for studying abroad, being married, and having a religion" (Yu et al., 2014, p. 6). Preparedness for adjustment was believed to be a long-standing contributor to acculturative stress according to the researchers. Being unmarried presented an easier methodology in the adjusting process because the individual is only focused on himself or herself, without a spouse or children to successfully integrate into the new culture. Individuals with specific religious practices, such as Hinduism and Islamic beliefs, may encounter difficulties finding friends or partners, and even finding a place to worship, which could also contribute to stress (Yu et al., 2014). Of note, the authors' findings regarding religion as a contributing factor to acculturative stress is not

in line with other studies that have connected religious practices. Other research has found that religion serves as a valuable coping mechanism contributing to a positive acculturation process and marital satisfaction (Baek Choi & Thomas, 2009, Kallampally et al., 2008; Kimberly, Skye, & Hymie, 2008). It is plausible that the subjects in the Yu et al. study were unique and possibly experienced stress due to difficulties finding a place of worship or finding other individuals who share similar religious traditions.

Challenges related to acculturation can frequently activate feelings of uneasiness, insecurity, and loss (Yakunina, 2013). Meifen, Pei-Chun, Yi, Chu-Lien Chao, and Shu-Ping (2012) provided an example of lower English language proficiency being significantly associated with psychological distress and the consequent stress with 143 East Asian international students studying on US college campuses. Inability to speak the language can facilitate discomfort communicating comfortably and being understood by others. The individual may experience anxiety as he or she begins to develop their proficiency of the English language. The individuals may experience physical symptomology, such as sweating or stuttering, due to his or her worries of not being able to pronounce the words correctly and/or to be able to understand the slang terminologies being used in the conversation. Similarly, the individual may become withdrawn from others to avoid uncomfortable interactions.

Individuals who may be migrating from another continent to the U.S. would be well-served by recognizing these triggers early on so that they are able to manage the symptoms using effective coping strategies. Engaging in meaningful activities such as volunteer work, club activities as a way to develop friendships, or being involved in his

or her hobbies are examples of healthy coping mechanisms that can assist migrant individuals in reducing the impact of acculturative stressors (Junhyoung, Wonseok, Sooyeon, & Himanshu, 2012). Likewise, holding strong belief systems such as those associated with religion, political views, or social support assists immigrants in minimizing the effects of acculturative stressors (Kimberly et al., 2008).

Several researchers have linked acculturation stress to psychological distress (Gupta, Leong, & Valentine, 2013; Torress, Dirscoll, & Voell, 2012; Wie, Liao, Heppner, Chao, & Ku, 2012). Mui and Suk-Young Kang (2006) studied 407 older Asian immigrants to investigate the relationship between acculturation stress and depression. The researchers found that 40 percent of the sample population was depressed, demonstrating higher depression rates than those found in populations from other studies of older Americans or older Asians in the United States and Asia. Because acculturation is a multidimensional process, older Asian immigrants may be affected in a multitude of ways. Mui and Suk-Young Kang identified some of the contributing stress factors, such as income, education, and English proficiency (2006). The depression in the older Asian immigrants was also attributed to migration stress, adaptation difficulties, poverty, illness, and diminishing family support (Choi & Thomas, 2008; Mui & Suk-Young Kang, 2006). This study is important because it illustrates the development of acculturative stress among the older population, which includes individuals who are also managing end of life concerns. Clearly the adjustment course for one individual can be different from that of another; however, the propensity to experience acculturative stress has been

proven to be forthcoming, as evidenced by the 40 percent sampling reporting depression in Mui and Suk-Young Kan's study (2006).

Another study by Thomas and Choi (2006) examined acculturative stress and its relationship to social support among Korean and Indian immigrant adolescents. The researchers collected data from 165 Korean and Indian adolescents using the Acculturation Scale for Asian American Adolescents and the Social Support Scale. The findings showed that social support, such as receiving emotional support from friends and families, attending religious activities, and engaging in cultural festivities, lowered the level of acculturative stress for the participants. The study also revealed that support from parents was the most important predictive factor in influencing the level of acculturative stressors. However, Thomas and Choi (2006) found significant differences in acculturative stress between the Korean adolescents and the Indian adolescents. The Korean adolescents indicated experiencing higher stress than the Indian adolescents, as demonstrated in the following statements: "I sometimes feel that I don't really belong anywhere"; "At school and other places outside my home, I am sometimes overlooked because of appearance"; "I often feel that I am different"; "Peers have made fun of me for my Korean/Indian characteristics (appearance, language, etc.), which in turn makes it hard for me to fit in with others." The participants in the study acknowledged that acculturative stress was managed better by receiving social support from parents and organization activities. The stronger the support received from the adolescents' parents, the easier they were able to cope with the acculturative stressors. Parents delivered support by way of communicating with the adolescents and providing acknowledgments

of the challenges they were facing. Organization activities were also characterized as a method to reduce acculturative stressors by way of creating an innocuous setting where adolescents are able to congregate with others who may be living through similar experiences or by providing an emotional and social support for the adolescents.

Acculturation Stress for Married Couples. Just as acculturative stressors affect the individual's psychological and emotional states, these stressors can also have an effect on married couples and their relationships. Although families provide important sources of social support during the immigration process, marriages are definitely impacted by the acculturation of one or both partners (Choi & Thomas, 2008; Kisselev, Brown, & Brown, 2010; Mui & Suk-Young Kang, 2006). For example, the pressure of immigration and the associated acculturative stress can lead to change in the dynamic of a relationship between spouses. Changes such as the variance in spiritual and religious practices and traditions among couples can lead to marital discord (Kisselev et al., 2010). Additionally, difficulties with economic challenges can lead to alteration in the couple's relationship (Park & Park, 2013), particularly if both members of the couple are required to work, or perhaps one member of the couple may be required to forego his or her career in order to meet the demands of children.

Kisselev, Brown, and Brown (2010) conducted a study with 50 Russian-speaking married couples, currently living in the United States, to investigate the influence of language acculturation on the marital relationship. The researchers concluded that spouses experienced less satisfaction in their marriages when there was a difference in the proficiency that each spouse had in acculturating to the English language. For

example if the husband had less competence than his wife, this could lead to discord between them when navigating their community or social roles. The study results showed a higher marital satisfaction among couples that acculturated with the same rate of language competency, while maintaining their traditional gender roles. The study also presented findings of the impact on marital satisfaction when the husband's rate of language proficiency affected his ability to secure employment (Kisselev et al., 2010). The authors further discussed how a low proficiency in acculturating in the English language can result in reduced opportunities and access to employment, as well as additional distress when navigating through the health system, educational system, and other social services in the country.

Mixed Marriages

Traditional Roles in Marriage in the American Culture

The term *marriage* was derived from the French *marier* (to join) and the French suffix *-age* (denoting a condition or a state of being) (Ryan, 2009). This study focused specifically on individuals who were in heterosexual marriages. Use of the term traditional marriage is used to denote heterosexual unions, but is in no way intended to diminish the existence of same sex marriages or the fact that individuals in same sex marriages also experience unique acculturation challenges. While acculturation concerns with same sex marriages is also of concern, same sex marriages encounter additional stressors related to sexual orientation, state and local politics, and social norms in the United States that heterosexual couples do not experience. The uniqueness of stressors

related to same-sex marriages was beyond the scope of this study and would require additional research.

Well into the 20th century, a traditional marriage arrangement was with the husband operating as the head of the family while the wife assumed the responsibility for domestic and child-care services. The marriage contract was customarily understood as when a husband and wife married, they become one identity, that of the husband (Weitzman, 1974). As society evolved and the U.S. became more and more diverse, traditional marital roles and responsibilities changed. The current marriage arrangement explores alternative approaches to creating equality in the relationship. This is to ensure that each party is not discriminated against and is leveraged for their individual talents and contributions. As America ventured into the twentieth century, the current model envisioned a marriage partnership where individuals were able to value their own self-identity and express themselves uniquely within the relationship (Sharma & Chaudhary, 2012). Throughout today's marriages in the United States, there is an evident shift in the spectrum of gender roles (Deutsch, Kokot, & Binder, 2007). Today's marriages tend to be of an egalitarian type, which means both genders have equally absorbed work in which the household tasks and childcare are shared equally (Altrocchi & Crosby, 1989). In these marriages, the couple establishes shared their responsibilities related to financial, domestic, and family (children) responsibilities.

It is also common to see married women in the U.S. acting as the breadwinner of the household. While this may not be the couple's expected turnout, challenging economic as well as individual preferences may dictate this to be necessary. Female

partners operating as the primary breadwinners in traditional heterosexual marriages are becoming accepted more frequently in U.S. families than a few decades ago. Likewise, men may be seen filling the domestic roles in the family. Women's rights awareness has played a factor in increased expectations of gender equality and decision-making in marriage (Altrocchi & Crosby, 1989).

Egalitarian type marriages operate under the notion that both spouses will share equal responsibility in domestic tasks and child rearing, and that women have the right to work outside of the home. According to Altrocchi and Crosby (1989), egalitarianism within marriages results in increased happiness, personal fulfillment, companionship, intimacy, sexual excitement, and sexual satisfaction. Haas (1980) found that couples were willing to engage in a nontraditional partnership in their marriage by sharing household responsibilities and to allow the women to gain the opportunity to be gainfully employed. In Haas' study the couples who practiced egalitarian marriage practices found benefits that were not perceived in a traditional marriage. According to the researcher, over a third of the research participants were willing to try the egalitarian approach within the marriage because they felt that their parents were constrained by the traditional familial display of labor where the women were responsible for the domestic duties while the men took the responsibility to work outside of the home (Haas, 1980). Moreover, some of the research participants who have been previously married reported that conflicts over gender role expectations had been a major factor in their divorces. The couples in the study shared the benefits in role sharing is that each partner is released from the confined traditional family roles. In another study, Deutsch, Kokot, and Binder

(2007) researched 236 women who were seniors in college, to assess their plans for engaging in egalitarian marriages. The researchers demonstrated that young educated women intended to establish egalitarian unions with emphasis on work and childcare perceived as equally important to earning wages. Study results such as these suggest that many marriages in the U.S. currently assume nontraditional gender roles and egalitarian expectations

While this study was primarily focused on heterosexual marriages, attitudes toward same sex marriage in the United States also illustrate changes in perceptions of marriage in the U.S. over the last few decades. Baunach (2012) reported that opposition to same sex marriage in 1998 was much higher, and by 2010 opposition to same sex marriage decreased due to more broad-based support. Additionally, in June 2015 the United States Supreme Court ruled that state-level bans on same-sex marriage are unconstitutional, serving as another indicator of the cultural shift towards the acceptance of nontraditional marriages.

Marriage in the Asian Culture

Each Asian culture possesses distinctive cultural traditions and customs. It would be amiss to group all Asian culture together. Throughout Asia, marriage behavior and family expectations are different and changing. Asia's subregions each possess distinct traditional family structures. In many Asian communities, traditionally, women leave their parents at the time of marriage and proceed to move in with their husbands. Less cohabitation before marriage exists in most Asian cultures than in other countries such as the U.S. and Scandinavia (Daatland, 2007) and childbearing outside of the marriage is

seen even less frequently in countries such as Japan, China, and India (Kavitha, 2013; Raymo, 1998; Yu & Ocker, 2013). Because most Asian cultures strongly operate from male dominated traditions (Min, 2001; Yelsma & Athappilly, 1988), women often have little independence within the family. Additionally, in many families the youngest daughter and her husband are likely expected to stay with his or her elderly parents to look after them. In some parts of Asia, the bride's family pays a dowry to the husband's family, which can place a burden on the wife's family and contributes to the preference of having male children. Of particular note in Asian cultures is that marriage is viewed as infinite; therefore, divorce is not traditionally accepted (Yelsa & Athappilly, 1988).

Some more modern Asian cultural views around marriage have developed over time, with both men and women entering marriage at a later age. Since the early 1990s, an increased number of Asian women, like nonAsian women in the United States, are found more often to secure outside employment. However, unlike their U.S. counterparts, many Asian women tend to be primarily responsible for domestic duties despite the economic and social modernization. In most Asian cultures, men continue to serve as the main breadwinner for the family.

History of Mixed Marriages

Historically, many citizens in the U.S once shunned the idea of interracial marriages and it was once known to be a taboo practice. These ideas have significantly changed since the 1800s. The notion of a couple from different racial backgrounds uniting is now becoming more acceptable in today's society. Fryer (2007) recounted that about one percent of Caucasian marriages, 5% of African American marriages, and

fourteen percent of Asian marriages are represented in the interracial marriage make-up in the U.S. The U.S. Census Bureau declared that interracial heterosexual marital households grew by 28% over the decade, from 7% in 2000 to 10% in 2010. Asian population marrying outside of their race in the United States is prominent with approximately 4.8% of Asian people who immigrate to the U.S. marrying non-Asians. *Marrying out*, or marrying outside of their race, presents a thought-provoking concept as the couple navigates through the union of two or more cultures.

Cross-Cultural Couples

Kim and Leavitt (2012) defined intermarriage as marriage between individuals of different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Intermarriage is a concept that continues to grow in the United States, and therefore requires special consideration. The focus of this review is directed towards how cross-cultural couples navigate through their marriage and how acculturation plays a role in their relationship. Intermarriages intersect with many layers of cross-cultural practices, such as values, religion, and languages. Individuals who marry someone from a culturally diverse background are disposed to potential challenges in navigating through the integration process.

According to Hwang, Saenz, and Aguirre (1997), there is little research available that examines Asian intermarriages. These unions appear to be represented inadequately in the literature due to this limited number of studies. Focusing on recent interracial marriages will enable researchers to better understand these marriages as well as the role of acculturation of couples within them. Hwang et al. (1997) hypothesized that better acculturated and structurally assimilated Asians are more likely to intermarry than those

who are less acculturated and assimilated. An additional hypothesis of Hwang et al. is that intermarriage between Asians and individuals outside of their ethnic group will be more prevalent in areas where group differences in socioeconomic status and residence are small, rather than in areas where such differences are large. The researchers observed gender differences in their study and postulated that Asian women are more likely to engage in intermarriage while Asian men are likely to marry within their own group. The researchers attributed the Asian women's propensity to marry outside of their race due to the lack of eligible Asian men in the U.S. Furthermore, research (Hwang et al., 1997) supports that highly acculturated women tend to intermarry more frequently. It is possible that Asians with a higher degree of acculturation and/or assimilation may enhance their acceptability to marry outside of their race. According to Qian (1999) "Asian Americans were about two-thirds more likely to have completed college than Whites," which in turn provides the individuals the confidence to intermingle in the greater masses, which also increases their chances of being integrated into the mainstream (p. 582).

Complexity of Inter-Racial Unions

Mixed marriages face challenges related to social acceptance outside of the marriage. Inman, Altman, Kaduvettoor-Davidson, Carr, and Walker (2011) found that race relations, relationships between individuals of different races or ethnicities within one country, have resulted in social divisions and imposed societal stigma on some marriages. Asian parents fear that mixed marriages will not only create disparity in each of the children's cultural traditions, but can also create a distance between the

grandparents and their grandchildren (Inman et al., 2011). The Asian family members, parents and/or grandparents, who object, believe that interracial couples do not preserve their unique racial purity and identity (Lienemann & Stopp, 2013). Additionally, families may believe that the love and marriage expectations will be different between the couple. For example, in the Asian Indian marriage tradition, the elder members of the family believe that marriage should work out and never end in a divorce. The concern by the family is that the familial and cultural belief may be contradicted by marrying outside of the person's ethnicity or race. The result in *outmarrying* could generate opposing practices, and more importantly may diminish treasured cultural customs and traditions. Inman et al. (2011) cited that one of the tension predictors in mixed marriages is a difference in religious beliefs and practice. Likewise, the elder family members' desire to keep the traditional practices intact fear that the interracial couple practicing dissimilar religious beliefs, for instance, may experience marital dissatisfaction due to their differences in religious practices.

Cultural Differences

Inman et al.'s (2011) study on cultural intersection with Asian and White interracial couples indicated that different expectations for love and marriage, communication difficulties, or different methods in which they discipline their children, were greatly predisposed by each person's cultural factors, such as religious beliefs and familial values. These differences in beliefs and practices caused challenges for the couples when deciding in which culture to primarily raise the children. Additionally, family influences can create strain on the relationship if the family expectations are

unclear. For instance, does the Asian family expect for the couple to have dinner with them every Sunday night, and if so, how is that received by both partners? Are both partners in agreement over the subject of child rearing? Furthermore, the couple must be in mutual agreement over their decision about whether the child will be raised in a multilingual home. Asian cultures are known to have strong family ties. Does this notion mirror the American partner's belief? An example from Inman's et al.'s study illustrates this dynamic. In their study, one Caucasian participant shared differing views regarding privacy from those of his in-laws, explaining that it was difficult for him to fathom in-laws were aware of every detail in his household and marriage.

Language

One of the greatest challenges in intercultural relationships is the reality of shared language (Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004). Difficulties surface when one partner in the relationship struggles to communicate his or her thoughts or feelings due to a language barrier. In return, both partners may experience negative contact, such as difficulties in emotional interpretation resulting in relationship challenges, disagreement regarding the amount of time spent with each other's family, or understanding the depth of the partner's life experiences. Rosenblatt and Stewart (2004) postulated that if a couple cannot communicate fluently in a shared language, there may be problems in effectively forming common ground. The immigrant partner's word choices may be received as confusing by the American partner, and therefore may miss the meaning that's being conveyed. Additionally, the American partner may not fully comprehend the emotional consequences, such as the feeling of loneliness that the immigrant partner may be

experiencing by being away from his or her social network. Moreover, failure to understand one another can lead to power imbalances in the relationship (Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004) if the migrant partner is expected to translate his or her thoughts into the host country's language such as Japanese to English or Chinese to English. Furthermore, the migrant individual may experience challenges in articulating the content of his or her messages outside the home, when interacting in the social environment. For instance, the migrant partner may feel at a disadvantage when expressing his or her thoughts while interacting with the couple's circle of friends or when engaged in parent-teacher conferences for the children. Negotiating equal responsibilities, such as placing the responsibility to attend children's medical appointments or assigning grocery shopping to only the English speaking partner, can also create tension between the couple.

Community Acceptance

Additional trepidation may exist about whether the Asian spouse will be accepted in the couple's immediate community. For instance, in communities that are primarily Caucasian, fear of the Asian spouse can be based on the Asian person's appearance or mannerisms that may be different from most people in the couple's immediate community. When a partner experiences rejection from the community, both members of the couple may experience hurt and embarrassment. Inman et al. (2011) included one research participant's concerns about the Caucasian partner's comfort level as the only White person when they visited the local Indian temple. In the same study, research participants also shared their concerns on whether their immigrant partners will be received in their community. The study concluded that both partners, American Indian

and Caucasian, were sensitive to “negative reactions in public spaces” (Inman et al, 2011, p. 260).

Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is defined as the “individual’s overall subjective evaluation of the nature of his or her marriage, including the degree to which the person’s needs, expectations, and desires are met” (Hyun & Shin, 2009). As previously mentioned, there are many factors to consider that may influence the marital satisfaction of mixed couples. Research has found that a number of essential components play an integral part in the couple’s marital satisfaction. For example, (Negy, Hammons, Reig-Ferrer, & Carper, 2014) found that stress from family influence and/or lack of support, as well as difficulty in communication, including language barrier and cultural differences, are attributed to reduced marital satisfaction. Helms et al. (2014) conducted a study based on a data sample of 120 first-generation Mexican immigrant couples to examine the link between economic and cultural adaptation stressors and spouses’ marital negativity and satisfaction, the couple’s stressors, relationship troubles, or the frequency and severity of the couple’s arguments resulting in marital dissatisfaction. The results of the study showed a connection between associated economic and cultural stressors and their marital negativity and satisfaction. This study suggested that psychological distress, such as both spouses’ depressive symptoms, and resulting negative exchanges, such as arguing over financial matters, adversely affected their marital satisfaction.

Hyun and Shin (2009) conducted a study utilizing 640 Korean American Baptist pastors and their spouses, to understand how selected factors predicted marital

satisfaction. The selected factors were communication, expression of affection, empathy, sexual satisfaction, and enjoying doing things together. The study hypothesized that these selected factors would be significant predictors for the marital satisfaction among Korean-American Baptist pastors. The results showed that 93.6% of the pastors and 89% of their spouses reported having marital satisfaction. The researchers believed that there were a number of explanations for the high level of marital satisfaction. First, these couples may have entered into marriage with a positive outlook, which could be highly related to their perception of marital satisfaction. Secondly, those couples who have reported having low marital satisfaction may have been more likely to have viewed their marriages as dissatisfying because they believed that their marital needs were not being met. Lastly, the participants were mature adults, between 40 and 60 years old, and may have reported higher levels of marital satisfaction because the level of marital satisfaction increases during the empty-nest years as a result of couples spending more time together.

Another study was conducted to determine gender, psychological resilience, acculturation, and spirituality as predictors of Asian Indian American marital satisfaction (Kallampally, Oakes, Lyons, Greer, & Gillespie, 2007). The study was based on 109 Asian Indian Americans, Asian born, who were presently married. The sample was limited to the immigrants whose living experience in the U.S. was more than 5 years. For the purpose of this study, the researchers used only individuals who were either Hindu or Catholic in an attempt to maintain a controllable range, to reflect the dominance of Hinduism and Catholic influence in the Asian Indian society, and to leverage the researcher's ministerial competence. The results of the study supported the research

hypothesis that there is a link between spirituality and marital satisfaction. The study reported that the Asian Indian American immigrants rely on spirituality to defy marital challenges faced in the relationship. Additionally, the authors indicated that the lower divorce rate among Asian Indian immigrants is “attributable to the strong association between spirituality and marriage found among them” (Kallampally et al., 2007, p. 45). This study suggested that any factor related to enhancing psychological health of married individuals among the Asian Indian Americans should consider spirituality because of the strong association between spirituality and positive emotions (Kallampally et al., 2007). Orathinkal and Vansteenwegen (2006) also conducted a study to investigate the relationship between religiosity and marital satisfaction using 787 participants from the Flanders region of Belgium. The authors learned from their study that religiosity is tied with marital satisfaction, and added that religiosity has great influence in general life adjustments.

Literature Search Strategy

Library Databases and Key Search Terms. I utilized electronic searches to gather relevant articles for this study. The search focused on databases including *PsychINFO, SocINDEX with Full Text, PsychARTICLES, ERIC, Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition, MEDLINE, and SAGE Publications*. Keyword searches were used to gather pertinent information related to the research topic. Keywords included *Acculturation, Acculturating Groups and Individuals, Acculturative Stressors among Asians, Acculturation Strategies, Asian American, Asian Family Values, Asian Immigration, Assimilation, Caucasian and Asian American Marriages, Cross Cultural*

Couples, Cultural Differences, Interracial Marriage, Marital Satisfaction, Marital Relationships Relationship Quality, Marital Adjustment, Marriage, Mixed Marriages, and Spousal Attitudes. The search resulted with approximately 76 articles that were useful. Another search was also conducted with the U.S. Census Bureau Statistics, to attain supporting statistical data on acculturation, migrant population, and mixed marriages.

The peer-reviewed articles selected are dated from 2007 to 2014, with some exceptions where I used an original concept. The study of the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples had limited specific sources; however, with expanded word searches, I was able to collect additional information. For instance, in order to gather information about marital satisfaction, I expanded the search to include other ethnic groups, as marital satisfaction literature specific to Caucasian and Asian American were scarce. The themes of the articles used were acculturation, Asian American and immigration, and marital satisfaction.

Iterative Search

The search process in each different database was repetitive in nature. The first step taken was to determine the appropriate term to assist in the search process. In the *SocINDEX with Full Text*, for example, I searched key terms, which include acculturation, assimilation, and marital satisfaction. A similar approach was taken on *PsychINFO* and *PsychARTICLES*. In addition to the utilization of the aforementioned databases, I also ensured that all of the articles collected were peer reviewed. After the

initial few searches, studies that were greater than 10 years old were eliminated, unless they were considered influential and important to the research topic. After gathering the articles, they were reviewed for duplication and redundancy and discarded those articles.

The iterative search revealed the few articles that were specifically related to the investigation of acculturation in marital satisfaction. While my expanded search revealed many articles related to the topic of acculturation and marital satisfaction, there were limited articles reporting solely on Caucasian and Asian American couples. Even fewer discussed the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples.

Social Learning and Behavioral Theory

This study was guided by a social learning and behavioral theoretical framework, which served as a mechanism for understanding and explaining acculturation. These evidence-based theories have been integral with previous researchers investigating cultural considerations in adapting to different cultural practices and beliefs (Chavis, 2012). These theories also provided a strong foundation for understanding how individual behaviors were affected by the social context. Behavioral theory provided an understanding of learned behaviors that occur in the new environments of migrating individuals (Chavis, 2012). Social learning theory helped explain how culture shapes human behavior, and further contributed to the understanding of individuals' and families' positive or negative experiences.

Albert Bandura developed social learning theory in the 1960s (Corey, 2009). This theory draws from classical and operant conditioning and integrates these concepts with

observational learning. Social learning theory implies that learning includes direct reinforcement consisting of social elements such as observation, imitation, and modeling. Modeling has been characterized as an effective way for individuals to acquire diverse forms of learning (Sanderson, 2013). Social learning theory was chosen for this study because of its compatibility with studying the acculturation process. A large part of acculturation is the migrating individual's experience related to his or her social environment and surroundings. The individual's willingness to receive behavioral cues from customs of the host country is an important consideration in determining level of acculturation.

As social learning theory suggests, individuals learn through observing others' behaviors, and attitudes, as well as noting the outcomes of those observed behaviors (Brauer & Title, 2012). Social learning theory speaks to the individual's propensity to acquire the basic elements of the host country's culture through modeling, observation and demonstrations. This theory helps explain how the migrating individuals employ learned behavior in their marriages, as well as how acculturation occurs, and affects the couple's relationship. The premise of social learning theory is that people not only learn through their own experiences, but also by observing others' behavior and the results of their actions. Social learning theory posits that behaviors are attributed as a function of the person and predicts that behavior as a function of the environment (Harvey, Napier, Moeller, & Williams, 2010).

Bandura also discussed the element of motivation in social learning theory. In order for observational learning to be successful, the individual will have to be motivated

to imitate the behavior that has been modeled. For example, the immigrant may notice that increasing his or her proficiency in the English language may encourage easier dialogue with other individuals, he or she may be motivated to practice that behavior. Social learning theory considers both the internal (the person's own psychological make-up), and external (the person's surroundings) influences that help form their beliefs. Notably, acculturation consists of two components, attitude and behavior. Ojeda, Flores, and Navarro (2011) utilized a social cognitive model of well-being, which was derived from the social learning theory, to examine the academic and life satisfaction of 457 Mexican American college students attending a Hispanic-Serving Institution. The researchers found validity of the tested hypothesized model, which demonstrated the need for theory to consider the unique cultural and academic experiences of more favorable expectation for completing college. Additionally, the research also found that positive feelings were optimistically related to enculturation, acculturation, college self-efficacy, and both academic and life satisfaction.

John B. Watson coined the term *behaviorism*, which is the study of human behavior. Behavioral theory was also pertinent to this research study because of its methodology for explaining human behavior (Matusitz & Breen, 2011). Behavioral theory originated in 1950s and early 1960s (Corey, 2009). One of the best known behaviorists was B. F. Skinner, who believed that internal states could influence behavior just as much as external stimuli, which exemplifies the theory of learning that all behaviors are acquired through conditioning. Learning can be defined as a process culminating in relatively permanent behavioral change or potential change as a result of

experience or practice. We learn from our perception of our environment, because of our interpretation of the stimuli, which then translates to our behaviors. Behaviorists believe that learning is an internal event, however it is not recognized as learning until it is displayed by overt behavior (Corey, 2009). The behavioral learning theory is represented as a Stimulus and Response paradigm, meaning the individual's response is attributed by the factor that is taking place. Ivan Pavlov, a major theorist, developed the concepts of classical conditioning, which is an automatic type of learning activated by a stimulus and evoke a response (Corey, 2009). One of the examples of classical conditioning was when Pavlov observed the dogs deprived of food began to salivate when one of his assistants walked unto the room. Skinner later renamed this type of learning *respondent conditioning* because one is responding to an environmental antecedent. The application of behavioral theory helped explain how participants' environments influenced behavior.

Kosic, Kruglanski, Pierro, and Mannetti (2004) described immigration as one of the most significant social phenomena. Migrating from one country to another can be exciting and desirable; however, the potential for stress can be greater than an individual might imagine (Berry, 1997). Immigrants may not initially consider the entire impact of the transition process as they adjust to the host country's practices. Although each individual acclimates to a new environment differently, there are a number of common adjustments, such as language proficiency, acclimation to different conditions, or possible changes in daily routines, all of which are factors that may not be initially considered by the migrating person.

Berry's acculturation framework (1997) is grounded in research on both acculturation and ethnic relations, as conjoint factors that lead to various results as an individual integrates into a new culture. The framework assists researchers in understanding an individual's distinctive integration experience and serves as a guide for understanding how migrants behave as they attempt to re-establish themselves into a new environment, specifically, how individuals behave when they migrate to the United States.

Berry explained that there are many variables to be considered when observing how individuals adapt to their new environment. Individual factors can include but are not limited to, age, gender, education, pre-acculturation, status, migration motivation, expectations, cultural distance, and personality. It is clear that there is not a single approach that individuals can take to make an effortless transition into plural societies. As immigrants migrate into a new country, one's age and education level may influence the adjustment process. For instance, an older adult may experience difficulties in understanding the dissimilar behaviors exhibited by the mainstream culture, while a younger person might rapidly adapt to the differences in practices and behaviors in his or her new environment (Murray et al., 2014). Additionally, the migrant individual's educational level may prevent the person from securing employment, thus affecting his or her ability to provide financial support to the family. Likewise, the lack of English proficiency may prevent an immigrant from creating a social network in the U.S. due to his or her inability to communicate well with others.

The immigrant's acculturation experience can also lead to the development of psychological distress, such as depression or anxiety. Moreover, a migrating individual's acculturation process is also influenced at a group level, such as within the family and within a specific ethnic group. Some of these factors can include the individual's political affiliation, economic situation, and demographic factors. When becoming part of a new environment, immigrants are concerned about the role they will play, as well as the influence of the mainstream's beliefs and practices specific to their political association. Most importantly, the migrated individual's conceptualization of the host country's political or economic business will influence his or her decisions in navigating through the new system.

Another factor that immigrants may face is the changes in demographic characterization. For instance, as an Asian individual migrates to the U.S., predictably there is an evident change in the racial make-up of the group and potentially the socio-economic membership of the individual. Consequently the diminishing size of the native majority group is an element that acculturating individuals will have to consider. More importantly, how he or she perceives their suitability in the new environment, whether positively or negatively, plays a factor in the adjustment process.

Ataca and Berry (2002) postulated that unidimensional acculturation occurs when migrants operate from a unidimensional framework by using only a single cultural continuum: practicing in either the native culture or of that in the host country. For example, an individual who is operating from a unidimensional framework is an immigrant person who is only willing to consume foods from his or her identified ethnic

affiliation or only willing to speak the native language. Ryder, Alden, and Paulhus (2000) posited that migrating individuals are often seen relinquishing their native cultural values and attitude while adopting the host country's values and attitudes. This act of relinquishment is described by Berry as the assimilation acculturation strategy. On the contrary, a bidimensional model is when individuals adapt to their host environment while they integrate both the originating and host culture's values and attitudes. Berry (1997) argued that acculturation is least stressful through bidimensional approach. Bidimensional framework allows the immigrant to navigate the new domicile through the lens of his or her native eyes, as well as the mainstream's cultural practices. Berry postulated that the use of bidimensional approach will provide the individual the resources to more easily negotiate the transition. Both approaches depict the acculturation process that leads to adaptation to a new cultural environment for immigrants.

Understanding the migrant individual's acculturation adaptation process, whether it is through a unidimensional or a bidimensional approach, provides the researcher's explanation of the client's self-identity in his or her new environment. Unidimension or bidimension reveals patterns in which the client has received or rejected the elements of the new culture. Furthermore, social learning and behavioral theory explains the client's discernment of the environment by identifying how the individual demonstrates acculturation. These selected theories helped inform data analysis about how the migrant individual has acculturated within the dominant country's practices. The chosen theories also helped provide an explanation about the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction

among mixed Caucasian and Asian American couples. For example, some participants discussed how their relationship was affected by acculturative stressors, such as language proficiency and social support. Understanding the role and influence of these factors as well as the migrating partner's level of acculturation offered insight into how acculturative stressors intersected with the participants' levels of marital satisfaction. Moreover, the use of social learning theory, behavioral theory, and Berry's acculturation framework, further enriched the explanation of the connection between the research participants' acculturation process and behaviors they demonstrate acculturation within their marriages.

Summary

Chapter 2 reviewed literature on Asian American immigration trends, acculturation, mixed marriages, and introduced the supporting theoretical foundations of the present study. The literature search strategy was also explained in this chapter, to clarify where peer-reviewed and other primary resources were obtained. The Asian American immigration trend was also discussed, covering subtopics of the Asian population trend and the Asian family values. Additional information described increasing statistics of the Asian population in the United States. I explained causes of Asian migration to the United States, including benefits such as improving economic conditions as well as individual desires to pursue liberty and freedom. Traditional Asian family values were also described to illustrate potential differences between Asian cultures and their family structures and the mainstream U.S. values and family structures. The purpose of the illumination was to illustrate the propensity of difficulties experienced

by Asian American immigrants when adjusting to the mainstream, and particularly as they engage in cross-cultural relationships.

This chapter also reviewed research studies which examined acculturation with various ethnic groups, such as the Asian, Hispanic, and European population (Gupta et al., 2013; Kallampally et al., 2008; Kisselev et al., 2010) and the psychological impact on migrant individuals. The reader was introduced to the challenges of acculturative stressors, such as managing the migrant individual's support system and learning the English language, and how these stressors may precipitate distress such as depression, anxiety, or low self-esteem. Traditional marriage practices in Asian cultures were also reviewed to provide insight about how the dynamics of acculturation can create marital distress for the cross-cultural couple.

This chapter also discussed the literature search strategy including an explanation of the databases used. The discussion included the key term searches to illustrate the main subject topics explored to support the research. Lastly, the chapter examined the supporting theoretical foundation of social learning and behavioral theories as well as Berry's acculturation framework. Social learning and behavioral theories support the belief that migrant individuals learn from their surroundings, and may adapt their behaviors to more closely resemble those exhibited by the dominant culture. Berry's acculturation framework also helped explain differences between adjusting to a new environment using unidimensional or bidimensional strategies.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The goal in conducting this research was to provide an explanation of the role of acculturative stress in the marital satisfaction of mixed Caucasian and Asian American couples. The purpose of this study was to generate theory to help explain how acculturation influences marital satisfaction in mixed Caucasian and Asian American couples. Researching the elements of acculturative stress can improve both the adaptation process of migrant individuals into a new environment, as well as the couple's marital satisfaction. The result of this research study also supplements previous literature about intervention and protective factors to support multicultural families. This chapter will discuss the rationale of the study design as well as methods of data collection, participant selection, and my role as the researcher throughout this study. Planned methods of data analysis as well as a discussion of trustworthiness and ethical considerations will conclude this chapter.

Research Paradigm

The present study explored the influence of acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples. Qualitative research was determined to be the most appropriate research paradigm for this study due to a need to understand the phenomenon of acculturation from the perspective of the research participants. The nature of the study of acculturation involved gaining deep understanding of the experiences of both immigrant individual and the group. The process by which individuals or groups transition from one country to another

encompasses many factors, such as acclimating to the host culture's beliefs and traditions, learning a new language, or creating social support. The investigation of these concepts is best understood by studying the participants' words and actions through a qualitative lens (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Traditionally research investigating acculturation and its impression in the lives of the immigrants has been conducted primarily within the qualitative research paradigm due to the researchers' strong desires to gain full comprehension of the lives of the participants and how acculturation may affect them (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Moreover, qualitative research is generally conducted within the participant's native setting because data collection by immersion into the everyday lives of the participants provides a better perspective of the participants' world and worldview (Corbin & Strauss, 1967; Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). By entering the natural setting of the participant, the researcher is better able to ascertain participants' meanings rather than testing pre-determined variables (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Qualitative research allows enables researchers to immerse themselves within in the participants' culture and practices, and providing opportunities to understand the unique perspective of the participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Research Questions

Central Question:

What is the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples?

Subquestions:

1. How is the process of acculturation perceived by the Asian American partner and the Caucasian partner?
2. What acculturative stressors are experienced by the immigrant partner? (for example, language barrier, social support, acculturating/assimilating/or adapting to both culture's values and traditions).
3. How does the Caucasian partner feel about the acculturative stressors, such as, language barrier, social support, acculturating/assimilating/or adapting to both culture's values and traditions?
4. What experiences have both partners encountered because of misunderstanding or misinterpretation due to language barrier or cultural beliefs or traditions?
5. How do the acculturative stressors affect the marital satisfaction of the couple?

Design of the Study

I used grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to generate theory as it relates to acculturation and its influence in marital satisfaction. Grounded theory is the development of theory from data systematically obtained from social research. The process of grounded theory involves the development of theory, inductively derived from the collected data rather than testing or proving a hypothesis on existing data. The practice of grounded theory encourages researchers to stay focused on the data and answering the question of “what is really going on and how?” Likewise, the use of grounded theory facilitated the construction of theory *grounded* by the data (Charmaz, 2006). The participatory nature of the data collection within the research participants' natural setting permits researchers to immerse themselves in the lives of the participants.

By doing this, I was able to gain understanding of the participants' statements and actions through observations, interviews and collection of archival data (Charmaz, 2006).

Generating grounded theory involves analyzing the data using a comparative method. Glaser and Strauss (1967) identified the use of a comparative method in theory generation as a four part process: These processes include (a) identification of the phenomenon, object, event, or setting; (b) identification of a few local concepts, or principles, along with structural or process features of the experience or phenomenon; (c) the initial data collection informed how the balance of the data collection proceeded; and (d) initiation of the theory sampling. As the researcher engages in the solidification of theory, key questions are asked to continue to identify the next steps of the data collection based on the current data and consider modifications to mainly clarify the logic, and lastly the beginning of the theory writing. At this stage, the researcher provides an analysis of the coded data, "a series of memos, and a theory" (p. 113). Glaser and Strauss (1967) explained that the generation of theory is an evolving development in which each step in the process informs the next.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher in the data collection phase was all encompassing. I was involved from the onset of the participant recruitment process, to conducting the research interviews, observations, and data archival review, and to the data analysis component of the study. I served as the interviewer and observer/participant during the data collection period.

To address the nature of authoritative power during the data collection process, I considered and applied a number of preventative measures to reduce the risk. My goal was to select research participants who were not personally or professionally connected to me. Additionally, I aimed to create a safe and open environment for the participants, not having personal or professional knowledge of the individuals, which made that goal more realistically attained. Moreover, avoiding coercing the participants to share sensitive information assisted in balancing the power distribution between participant and me.

Patton (2002) postulated that what the researchers say and do in the research process is very much noted by the participants; additionally, the words spoken by the researcher can be taken literally by the participants and that participants are also interpreting and acting based on what's seen and heard during the interaction. Therefore, it was crucial that I explained to the participants her role and the purpose of the study to avoid misunderstandings and provided clarity about how the data will inform the study.

Anyan (2013) also suggested that it is important for researchers to discuss the academic rationale and objective of the research before the study begins, to provide explanation to the participants about how potential data will be used. In consideration of working closely with the topic of acculturation and its role in marital satisfaction, as well as working closely with the research participants, it was important for me to be cognizant of my own biases related to the topic and the individuals involved. It is duly noted that I had existing biases to the participants' adjustment process. I was reflective of my own predispositions of the participants' method in which they acclimated to their surrounding,

such as cultivating their support system, or the lack of social involvement within the immediate community, or not being able to understand the individual's challenges as they navigated through their new environment.

Closeness to the subject matter does not guarantee a bias free perspective (Patton, 2002). I, as the researcher of the present study, am an immigrant to the United States, and am also involved in an interracial relationship; consequently, extreme awareness needed to be present to ensure that I did not impose my values and opinions to the research participants (ACA, 2014; Crosbin & Strauss, 2008). While having a personal understanding of the participants' experiences, and the research questions can contribute to researcher bias, Corbin and Strauss (2008) also proposed that having similar experiences to those of the research participants does not necessarily present a disadvantage. In fact, the researcher can pull from shared experiences, as long as he or she is mindful of his or her personal biases. Corbin and Strauss argue that such communal information can be used as a "comparative case to stimulate thinking about various properties and dimensions of concepts" (2008, p. 80).

In order to obtain quality research data, the reduction of power relations was crucial to create trust between the participants and me. I encouraged disclosure and authenticity to decrease the predisposition of power differential. The hierarchical structure in a number of Asian cultures may have placed me, as having a higher level of education, as someone with power, which was an important concept for me to keep in mind during the research interface (Hairon & Dimmock, 2012). I continued to be reflexive in the process to ensure that the research process remained the focus of inquiry

and that the participants and I were jointly involved in developing the knowledge production. Moreover, it was important to communicate to the research participants that I had a strong desire to expand knowledge around acculturation due to my personal experience as an immigrant to the U.S. I recognized the notion that migrating from one country to another can be very challenging. The information obtained from this research was hoped to be useful to assist others in understanding the acculturation process and gain knowledge to manage the potential acculturative stressors associated with the move. The effort to lower power differential promoted participant authenticity, which in turn provided valuable information related to the research topic.

The fact that I migrated to the United States almost 25 years ago may have caused the research participants to display some apprehension in sharing their story because they may have felt inferior due to my higher level of education and length of time in the U.S.. I continually reminded the research participants of the content of the informed consent, to ensure that the participants were aware of my role during the investigation process, as well as their roles as the participants.

Participant Selection

Participants of this research study included married couples with one partner who identified as being Caucasian and U.S. born, and the other as Asian American, and who was an immigrant to the United States, born outside of the U.S. The participants' Asian American ethnic identification could have come from varying cultures, such as Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, or any other Asian ethnic groups. The participants were at least 18 years of age. I was open to conducting interviews in

locations in which the participants felt comfortable, such as the participants' homes, places of employment, places of worship, and other natural settings that the participants deemed as appropriate for me to observe and/or act as an observer participant. The majority of the data collection was conducted at the participant's homes, while other participants opted to have the interview at their friend's homes.

This study used purposive sampling to gain insight about the phenomenon in order to deliberately select participants who were best suited to answering the research questions (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). This sampling method allowed me to learn a great deal of information specific to acculturation and marital satisfaction of the couples. According to Patton (2002), "studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations" (p. 230).

I solicited research participant interest through emails to personal and professional contacts. Online postings were originally planned as a method to invite research participation through CESNET academic listserves and social groups, such as the Filipino-American Community of the Carolinas and Southeast Asian Coalition Facebook pages; however, I received a good number of participation interest through the emails sent to my personal and professional contacts. I also intended to solicit participation through a local organization, International House in Charlotte, NC, an organization that provides services to foreign-born individuals; however, due to the organization's restriction in participating in outside research, I was unable to pursue this avenue. Lastly, I also contacted the local Buddhist Temple in Charlotte, NC, to solicit research participation. I faced a roadblock when informed that most of the Temple's members

were non-English speakers, and therefore this solicitation method was omitted. The participant criteria was outlined in each of postings and communication, specifically stating that the research required participants to be at least 18 years of age and in a mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual relationship.

Upon receipt of a couple's interest in participating, I reviewed the potential participants' qualifications and determined whether the couple met criteria for the study. I contacted the participants via phone to discuss the research and answer questions. Once participants were identified as meeting the selection criteria, they were asked to sign a consent form that detailed the purpose of the study, amount of time required to participate, benefits and potential risks of engaging in the study, as well as who to contact to find out more about the study.

The study initially utilized 10 couples. According to Creswell (2013), Patton (2002), and Anyan (2013), qualitative studies are not focused on the numbers of participants, but rather to ensure that the research questions are purposefully and rationally answered. Likewise, Lincoln and Guba (1987) posited that in purposeful sampling, the size of the sample is established based on informational considerations. Therefore, sufficient information is reached when the state of redundancy is present (Patton, 2002). When repeated information continues to emerge from the data the sampling is exhausted (Lincoln & Guba, 1987). I proceeded with the proposed number of participants and sought saturation which was determined by redundancy in the data. If saturation was not achieved with the proposed number of participants, I planned on

recruiting 4 additional couples and continue the data collection until saturation was achieved.

Methods of Data Collection

This study employed face-to-face interviews with the participants, observations of participants in their homes and places of employment to formulate theory. In addition to these data collection methods, all participants completed a demographic questionnaire. I also kept a researcher's journal throughout the process to record my own thoughts, observations and biases as they arose.

I acted as the sole data collector. The research data collection began with face-to-face interviews conducted by me, which lasted between 45 and 90 minutes per couple. Four follow-up phone interviews with the participants, lasting between 25 to 30 minutes, were conducted when additional information was necessary. Data collection methods of face-to-face interviews, observation, and reflective journaling was utilized until saturation was reached and collection of new data no longer provided any new information on the topic under investigation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was reached. The duration of the data collection process took approximately six weeks. I used an audio-recording device to record each interview. Moreover, I utilized the pen and notepad method to take notes during the data collection process.

Interviews. Interviews are crucial components in qualitative data collection. This method allows the researcher to gather information through voice delivery as well as through a non-verbal mode of communication (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2010). This study relied heavily upon the information provided by the participants during the

interview process. The purpose of the interview was to gain better comprehension on the Asian immigrant partner's acculturation process, and its influence in the couple's marital satisfaction.

I used semi-structured questions as a guide during the interview process. All questions were open-ended questions to gain as much information as possible from the participants. Although the initial face-to-face interviews provided substantial information, follow-up interviews were conducted only with participants where additional information or clarification was needed. If the research participants were not available to perform the follow up face-to-face interview, telephone interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted in the participants' natural settings, such as their home or place of employment. The confidential interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed by me, and lasted between 45 and 90 minutes each. Specific research questions that were answered during the interviews include "How was the process of acculturation perceived by the Asian American partner and the Caucasian partner?," "What acculturative stressors were experienced by the immigrant partner?," and "How did the Caucasian partner felt about the acculturative stressors?"

Demographic Instrumentation. Each participant completed a demographic questionnaire (age, ethnicity, education, employment, etc.). The purpose of the demographic questionnaire was to ensure that research participants met the characteristics of the population necessary for this research, such as being an immigrant Asian American who was married to a Caucasian partner, to classify groups of potential participants to ensure that the samples were representative of the target population, and collecting data

from the most accurate sample population provided valid and reliable data that were fundamental to the quality of the research study. Likewise, the demographic questionnaires assisted in identifying themes and patterns of the data that would not otherwise surface during the interviews. Be sure to include here their cultural make up

Non-Participant Observation. Patton (2002) shared that direct observation is valuable as it outlines the participants' change in behaviors from formal to informal settings. Moreover, Patton adds that direct observation allows participants to observe behaviors or practices that people would otherwise be unwilling to talk about. I also gathered information through observation of participants in their natural settings, the observation locations being either the research participant's homes or places of employment. The non-participation observation method permits the researcher the opportunity to collect data by "observing the phenomena from outside the research setting" (Owen, 2014, p. 3). I used this approach as a pure observer when gathering information on cultural knowledge at the participants' locations. I observed the couple's interactions with one another, as well as within their immediate surroundings, to gather data related to the participants' non-verbal and verbal communication. Observations were used to answer research questions such as, what acculturative stressors are experienced by the immigrant partner, what experiences have both partners encountered because of misunderstanding or misinterpretation due to language barrier or cultural beliefs or traditions, and how do the acculturative stressors affect the marital satisfaction of the couple?

Reflective Journal. I used a reflective journal and field notes as another form of data collection. Slotnick and Janesick (2011) explained that reflective journaling is a critical interpretive tool. The authors added that reflective journaling can facilitate the following to, “refine the meaning and interpretation of the researcher’s role; to understand more fully the responses of participants in the study; to use the journal as an interactive tool of communication between the researcher and the participants in the study; and to practice the habit of journal writing,” in a way that qualitative researchers reflects and becomes “connoisseurs” of their own thinking patterns (Slotnick & Janesick, 2011, p. 1354). Reflective journaling added objectivity, as I was able to process my assumptions or expectations of the collected data, reactions, and biases about the research process.

Ethical Considerations

Dual Relationships. Due to the extensive nature of qualitative research, relationships will inevitably form between the researcher and participants through building rapport and trust. The intimate conversation between the researcher and participants can promote emotional connections, and qualitative researchers are ethically bound to create an exit strategy for the research participants to facilitate the dialogue of closure (Morrison, Gregory, & Thisbodeau, 2012). I initially discussed the closure process with the participants at the onset of the data collection, as well as towards the end of the data collection process to start the transition and closure of the study (Morrison et al., 2012). The first step taken in the closure process was for me to communicate with the participants that they were nearing the end of the data collection process. I asked the

participants if they had any questions to ensure understanding of the purpose of the study, and to address any uneasy feelings or confusion about the research process. The participants were also encouraged to continue to share their thoughts and feelings about the study, as additional pertinent information may be gathered at this stage of the process. Lastly, I wrote a handwritten thank you note to each couple to express her gratitude, and to recognize the participants for their contribution to the study. The participants were given my contact information for any future questions or concerns. Lastly, I secured the participants' contact information in the event that they wished to obtain the results of the study or if follow-up interviews were necessary.

Methods of Data Analysis

The goal of grounded theory is to generate theory that emerges from the data rather than attempting to support an established hypothesis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This study used comparative methods described in grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). The foundation of comparative method is to dissect the data into “incidents” or units, and then to code them into categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In comparative methodology, the researcher applies open coding, coding data into as many codes as possible, and analyzing the data to develop impressions of the research topic by “comparing incidents, identifying their properties, exploring their relationships to one another, and writing the theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 105). Glaser and Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated that qualitative data analyses software are typically used to conduct data analysis. Computer software tools are used to assist qualitative researchers to analyze data so that theories and relationships emerge (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

NVivo. I used NVivo software, a leading qualitative software tool. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2011) state that NVivo is multi-functional in conducting qualitative research, such as managing the data by organization and retaining chaotic information during the data collection process. The QSR International (2011) explained the functions of NVivo as software that manages all of source materials in one place. Most importantly, NVivo helped the researchers to code the sources into themes and nodes (QSR International, 2011). This functionality allowed the researchers to quickly and easily code the material (QSR International, 2011). This software offered much more functionality that makes data analysis easier for the researcher.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility. Judging the quality of research requires focusing on different aspects of the study, such as addressing the credibility, transferability, dependability, and reflexivity, (Guba, 1981) and each term will be explained below. Establishing integrity in the research process was an important criterion to consider. Integrity of the data testifies to the adequacy or the dependability of the data (Patton, 2002). Charmaz (2006) postulated that credibility increases “resonance, usefulness, and value” of the contribution (p. 183). Addressing credibility assists in demonstrating the true embodiment of the research phenomenon.

One of the approaches to ensure quality in research is to manage the subjectivity of the data collection and interpretation to achieve fairness and to represent the participants’ viewpoints justly, avoiding biased interpretation (Morrow, 2005). The author also added that ensuring that “adequate amount of evidence” is represented in the

research to ensure quality findings by including verbiage directly from the collected data as shared by the research participants (Morrow, 2005, p. 255). Patton (2002) shared that one of the challenges in qualitative research is the transformation of the data into findings. One of the strategies that were used during the formulation of the data analysis was to carefully represent the interpretation as reported by the research participants (Marshall, West, & Aitken, 2013). Member checking, which includes providing the opportunity for research participants to review the researcher's data interpretation, is an important tool to facilitate authenticity of dialogue that occurred during the interview (Carlson, 2010). To additionally support credibility of this research, the research participants were given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts to ensure there were no errors in the data and to guarantee accuracy. The participants were given five days to review the material and respond to me. None of the participants requested any transcript revisions.

Reflexivity. Smith (2006) postulated that the use of reflexivity is integral in ensuring quality in the composition of qualitative themes and write-up. Reflexivity is the process in which the researcher is fully aware of his or her own biases and subjectivity (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002; Smith, 2006). As Creswell (2013) indicated, qualitative writing is a reflection of the researcher's interpretation based on the worldview. Smith (2006) stated that qualitative researchers are strongly encouraged to use reflexivity in the writing process of a qualitative research, to mitigate bias of the information being presented. Because the analysis of the research project is largely dependent on the researcher's perspective, the use of self-reflection will assist in facilitating the impact of

the perspective being presented by the researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This plan also helped in examining my insight related to the collected data. The use of reflexivity increases the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative data (Smith, 2006).

Transferability. Transferability in qualitative research helps to safeguard that the study results are applicable to a wider population (Shento, 2004). Since the sample size is rather small, the researcher has the obligation to ensure that the qualitative research “findings and conclusion are applicable to other situations and populations” (Shento, 2004, p. 69). Thomas and Magilvy (2011) suggested that one of the strategies to warrant transferability is to “provide dense description of the population studied by providing descriptions of demographics and geographic boundaries of the study” (p. 153). In addition, I reported with sufficient detail and accuracy to concede discernments about transferability to be made by the readers. Lastly, the use of purposive sampling, as previously mentioned, permitted the study to establish a representative picture, which yielded similar results.

Dependability. The issue of dependability focuses on the need to show consistency and trustworthiness in the findings, if the research will be repeated. Shento (2004) posits that dependability in qualitative research may be reached through the utilization of overlapping methods or triangulation, such as using individual interviews, couples interviews, group interviews, or the use of a combination of interviews, observation, and document reviews. The use of multiple methods to collect data will assist in highlighting any discrepancies in the information, if applicable. Moreover, the research process should be reported in the details, enabling future researchers to duplicate

the work, if necessary (Shento, 2004). The prototype should include “the research design and its implementation, the operational detail of data gathering, and reflective appraisal of the project” (Shento, 2004, p. 71). To address dependability in this study, I reported the study processes in detail, such as the research design and implementation, the data gathering procedures, and the reflective evaluation of the project, enabling future researchers to be able to repeat the work that I conducted.

Confirmability. Another characteristic of sound qualitative research is confirmability, the ability to depict full exposure of the data upon which all interpretations are constructed (Patton, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) postulated that confirmability builds on audit trails, which includes the fieldwork notes, memos, researcher’s journal, personal notes, and reflexive journal. Comprehensive record keeping and safeguarding of research data were vital to this approach.

Ethical Procedures

I solicited approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University to begin the research project. This approval necessitated my adhering to the ethical standards of Walden University and ensured that regulations and guidelines were met. The study was also conducted in accordance to the American Psychological Association Standards (APA, 2014) and the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (ACA, 2014). Prior to the participants’ research participation, informed consent forms were distributed that outlined the purpose and procedure of the study. The participants were informed that the purpose of this present study was to examine the role of acculturation in the marital satisfaction of mixed Caucasian and Asian American

heterosexual couples. The research participants were also provided with the limits of confidentiality and addressed any foreseeable psychological risks and discomforts related to the subject matter. Moreover, the participants were provided my contact information to address any questions.

According to the ACA Code of Ethics (2014), “counselors who conduct research are responsible for their participants’ welfare throughout the research process and should take reasonable precautions to avoid causing emotional, physical, or social harm to participants” (G.1.e). I conducted the investigation in a way that the participant’s dignity and welfare was respected, such as conducting the interviews in a private setting, and providing equal treatment regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or class. The participants and my responsibilities were included in the informed consent forms, which were covered by me, and addressed any questions from the participants. The participants were advised that they had the right to withdraw from the research study at any time. Additionally, the participants were provided a list of counselors in the local area able to provide counseling services related to any distress caused by the study.

The recruitment of research participants was conducted until a total of 10 couples were achieved. No participant personal identifiers were retained or displayed at the end of the study. Each participant was assigned an identification number for all data analysis reference. The electronic data was de-identified to remove any link to the participant’s personal information. The documents and audiotape recorder used during the research process were kept in a secured and locked cabinet. I was the only person with access to the research files in the locked cabinet. The collected information, the hard copy

documents, and audio recording file are securely stored for five years, at which time the documents will be shredded and the audio recordings will be destroyed.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided an in-depth explanation of the desired research design and rationale, my role as the researcher, the methodology that was used in the study, and an explanation addressing the issues of trustworthiness. This study used qualitative research methods to answer the central question of this research investigation, “what is the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction in mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples?” Specifically, this study used grounded theory approach to develop a substantive theory based on the collected data. I took the responsibility for participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. This chapter also included a comprehensive discussion of the data to understand the influence of acculturation in marital satisfaction among the couples. Subsequently, the discussion of the collected data lead to the data analysis, which helped answer the research question. Lastly, the course of action considered to establish trustworthiness of the study was outlined in this chapter; validity, reflexivity, dependability, and confirmability were addressed. Lastly, establishing utmost accordance to Walden University, APA, and ACA’s ethical issues guidelines were discussed to ensure protection of human participants.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, grounded theory study was to investigate the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Asian and Caucasian heterosexual couples, with a main research question of “What is the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples?” and the following sub-questions:

1. How is the process of acculturation perceived by the Asian American partner and the Caucasian partner?
2. What acculturative stressors are experienced by the immigrant partner? (for example, language barrier, social support, acculturating/assimilating/or adapting to both culture’s values and traditions).
3. How does the Caucasian partner feel about the acculturative stressors, such as, language barrier, social support, acculturating/assimilating/or adapting to both culture’s values and traditions?
4. What experiences have both partners encountered because of misunderstanding or misinterpretation due to language barrier or cultural beliefs or traditions?
5. How do the acculturative stressors affect the marital satisfaction of the couple?

This chapter will review the research setting, participants’ demographics information, the data collection details, the data analysis, the evidence of trustworthiness, the results of the research, and lastly the summary of the chapter.

Setting

Walden University's Institutional Review Board approved the research proposal for this study on April 15, 2015. I began to disseminate the study solicitation email to professional and personal contacts thereafter. Interest to participate in the study commenced soon after the distribution of the email. I was able to begin mailing or hand-delivering the interview packet, containing the informed consent forms and the demographic questionnaires, and scheduled the interview appointments within the following week.

Several barriers presented themselves during the participant recruitment stage of this study. First of all, I was concerned about finding the necessary number of participants in order to gain breadth of research data. Determining a location for the interviews was also a concern; however, most participants opted to have the interview at their own home or at a neutral place where they felt comfortable. I was also concerned about being able to recruit a heterogeneous group of participants, representing broadly across the many Asian cultural backgrounds. Additional barriers were related to the types and sources of data for this study. I initially planned to utilize the following sources: interview data, observation data, archival data, a demographic questionnaire, and a researcher's journal. However, the research participants were only interested in participating in interviews and declined to participate in live observations or to provide archival data. During the interviews, I was able to take observation notes of the participants' surroundings, which served to help support interview data. A researcher's

journal was also kept throughout the study to assist me in recording my responses and reflections about the data and the research process.

Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants

The Demographic Questionnaire included questions related to (a) gender, (b) length of marriage, (c) ethnicity, (d) nationality, (e) age, (f) languages the participants speak, (g) religion, (h) education, (i) number of children, (j) employment status, and (k) total household income.

A total of 11 mixed Asian and Caucasian heterosexual married couples with one partner who identified themselves as being Caucasian and U.S. born, and the other as Asian American, who is an immigrant to the United States (born outside of the US), participated in the study. The immigrant partners who participated in this study were all females with a U.S. born Caucasian male partner. Additionally, all Asian participants but one were from the Philippines. All participants were at least 18 years of age and had varying levels of conversational abilities in the English language. The research participant recruitment took place electronically via my personal and professional contacts, email recruitment, and Facebook announcements. All research participants individually received a consent form explaining the study and his or her rights as a participant. Each participant also received a copy of the demographic questionnaire form. All research participants reviewed and signed his or her individual consent form and demographic questionnaire.

The research participants' ages ranged from 21 years old to 67 years old. The length of marriage among the couple's was from 2 months to 42 years. The number of

children per couple also varied from 0 to 4 children. The couples reported an education level ranging from High School Degrees to Masters' Degrees. The couples' individual household incomes represented a wide-ranging spectrum from \$10,000 to over \$100,000 annually. Lastly, the employment status for each individual varied from not employed to full-time employment. Given the outlined samples, the research represents a wide scope of the larger community.

Participant Profiles

Participant Couple 1:

This couple was comprised of a female spouse from the Philippines who was 25 years old, and a male spouse born in the United States who was 45 years old. They had been married for 2 months and had no children together. The male partner had two older children of his own, while the female partner had one small child in the Philippines. The couple was initially introduced by the female partner's relative who was already living in the U.S. The couple communicated online, via email and instant messaging, and shortly thereafter the Caucasian partner travelled to the Philippines to meet the female partner. The couple dated for a short period of time before getting married in the Philippines. After their wedding day, the couple was able to begin the immigration paperwork for the female partner to come to the U.S., and she had been in the U.S. for two months at the time of this research interview. The couple lives in Eastern North Carolina.

The couple reported their relationship to be challenging due to the language barrier between them. The American partner reported he has had to teach his spouse "what seems to be basic" information, such as how to use the thermostat in the home to

adjust the temperature. The Asian partner also described her experience with husband as perplexing due to her inability to fully express her thoughts. However, the couple described their marriage as “exciting and fun” as they navigate through their experiences together. This couple was one of the most eager of the 11 to begin the interview process, and contacted me the same day they were informed about the study by a friend who received a recruitment email from me. The U.S. born partner shared some of the challenges in their relationship:

It has been challenging for me because I know she is used to warm weather and I'm used to cold weather. She has done good [sic]. That has been the biggest challenge right there. But as far as going to the market, I can let her loose in the market and she knows that she is going to get. She can get whatever she wants and I just pay for it. So far it has gone a lot smoother than I thought. Another big challenge right now is her English. We are working on that. We are working on her English some more and I will help her with that because I would never know when I have to go to work and that bothers me because I want her to be safe [sic]. Thank god she has family here that she can talk to. I would like for her to have American friends that she can talk over [sic]. Some of my friends come over. I think they finally understand what she is trying to say but the language is hard. While the wife shared the following:

You know Filipino are sometimes are shy and I just stay quiet and not speak what's really in my mind. I am not very vocal. Sometimes I have to think what I have to say. Like, it is literally translated differently. I don't know how to say it.

It's frustrating sometimes. I'm happy. I am very thankful that my husband accepted me even though I already has [sic] a son, because the Filipinos will look at that as I am damaged. [I am] thankful that he is very patient with me with that language and his willingness to wait for me to get adjusted [sic].

Despite the couple's communication challenges, the couple has maintained their enthusiasm, which could partially be due to their still experiencing the honeymoon phase of their marriage. They reported that they continue to work hard in understanding each other to further strengthen their relationship.

Participant Couple 2:

This couple was represented by a female spouse from the Philippines who was 35 years old, and a male spouse born in the United States who was 59 years of age. They had been married for seven years and had a nine-month old infant, and the U.S. born partner had older children from a previous relationship. The American partner shared that he had been recently divorced when he was introduced to his current spouse by friends of her family. The couple began communicating via mail for four years, and as their personal technology was updated, the couple was able to utilize a computer with camera to communicate face-to-face. The couple eventually married in the Philippines, at which time they began the immigration process for the wife to move to the U.S. The couple lives in Eastern North Carolina. They enthusiastically shared their interest to participate in the study when a friend informed them about this research study. The couple described their relationship as "turbulent" at times due to their differing points of view about money management, children rearing, and the Asian-born spouse's language

development. The U.S. partner said he would like to see her hone her ability to speak the English language and provided examples of their challenges, such as the language barrier and financial stressors in the relationship:

It has been a learning experience now. I joke with her because she likes to spend money. I tell her “when you find that money tree in the backyard....” She goes through money quick now [sic]. I’m trying to teach her. I mean I handle pretty much all of the household bills. The problem is something is going to happen to me one day and she is not going to have a clue. I always tell her you are not going to believe all of the bills that comes through the house every month [sic]. She ain’t got a clue [sic]. Language barrier, little things that I don’t understand. I have to figure out what she is talking about. It’s fine when I finally figure out what she is asking. When she makes a phone call to the Philippines or her family here I don’t understand. I rely a lot on body language and stuff like that. That’s how I learned a lot because I could tell her body language because she didn’t understand. I could tell when she started freezing up and getting nervous because she didn’t understand.

The female partner shared the following:

There is a negative and positive side of being straightforward. Filipinos have the tendencies to hold everything because it is how we are used to [sic]. This creates an issue for us sometimes. But somehow I am learning how to better communicate with him. Sometimes I have a hard time expressing myself and doesn’t know how to say it [sic]. I am thankful to have friends that I can talk to

that are able to translate for me. At first he didn't like that I was speaking Tagalog all the time. But later on he was able to accept the fact that I feel more comfortable in Tagalog.

The couple stated they were committed to working together to help each other navigate through differences in money management, children rearing, and the language barrier.

Participant Couple 3:

Participant Couple 3 included a female spouse from the Philippines who was 48 years old, and a male spouse born in the United States who was 56 years old. They had been married for 14 years and had no children. The American partner initially met the Asian partner "through a magazine" at which time they started communicating via writing and telephone. They dated for a short period of time and the American partner visited the Asian partner in the Philippines and reportedly "fell in love with her." Following their short courtship, the couple married in the Philippines and initiated the immigration process for the Asian partner to migrate to the United States. The couple has been living in North Carolina for the past 14 years. The couple expressed their interest to participate in the study after learning from a friend who initially received the email outlining the specifics of the study. The couple described their marriage to be "working" for the two of them.

They laughed together as they shared the following:

It was rough [at the beginning of the marriage]. She didn't know a lot of English.

It has gotten better over the years. The language barrier. It was bad. We fussed a

lot. She doesn't listen to me, I don't listen to her. Eating fish heads [sic]. I still don't like that. Fish on everything. Her number is fish, mine is beef [sic]. I like the Filipino culture. We have the Filipino channel - the news. It's pretty neat.

The Asian partner explained:

I manage our relationship, like for example if he is mad then I don't talk to him until he calms down. I'm not talking until he calm down [sic]. I try to understand his language. We can understand each other. I growing up Filipino, mostly English is the second language [sic]. I'm trying. Every time I cook I say to him, you can try if you don't like you don't have to eat it [sic]. We talk about it. We keep it to ourselves. You can't trust others.

This couple explained their choice to keep to themselves and not involve friends and families in their private life was related to discovering that they are able to manage their relationship better by communicating with one another rather than including other family members.

Participant Couple 4:

The couple included a female spouse from the Philippines who was 38 years old, and a male spouse born in the United States who was 41 years old. They had been married for 8 years and had one child, two years of age. The couple was initially introduced by the American partner's cousin who was in the military in the U.S., and was an acquaintance of the Asian partner. The couple utilized the telephone, email, and chat online capabilities to communicate with one another at the onset of their relationship. The American partner visited the Philippines two times before the couple was married

there. They reported that the idea of living in the Philippines did not enter their minds and they live in North Carolina, where the American spouse originally lived. The couple responded to participate in the study after being informed by one of their friends regarding the study. The couple described their marriage as a “work in progress.” They also described initially experiencing difficulties understanding each other due to the differences in communication styles, issues with language barriers, and other cultural differences between the couple, including gender role expectations.

The female partner shared the following concerns about communication early in their marriage:

Maybe in the beginning, of course, the communication, especially when I was just starting here [sic]. I couldn't really understand them (the U.S. born partner and his family). Although I can speak but sometimes I have to put my thoughts in a lot of words [sic]. So, the language barriers and communications was definitely a problem [sic]. Because he should be working (sharing her frustration related to the husband's unemployment status), you know, and I should be staying home. I would end up saying hurtful things.

The following statements were used by the Asian wife to describe the couple's marital financial distress and gender role concerns:

Because isn't it that Filipinas marry an American because the American can fulfill her dreams and it is common that “oh, you will have a better life and have a good life.” And with us, it is a given that I am the one working and he stays at home. So, that's also our biggest stressors. At first I was like, “you are just being lazy.”

And come to find out he is having physical problem and he was born [sic]. If you will look at him now, look at his leg and they swell up if he stands up for a long time. So, he really can't work. And it caused a lot of problem because I'm supposed to be the one staying at home here and you go to work. I don't know because maybe even absolutely that used to be the idea that the ideal family and now of course it has changed that the man and the woman should be working. But at least both of us should be working. When he stopped working my mom would send us money and now his mom would help us. It is not as close as Filipinos and in the beginning it really hurt me because I was like hey, your son is the male here and he should be the one providing for us [sic]. It's your family that should be helping us, not my family helping. I know it hurt his feeling because I'm from the 3rd world country and my family is in the 3rd world country and they are sending money here?!!! And you know, that was a stressor too.

The Caucasian partner shared the following:

Basically I worked 7 days a week my whole life. But I was born with a problem and I had to have hip surgeries. And I worked so hard and now it's like my body has caused a lot of problem and I can't really work now. I worked so hard as a teen and it's caught up on me [sic]. And I would try to hold it in. And it is tough because I have worked my whole life and I worked hard and when she was in the Philippines. I worked hard and I sent her money the whole time. I was working and I have worked my whole life. It is hard to have somebody else taking care of you and throw stuff at your face and you got to ask for money and for anything

else I have to ask for it [sic]. I hate having to ask for money. I am working on disability now. Finances and money. That's our biggest problem. I've come to be okay with whatever she wants I have come to be okay with it. Like she is Filipinos are Catholic and I am a Christian and they are different [sic]. So, I did have an issue with that. There's still a part of me that wish that we go to a Christian church (rather than a Catholic church) but I have come to be okay but it is a challenge. Until our daughter was born and it brought us closer [sic]. It was a blessing. We were able to work things out. I like the Filipino traditions. I got the Filipino channels. Culturally, I like the Philippines and traditions and stuff. I enjoy it. I don't have a problem with that. I tell her that I want her (referring to daughter) to know the Philippine culture, you know. I want her to learn both...we are on the same page. I think we are more Filipino...I really enjoy the culture. I want her (referring to daughter) to go to a catholic school.

The couple reported that having their two-year-old daughter has helped them repair their marriage because they recognized the value of family. Both partners shared that they are now more willing to tolerate each other's differences by compromising.

Participant Couple 5:

This couple consisted of a female spouse from the Philippines who was 28 years old, and a male spouse born in the United States who was 47 years old. The couple had been married for six years and had one child together, aged four. The U.S. born spouse also had two children, one aged, 21 and another teenaged daughter from one of his three previous marriages. The couple met online during the American partner's visit in Cebu.

The American partner visited the Philippines to initially meet another female whom he met online and the meeting did not go as planned. This couple agreed to meet face-to-face within the next day following their first initial contact with each other. The American spouse stated he had a friend who was also married to an Asian female, and that observing the success of their marriage was encouraged to try to romantically connect with an Asian female. Conversely, the Asian partner was looking for a potential foreign mate and had enrolled in an online dating website. The couple dated for a short period of time before getting married in the Philippines, at which time the immigration process was started for the Asian partner to migrate to the U.S.. The couple lives in North Carolina, in the hometown of the American partner. The couple responded to the research participant needs when informed by one of their friends who received the participant recruitment email from me.

The U.S. born partner described their marriage as:

We've been together for seven years and there's no real serious problem. We have fun with life and we have fun with each other and we don't take things so seriously. We have a wicked sense of humor about some of the things that would bother people. Like, we would be in public, there an age difference between us. I am 47 and she is 28. There's about 19 years difference. I think culturally as far as marrying someone that's not much of a difference but here in America, it is kind ofit shouldn't be a stressor but it is...just like we have fun with this because you know, the biggest stressor is she is not with her family. My grandmother didn't want me to go over there to get married. She didn't want me

to meet somebody (from another country)...she is old school. You don't mix marriages and stuff like that. One of the biggest problem, and it is not a problem in our relationship because we are going to be together, is that my family, they don't mean bad, they just don't know better. They are not doing things intentionally, they just say things that to them might be a joke and it may be insulting to her character. My grandmother for one thing, she is 86 years old but when my wife came back from the Philippines in 2010, she got pregnant right after she got back with Penelope. The doctor said, this is your due date. I wasn't thinking about it. My grandma said, if her due date is here that means she got pregnant when she was in the Philippines. It doesn't affect anything to us. If anything, it drives us crazy. I can't tell you how many times my times has been with me and I was getting ready to blow up and I can feel her hand on my back. She has been a calming force to me. I reckon it hurts the relationship but it's not like we are going to divorce.

The couple seemed to enjoy each other's company during the face-to-face interview. The Asian partner displayed non-verbal communication during the interview indicating she agreed and she didn't have anything else to add to the conversation. The couple indicated that she was okay with the husband speaking for both of them. The Asian wife also laughed, giggled, or chuckled throughout the interview process, and did not want to elaborate further to provide additional insight.

Participant Couple 6:

This couple included a female spouse from the Philippines who was 28 years old, and a male spouse born in the United States who was 28 years old. They had been married for five years with no children. The couple initially met through an online dating website. The female partner reported she elected to be on the website to “learn about other cultures,” while the American partner, from a small town in North Carolina, was interested in meeting female friends. Three weeks after meeting online, the American partner visited the Philippines to meet the Asian partner face-to-face. The couple dated for two years long distance and an occasional visit by the American partner to the Philippines. After dating for two years the couple began the process to petition the Asian partner, via a fiancée visa. The Asian partner arrived to the U.S. in 2008, and within a week the couple got married, and have been married for seven years. This couple was willing to participate in this study to share their story upon learning about the research project from a friend. Both described their marriage, as “it has been really good.”

The female partner shared:

At first I thought it was very silent here. I told my mom it is very boring here. You can't see people. In the Philippines you see your neighbors, you stop by and you chit chat. Here people have their own lives. We have done things like methodical and it made us even closer. We are used to doing things together. We have goals and we accomplish it. I think the next step is to have my baby next year. I know it is hard and I am thankful that we were able to do this. I told him that it was never a problem for me (referring to her being in the U.S.). I guess

because of my personality. People like me right away. And I don't know but it was good for me. I thought at first I was going to have a hard time. And plus I knew I didn't really know the accent (suggesting the Southern U.S. accent).

Maybe that's why others have a hard time making friends. In the Philippines, if somebody hurts your feelings, I learned from my mom, if your husband is really mad, then just shut up and don't say anything that you will regret [sic]. Just shut up...we will learn with it for about a week. It took me awhile to say I am sorry for what I did. Yeah, that's one thing. I have learned to speak up for myself. I have learned to speak my mind. We don't limit ourselves with just Filipino friends. I think in my generation, we learn to adapt quick. When I first got here, it wasn't hard to adapt. Me and him we never had anything serious [sic]. It is always outside of our relationship. He was always constantly reminding me.....because when he used to tell me that "oh we can't do this because we only have certain amount of money...." I don't know....it has always been a problem. I always wanted to tell him that I don't want you to remind me because I am your wife, I am not your kid. I go back to how you say things. Even though I was in a family where everyone knew my business I have learned to be independent. And if there's anything that he doesn't want to eat then it doesn't bother me. In the beginning, it used to hurt my feeling when he didn't eat my food. Here's my thing. If there's anything you don't like about food then you tell me. I will tell you if I don't like it. When I first got here I would identify with Filipino but not American. Took me less than a year to convert to English. I guess we are younger

and we don't have the same issues that everyone else may have. It's just that me and him [sic] are open-minded.

The male spouse reported:

I have always been amazed by how she handled everything. We started with nothing and she just hit the ground running. Another good thing about her...there's been many relationships that we've heard about that...we've heard couples that when the mom gets here then the husband feels resentment. She has done a good job that when she and her mom are talking she includes me on it. She translates it for me. I would say it is the way we say things. Sometimes I'll get, especially when....I get frustrated sometimes but I am not mad. Especially when she first got here, we were already in a lot of stress and I get frustrated and she would start crying and I was like "no, no, no, don't cry. I am not mad at you. I am mad at the whole situation [sic]." She is really sensitive. See, my parents even if they get into a disagreement, it just doesn't faze them because I know they will be fine [sic]. People here have the individual 'I want to do my thing' and sometimes they don't mean anything by it. I didn't realize that until I met her. They are more cordial (denoting the Filipino culture), they are not as direct, they show more concern about people's needs. I've noticed that over there with her family. I've learned how to calm down myself. I say Filipino culture is less direct.

This couple was very visibly comfortable with one another, and their desire to succeed together was evident during the interview.

Participant Couple 7:

This couple was comprised of a female spouse from the Philippines who was 42 years old, and a male spouse born in the United States who was 62 years old. They have been married for three years and have no children together. The American partner has older children from a previous marriage while the Asian partner also has children in the Philippines, who are six and three. The couple initially met through an online dating website in April of 2008. They dated for five years, and remained in contact through the use of the internet and telephone. After arriving to the United States, the couple married in 2012 and has been living in North Carolina for the past three years. Again, this couple responded to the research study participant solicitation after being informed by one of their friends. Both described their marriage as “beautiful.”

The U.S. born spouse elaborated:

On my side, my people are very happy that I have found happiness. They have all interacted with her and have found her to be lovely, caring, and devoted, and they appreciate that about her. It's easy. Two people with different ice creams. You try mine and I try yours. That's how we work it. I mean, I got a taste when I went to the Philippines, I read a lot about the Filipino culture. I knew what I was getting into. We both think before we speak. And our marriage is not about a one way ticket, you know, it is about love. Because I know she loves me and she is willing to try because she trusts me. The same thing with me, I am willing to try because I trust her. Because I love her and I know she loves me. You have to

understand something, at this point...we don't see a lot of differences...sometimes it swings on one side, sometimes the other side.

While his Asian spouse shared the following:

I think life is easier here. And I am surrounded by great people and supportive so that's what makes it easier. And I have a super-duper loving husband who is so supportive. It's good. I mean I am able to share my thoughts my feelings. Most of this stuff he didn't opposed any [sic]. Just said yes, just support me. When I met him, he is like a father to them (referring to her children born prior to this marriage). My kids has respect for him [sic]. And financially he is very supportive. I mean they are happy.

The couple conveyed their commitment to understand and support each other in order to better comprehend each other. The couple reported they worked hard to be in tune with each other's needs to show their love for one another.

Participant Couple 8:

This couple was made up of a female spouse from the Philippines who was 56 years old, and a male spouse born in the United States who was 62 years old. They had been married for 14 years and had no children together, while the American partner had older children from his previous marriage. The couple initially met in Saudi Arabia in 1997, while the male spouse was employed there with a large automobile manufacturer, and the female spouse was employed there as a Nurse. They dated long distance for approximately three years until the female spouse relocated to the United States in the year 2000. They were married in the U.S. shortly afterwards. The couple has been living

in North Carolina for the past 6 years. This couple was excited to share their story and reported to be the “focal gathering point” for many of their friends who are in a mixed Filipino and Caucasian marriage. Both described their marriage as “healthy” and thus the reason for serving as a “matriarch and patriarch” of the group.

The U.S. born husband reported the following:

Culturally wise we are pretty compatible. I try to understand what she is going through. Sometimes it is hard. She knows that when I snap then it is over with. I don't dwell on it. I want to make sure we are talking because the next day we are going to be here. Money is not an issue for us. Which I know for a lot of Filipino, particularly when the girls have to find a job and what they tell their husbands how much they are making. Like if she wants to send money to the Philippines, just let me know how much so I am not blindsided. Unlike, we know a lot of American guys married to a Filipino and they have secrets. I told her we don't have secrets. We don't go to bed mad at each other. Here's another thing, ok. She was used to sending her money home. I just went through a divorce. She knows me that I am very conservative. It took me about 1.5 years to give her a credit card. Then she started babysitting, just to earn her own money. I told her that when she got her first paycheck, I told her to get whatever she wanted. First of all, she has never seen that kind of money before. She was going to send it home, I told her to buy something just for you. I knew she didn't want to spend that kind of money. When she first got here she didn't have a driver's license. The biggest adjustment was that I was more mad [sic] that the insurance was high

and when we first got the bill it was reasonable. She didn't have a driver's license so she started out as a young driver. So, I paid for her and my daughter. I taught her how to drive. I think some adjustments too, as Americans we just do things...I just assumed things she didn't understand. As an example, I handed her a nail gun, to me I just assumed that she knew what she was doing. But she never seen [sic] this before. And she was in tears and then the light came on--she doesn't know what she is doing. No clue. Once I realized that, I realized I had to slow down. That comes from me being in the military. When I give an order, I expect for them to be carried out. When she first came here she didn't know how to cook. I didn't ask her to cook. I don't mind helping her cook and I know in the Philippines the men don't really do that. It took me a lot of patience honestly. The communication was not really a problem. I always tease her with "he and she."

The Asian partner reported:

He doesn't ask me to cater to him. And he does help. Like when he takes his clothes off he puts them in the basket. So far, culturally, we always understand each other. When we have an argument and we have a misunderstanding I go to the bathroom and she [sic] says what's wrong then I say ... With our relationship, he manages and pays all of the bills. I don't know anything. I am not used to that. See, after his divorce with his ex-wife he tried to manage his money.

The couple reported they work hard to communicate with one another to sort through their disagreements as reported by the husband, “I want to make sure we are talking because the next day we are going to be here.”

Participant Couple 9:

This couple included a female spouse from the Philippines who was 43 years old, and a male spouse born in the United States who was 51 years old. They had been married for 14 years and had two children together, ages seven and four. The male spouse had two older children from his previous marriage. The couple initially met in Seoul, Korea during the male spouse’s tour of duty with the military, and mutual friends introduced them to one another. They dated for about 24 months before getting married in the Philippines. The couple made a decision that it was easier to process the Spousal Visa petition in the Philippines and therefore, the female partner returned home to process her immigration documents. After approval of the Spousal Visa petition, the female spouse joined her husband in Korea and they returned to the U.S. together. The couple is now living in North Carolina after having been stationed in many different States due to the male spouse’s military assignments. When I approached the couple, they were enthusiastic to participate in the study. Both partners explained they have worked hard to understand each other to “make their marriage work.” They acknowledged their differing perspectives on things such as religion, child rearing, or their communication styles, and have made concessions to comprehend and respect each other’s viewpoint.

The husband shared:

It doesn't matter how long you have been together, how long you've known each other, whatever, it's there and you just have to deal with it. For her culture I just respect it. If she says it is then that's what it is. I'm not going to argue with it. And I trust her to not lead me astray with it. I don't play around when she does that (referring to words that his wife may not understand). I don't try to confuse her, you know when one word means different things. I know she is serious and I try to answer her as serious as possible. I'm not going to deny her to do Filipino and I'm not going to force her to be an American [sic]. There's always that language barrier. Even though she can speak English the translation is different. How you say it? One word can mean several different things. We have both made the decision that we would prefer for our girls to go to a private school in the Philippines and let them get that experience of both cultures. The education for the girls are the biggest thing [sic]. We love it there. She went home when I was deployed for almost a year and the girls started picking up the language. We both have the same beliefs as far as respecting your grandparents. The common thank you, we appreciate you, and don't talk and don't be nosy with adult conversations. Those are some of the things that we agree on. A difference between the two of us can cause issues sometimes is she always has a serious face. I can smirk and be funny and she is always serious. I grew up smirking, that's my way of dealing with stuff. Half smile. My daughter is picking up on it. My daughter smirks. It is my way of dealing with a difficult situation.

His female counterpart agreed, stating:

Our first assignment was in a remote area in AZ. I was culture shock [sic]. You know, it was very quiet and I was homesick. You know, a lot of adjustment but when I found a job I found some friends. I got adjusted. But after a couple of months I told him to send me back to Korea because it was better there. Yeah, it was a remote area. After AZ, I was in KY and I was already adjusted. But every time we left I went from job to job and it was like starting over again. He was a recruiter so he was never home. Sometimes I told him I just wanted to stay there (their current home) because I already got adjusted [sic]. I don't mind whatever way, my culture, his culture, as long as it is good for the kids [sic]. As they grow up looking for work, I don't want them to have some barrier. We talk. What is the problem and then we solve it [sic]. Sometimes I will tell him you know if you are upset talk to me [sic]. I would like him to talk with me. It's hard here.

Everybody is working. He is a truck driver and is always away. In the Philippines we have a lot of relatives. I am glad that he is understanding, he understand the Filipino culture [sic]. I don't have a job right now. It is embarrassing. You know in our culture we are willing to help. I don't have a job.

This couple was passionate about their positive view of the Filipino culture and in ensuring they continue to practice the culture for their children's sake. The couple's respect for one another was evident during the interview.

Participant Couple 10:

This couple was comprised of a Taiwanese female spouse who was 61 years old, and a male spouse born in the United States who was 55 years old. They had been

married for 20 years with no children together. However, the Asian partner had two children from her previous marriage. The couple met in New York, during the male spouse's search for a Chinese tutor, as he had planned to go to Taiwan to teach English. They dated for a couple of years before getting married in NY, where they lived for some time, and have since relocated to North Carolina in the past decade. The couple expressed their interest in participating in the study after being informed by my colleague who received the study solicitation email. The couple explained their marriage as having the foundation of "understanding" and "compromise." They expounded that they have differing personalities. For example, the female spouse stated she requires extremely detailed information to be explained to her, while the male spouse said he is able to work on limited information; however, they manage to understand each other.

The couple also described that they navigated through their differences by understanding each other's needs and adjusting. The husband explained his outlook towards humanity and his relationship with his Taiwanese wife in this way:

We are just people. Men and women have problems together. I think we share the value of being peaceful. A lot of things that we share, values, a lot of our cultural differences, are minor issues. Separating personality and culture is a good one. Sometimes it is hard for me to determine what is culture and what is personality based. One challenge that I have with (wife) is getting her to be more open and say what she is thinking. I am totally supportive of the idea of her spending time with family and friends. I just don't think it is healthy to be on the phone that much time. Anything cultural has been a plus versus a problem. She

cooks Chinese food and we have a variety. I do martial arts and it is great to have her there to help me understand the translations there, customs, and language.

Taiwan is very Americanized. There's still some unique culture.

His Taiwanese born wife shared her struggles in navigating through the American culture:

Culturally it was very difficult in the beginning. Everything was new around me.

Very very difficult [sic]. We have transportation in Taiwan, and here no [sic].

We were living with my sister and I didn't have a car. In Taiwan I didn't have to take a test but here no [sic]. Chinese culture is very open and American culture is more private. Chinese no private [sic]. In Taiwan we don't have privacy. It is like how many in your family, how many boyfriends, how many girlfriends, how much money you make [sic]. If I want to see my friend then I just go. I go to their house and here you have to call. Language, sure it is hard [sic]. And sometimes makes me frustrated. I want to say something but I cannot say the word. I want to ask something but I don't know the words. Sometimes I feel frustrated, because I cannot understand the American way. I do have Chinese culture, so this is hard.

This couple recognized their differences in the Chinese and American cultures; however, their desire to work together was evident and indicated that the foundation of their relationship was based on understanding and compromising with one another.

Participant Couple 11:

Participant couple 11 included a female spouse from the Philippines who was 65 years old, and a male spouse born in the United States, who was 67 years old. They had been married for 42 years and had one special needs child, aged 26. The couple initially met in Connecticut where the female spouse was visiting her Godmother on a visitor's visa, and where the male spouse at the time resided. The couple dated for about four months until the female partner returned to the Philippines. The couple described the beginning of their relationship as "difficult" due to the distance between the Philippines and the U.S. and the amount of "loneliness" that each partner experienced from being away from one another. Two years later, saving money for his travel expenses and immigration proceedings, the male partner visited the Philippines where they got married. The couple lived in Connecticut for many years and then relocated to North Carolina where they have resided for about 10 years. The couple agreed to participate in the study after being informed by the female spouse's church friend about the research study. Both partners described each other as a "great team," due to their ability to leverage each other's strengths.

The husband shared an example of how they have managed to leverage each other's strengths:

I would like you share one thing with you. I think the hardest part of our marriage was the very first year. I only knew life my way and she knew it another way. It was very hard for us in the beginning to really make a pair. I only knew one way and she knew another. Until we learned that to combine our two ways, it was

hard, but once we got it...She was the finance person and my background was in carpentry so I fixed things. We had a great partnership. We don't jump in without talking with one another to discuss the pros and cons. It's a give and take. I told them (his family), they (the Filipinos) are not afraid to work. Like my brother and sister, my wife and I owned a home but nobody in my family.....but American people want it handed to them. They don't want to work for it. My sister saw we succeeded; she resented what we had made for ourselves. You could see that in her. She always did not like us being where we are today. My brother, he ended up with my father's house. But again, he didn't work for it. We did pretty well for ourselves. Nobody gave us nothing [sic]. Until we learned how to get along, she was very unhappy. And I didn't want her to get homesick. I didn't want that. More or less, Iyou know, what I learned over the years, she is usually right. I think she didn't like the idea that I was fully controlled my financial [sic]. I think that Rose, that bothered her [sic]. You know I remembered her saying that I was too tight with that money. So, at that point, that was a hard thing for me to let go because I had a good credit rating. She didn't like where I was with that.

The wife shared her recollections of managing cultural differences in their relationship in the following:

I think at that point too, you actually decided which way was the best way, not necessarily the right way because you cannot have two cultures and working separate. It only divided the family, the couple, so I think you pretty much

embraced what I knew and what I was doing because you always said that even my family said to them “just let it go.” My thinking was my way because if, because just say for example on Saturday night [sic], like I said I went to church Saturday and then come home and have a meal. Then I look at his family and they don’t worship and they don’t eat together. They just party....thank God that he, doesn’t think, that he didn’t want to be a part of that. When we were going out I would say to him I was going to church and then he would come too. Also, you had a routine (referring to her husband). You wanted to control the money. Because the way I thought in my household, my dad just handed the money over to my mom. That’s it and then no one had to ask for money. My mom always said, you do not ask your husband for money. I used to call him “you are such a tight wad.”

This couple reiterated throughout the interview that their success was attributed to leveraging each other’s strengths and weaknesses, and putting their heads together to determine the best fit for their family. The couple also shared that being able to trust each other’s intuition in making the best decision for the family was also advantageous in their successful marriage.

Data Collection

The research data was collected over a six-week timeframe. Interviews only occurred following each member of the couple signing his or her own consent to participate. I conducted one face-to-face interview with both members of the couple present together. The interviews took place either at the couple’s respective home or the

participant's place of choice, such as, at a friend's home. Interviews lasted between 45 to 90 minutes, as proposed in the methodology section. Prior to each interview, I reviewed informed consent with the participants and invited each member of the couple to ask questions. All interviews took place with both spouses participating simultaneously. The interviews were recorded via a portable electronic audio recorder. I also took handwritten notes during the interviews. All notes and audio-recordings were securely kept in a locked cabinet where only I had access.

While several strategies were used to recruit potential participants, all participants in this study responded to recruitment notifications via email and word of mouth, such as being informed by an individual who initially received the participant recruitment email. None of the participants agreed to give consent for collection of observations, and none of the participants provided archival data. While initially I planned to contact the local Buddhist Temple, a large number of the members were non-English speaking and therefore this potential source for participants was not utilized.

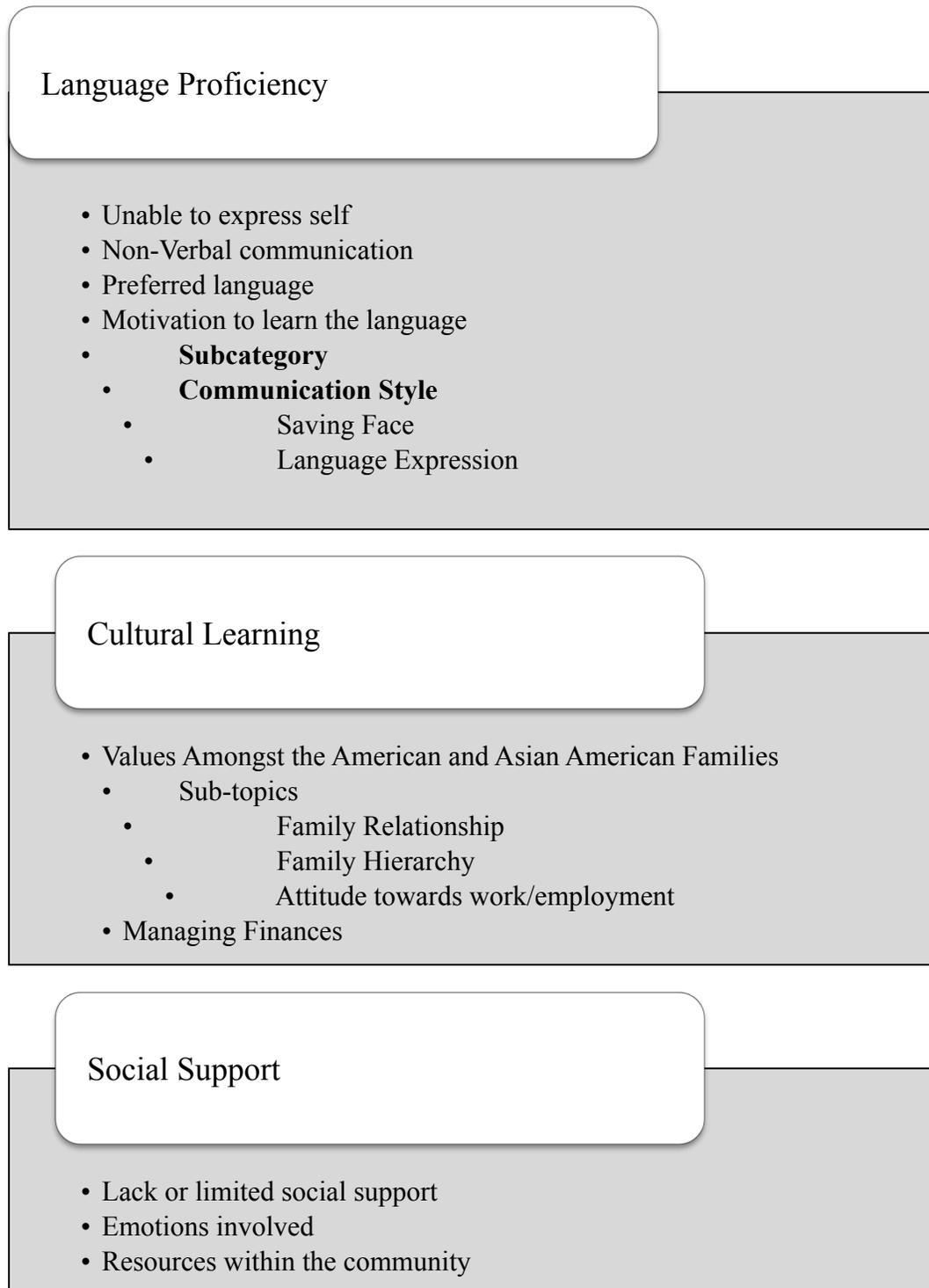
Data Analysis

I utilized an interview protocol and each participant couple was asked the same questions to guide the interview process and provide consistency in the data. Interview questions were open-ended and crafted to encourage participants to share details of their mixed marital experiences. The interview questions used can be found in Appendix C.

All interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed by me into raw text immediately following to maintain freshness and accuracy of information. Upon completion of the interview transcription, each transcript was uploaded into NVIVO

software. NVIVO is a qualitative software program that helps researchers organize qualitative data. Prior to coding, I initially read through the text data several times and to engage in preliminary coding. One of the characteristics of grounded theory is a constant comparative analysis, an iterative process that encourages me to concurrently collect and analyze data as it is collected (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I then coded the data line by line and at first, the coding process felt awkward due to uncertainty about labeling the codes; however, over time ambiguity decreased as patterns began to emerge. The process of memoing assisted me in conceptualizing emerging theory, by comparing constructs that appeared across all of the data. Emerging themes were identified by studying the transcripts repeatedly, and considering possible meanings and how specific constructs fit with developing themes. The trustworthiness of grounded theory suggests that the patterns within the data can only be identified after seeing repeated evidence of pattern indicators (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Illustrations such as mapping were used to identify the emerging constructs and themes. I created core categories to reduce overlapping categories and redundancy among them. Upon the completion of the data review, no new themes emerged, which suggested that major themes and their constructs had been identified. An accounting of the initial codes and nodes can be found in Appendix F. Figure 1 illustrates the themes identified in the data and the constructs within them.

Figure 1 Selective Coding Themes and Categories



Evidence of Trustworthiness

In Chapter 3, I discussed the importance of credibility, reflexivity, transferability, dependability and confirmability during the qualitative research process, and these points were considered throughout data collection and analysis of this study.

Credibility

In order to ensure credibility, upon the completion of each interview, I provided the participants the opportunity to review the transcript to ensure accurate representation and interpretation of the data, that no errors existed, and that the transcript accurately represented what they intended to communicate. During the analysis process, I extracted direct quotations from the data to precisely identify codes and categories and to ensure the viewpoints of the participants were represented.

Reflexivity

I exercised reflexivity by examining her biases and assumptions of the research topic. I maintained a journal to capture questions or immediate impressions of the collected data. This ongoing process of reflexivity assisted me in examining the research process and her own responses to the data to avoid misinterpretation based on her own assumptions or experiences.

Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shento, 2004). I facilitated transferability in this study by providing a detailed description of the investigation and selecting participants purposively. A thick, rich

description of the data is also provided to further support transferability of findings. The participant couples also represented a breadth of ages, length of marriage and annual incomes, further supporting transferability of the findings.

Dependability

Dependability is the concept of stability of the research findings over time (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). To ensure dependability, I asked follow-up questions and for clarification throughout each interview. I also engaged in the code and recoding strategy to determine if the results were the same or different. Lincoln and Guba (1985) postulated that if the coding and recoding results are in agreement, then it enhances the dependability of the qualitative investigation. This process also helped me identify emerging themes and patterns.

Confirmability

Confirmability denotes the level to which the results of a qualitative inquiry can be confirmed or substantiated by other researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). I was attentive to the interpretation and presentation of the research findings to ensure accuracy derived from the data. I ensured confirmability of this qualitative research by utilizing reflexive journaling to reflect on the collected data. My reflexive journal included information related to fieldwork observation, personal reflections on the study, and to any additional phenomenon that occurred during the investigation.

Results

The purpose of grounded theory is to develop theory that has been grounded by the research participants (Creswell, 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The theory derived

from this study allowed me and readers to understand how acculturative stressors affect the participants' marital satisfaction in mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples. Glaser and Strauss (1967) explained that grounded theory investigates the actualities in the real world and analyzes the data with no predetermined ideas.

Each couple presented differing circumstances in their marriage that contributed to their level of satisfaction. Seven of the 11 interviewed couples shared that they met each other through an online dating site or were introduced by a friend or relative who already resided in the U.S. Once they met, these couples communicated via online, phone, or chat messaging tools. Two of the couples interviewed for this study met overseas due to work assignments, and two other couples met in the United States. Though the couples met each other in varying ways, they shared experiencing similar stressors in their relationships, such as language barriers, and cultural differences. The study revealed the following emergent themes, representing the common acculturative stressors in all of the participants' relationships: (a) Challenges related to English language proficiency, (b) communication styles, (c) cultural learning, and (d) social support.

Theme One: Language Proficiency

Nine out of the 11 couples reported experiencing challenges at the start of the relationship with the immigrant partner's lack of English proficiency, and for many of the couples the concern continues to the present day. The initial inability to speak conversational English prohibited the immigrant partner from expressing herself, and

therefore created issues in the relationship. For example, nine of the couples stated that language proficiency affected them by limiting their social interactions, and 10 said the language barrier affected their ability to search for employment because of their inability to exhibit effective interviewing skills.

Some of the ways the immigrant partners described difficulties expressing themselves included not being sure about how to say something. “I want or wanted to say something but I don’t or didn’t know the words,” one participant explained. She further added that this limitation affected her by encouraging her to keep her thoughts in, and therefore building some negative emotions as a result. Sometimes the feeling of anger towards self and her spouse was evoked due to an inability to express her thoughts. “Although I can speak English, I have to put my thoughts into words,” stated another participant. Having to pause and translate mentally meant there were sometimes long pauses in her conversational speech that would leave her at a disadvantage.

The U.S. born spouses also discussed being affected by language proficiency. The American partners described their difficulty in understanding their partners. “In the beginning I cannot [sic] understand and there are still times today that I don’t understand what she is saying” one partner explained. He further elaborated that his lack of understanding what his spouse was trying to communicate affected them both because each becomes frustrated and this causes disputes between them. “It was rough,” another U.S. born spouse elaborated “she didn’t know a lot of English, and I only knew how to say two sentences in her language.” The men in the relationships also described indications that their immigrant spouse did not understand them when she was observed

to have a “deer in a head light look,” or “when she is smiling a lot,” which reportedly indicated to more than one American spouse that he needed to “reword” what he was saying or to explain something in a different way. Many of the men in the relationships expressed that at the onset of their relationship, it was very difficult for the U.S. born partner to phone home from work and that he often opted not to check in during the work day because of the language barrier between himself and his spouse:

That puts stress in our relationship because she probably doesn't understand what I am doing and where I am going. I know it probably bothers her. If I come in the house now and I see her face is upset and I ask her “what's wrong, what's wrong?” and she is like “nothing, nothing.” I say something is wrong and I know there is something wrong what she won't tell me. I have to reword things the way I think she will understand. And if she still looks at me with a blank look then I start pointing.

Concerns related to language barriers also affected the couple's social relationships. Several of the couples reported that language barriers prevented the immigrant partner from interacting with the general public. Actions such as going to the supermarket were challenging due to fears of having to communicate with someone. Making phone calls such as calling the cable company became difficult because the immigrant partner was unable to articulate her needs to the customer service representative. Lack of engagement outside of the couple's relationships provoked concerns around social support, which will be discussed more fully later in this chapter. Some of the immigrant partners reported that they believed other people made

assumptions that they were “dumb” because they did not verbally engage with other people and were observed to be smiling often.

One of the husbands explained:

There are times that she will say, oh (husband) can you talk/call them? Why can't you? My English is no good. Your English is perfectly fine. She is afraid of offending somebody and having to ask them to repeat. Or when Time Warner cable (cable company) sends her a bill and she feels it's wrong then she says (husband) you have to call them. How come you don't want to do that? They don't understand me.

Three of the 11 American partners expressed their desire for their immigrant spouses to enhance their ability to communicate in English in order to better their experience in the United States, and to improve the quality of their marriage. These Caucasian partners believed that their immigrant spouses limiting communication to mostly friends and family who speak their native language prevented their spouses from improving their English. One spouse reported “she spends too much time on the phone with her Chinese friends and family.” Another spouse shared his frustration, believing that his immigrant spouse was not trying to learn the English language and he subsequently encouraged her to take English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Even though five of the couples reportedly “teased around” the immigrant partner's lack of English proficiency, I observed that the stressor might have been larger than conveyed by the participants. Challenges related to English proficiency seemed most evident for couples who engaged in distance relationships prior to their marriages.

I think (wife) is a pretty intelligent person and has a lot to offer and to waste time doing that is not the best for her time. It is her time, it is her choice. I am not an easily frustrated person, for her benefit I just wish she would spend her time taking a class or something. Great, hang up the phone and do something else. I think it is holding her back from whatever it is she really wants to do. I am not one to suggest that everyone should be moving forward but I feel she can make use of her time wisely. I know her kids agree. Only if she spends 3 hours a day on phone calls with her Buddhist friends. It is about the time she spend talking with them.

In contrast, the couples who met overseas, due to work assignments, as well as one of the couples who met in the U.S., reported that English proficiency was not an obstacle in their relationships. Interestingly, these couples reported that the Asian partners knew few people from their native land, and therefore made friends and interacted with U.S. born individuals instead. The U.S. born husbands reported this assisted their spouses in better acclimating into the American culture. One husband stated, “she didn’t have a lot of Filipino friends and was forced to speak English all the time.” The couple shared the Asian partner’s English was improved due to the consistent “practice” while talking with American friends. This element facilitated understanding for both partners and therefore they did not experience “any major issues with English and understand each other.” Additionally, the one of the youngest couples explained “English was not an issue because she spoke English back home.” Reportedly, the

millennial generation in her native land often speaks English, and has made English as a part of their common interaction with one another.

Communication Style. In addition to the language proficiency, 10 out of the 11 couples expressed difficulties with differences in communications styles between partners. The U.S. born spouses had or continued to experience challenges about the immigrant partner “not speaking her mind.” Ten of the 11 couples expressed that the U.S. born spouses were more comfortable in expressing themselves and “saying what they have to say” than their Asian-born spouses. One Asian wife stated, “his being straightforward hurt my feelings,” and another one said, “I wasn’t used to that and it hurt my feelings.” Moreover, the Asian spouse reported having difficulties voicing her thoughts and opinions. The American partners conveyed additional challenges in their marriages resulting from the Asian partner’s reluctance to share her thoughts. One American husband said, “I would just like for her to be open and more direct,” and “the problem is her not sharing.” Many of the husbands highlighted that perhaps the immigrant partner’s inability to “speak her mind” is related to the “Saving Face” phenomenon that is practiced in many Asian cultures. The concept of “Saving Face” is the act of protecting the image of oneself or the self-image of another person or group (Tzu-Hsiang & Wei-Chun, 2003). The husbands stated that their wives were concerned with disappointing or fearful they may upset their husbands. Moreover, I observed how the immigrant partners seemed to display what appeared to be uncomfortable laughter whenever the American spouse disagreed or said something that the Asian wives disliked. The American partners also shared their frustration over their wives’ inability to

“say no.” For instance, one husband shared that whenever he asks his spouse if she wants to go to the movies or to go visit other family members, that the answer is always a “yes,” even though the Asian partner may not be fond of the idea.

One husband detailed:

One challenge that I have with (wife) is getting her to be more open and say what she is thinking. In the Chinese horoscope, she is a snake, and a snake is kind of reserved. If you buy into that or not. So, to a certain degree I am aware of that and in Taiwan the Chinese are not overt about things. They defer to men, even though it is changing. I would just like for her to open and be more direct. I think that is probably somewhat personality and somewhat cultural. If you want something, then say something as opposed to beating around and letting it fester.

Lastly, the study revealed concerns related to language expression. The immigrant partners shared that when they speak in their native language, that “literal word translations” are used; however, in the “U.S., there are many other words needed to make a sentence.” The Asian wives believed that this might be the reason they are often misunderstood. One husband said, “sometimes she will say things a little differently and I don’t understand.” And again, according to one of the husbands, the result is that the Asian partner will avoid expressing herself and at times “hold a grudge.” Reportedly, more than one wife explained that when her husband did not understand what she was trying to convey, she harbored negative feelings toward him that were revealed at a different time through anger and frustration.

Like I thought he heard me and I thought he understood what I was saying and I am like “I thought you understood what I was saying” and he tells me “you don’t know how to explain things [sic].” I want him to say it to me different. You know where it is easy for me to understand. That hurt my feelings [sic].

The effects of the language barrier and communication style challenges as outlined above are misunderstandings that lead to “arguments,” “fights,” “incorrect assumptions,” “frustration,” and “feeling offended.” Many of the couples shared that most of their arguments and fights resulted from language misunderstandings. One Asian wife said, “we argue if I don’t understand him.” Additionally, assumptions are made by both partners as a way to compensate for any misunderstanding. These assumptions, as explained by the couples, are not always correct and therefore led the couples to act based on an inaccurate interpretation of what was being said. Lastly, the couples reported negative feelings, like frustration and hurt, due to their inability to fully understand one another. These negative feelings frequently resulted in misunderstanding, which again provoked arguments among the couples. The Asian partners reported habitually being left feeling confused due to being misinterpreted.

One of the youngest Asian females who had a higher education level, with a Bachelors degree, reported that she did not experience language barriers with her spouse. She attributed this to the fact of her generation in her native country as being “very Americanized,” and skilled to proficient in speaking English. She and her husband affirmed that her ability to speak English was superior to that of some of their foreign born friends, who are from the same country:

With her, English was her first language. She went to school and English was her major. Language is not an issue. Sometimes she will say things a little different but not...people from here say things different all the times. I wouldn't really say that it was a language thing. I would say it is the way we say things.

This couple shared that while language barriers did not affect their relationship, differences in communication styles has presented some concerns at times, although "nothing serious." This younger couple is also one of the four couples that were close in age and they attributed some of their ease in communication to their closeness in age. They explained, "we understand each other because we are only one year and a half apart." Five of the couples who participated in this study represented considerable age differences between each other. One couple presented a 10-year age gap, and three of the couples presented a 20-year age gap. One other couple indicated a 30-year age gap. The communication style stressor amongst the couples with a larger age gap varied from those who were closer in age. The greater the age difference, the more problems the couples indicated in communicating with each other.

Preferred Language. All couples preferred to communicate with one another in English, or "otherwise," according to one husband, "we won't understand one another." Most of the Asian partners expressed a desire for their American partners to learn their native language, or at least key phrases. Moreover, immigrant partners in 10 out of the 11 couples preferred to speak in their native language with family and friends. The Asian partners reported, "I feel more comfortable in my native language and I can express myself better." Another participant explained that "I always think in my language first

and then translate, so it is better for me to talk in my language.” A third spouse reported “Sometimes I stop (when attempting to communicate in English) because I can’t translate (my native language) into English.” The American partners also affirmed from their observations their spouses appeared more comfortable communicating in their own dialect rather than English. “She can express herself better” one spouse explained. Moreover, all couples, but one, who had children desired for their children to be bilingual. The one couple who elected not to teach their child both languages did so because the child is challenged with special needs resulting in learning difficulties. The couple, along with their professional team, agreed that one language is sufficient for the child to learn and English was selected rather than Filipino.

An Asian wife expressed her language preference and the difficulties she experiences:

I speak Tagalog (Filipino National language). Because my relatives are here then I speak Tagalog [sic].

Sometimes I have to think what I have to say. Like, it is literally translated differently. I don’t know how to say it. It’s frustrating sometimes.

Another Asian spouse communicated the following:

At first he didn’t like that I was speaking Tagalog all the time. But later on he was able to accept the fact that I feel more comfortable in Tagalog. I speak Tagalog because I feel more comfortable but with Americans I have to speak English. Broken English and sign language/pointing [sic].

The Taiwanese wife stated the following:

I prefer to speak Mandarin. I really want to speak mandarin. I feel more comfortable and I can express myself. It depends on the situation, sometimes it is smooth, sometimes they can't understand me and it is frustrated.

Likewise, a couple of the U.S. born husbands voiced their concerns regarding their wives preference to speak their native language:

She is more comfortable in Tagalog. But I tell her that she needs to learn the language. I mean, you are in the United States. It was more of a learning experience in the beginning. It's like when you go to the parties that they have, there's like 30 women and they are speaking Tagalog. I am like hmmm, hhhmmmm, hhhmmmm (shaking his head indicating disapproval).

Theme Two: Cultural Learning

The dominant components of the couples' cultural learning within their marriage were two-fold: first, there were differences in the values, beliefs, and traditions practiced by each individual; and second, there were differences in the way each individual managed or conceptualized their finances. All 11 couples reported these two developing topics.

Values/Beliefs/Traditions. There were four sub-topics that emerged within the values, beliefs, and traditions for the couples: a) family and friends relationships, b) family hierarchy, c) attitude towards work/employment, and d) personal disposition.

Family and Friends Relationships. All couples reported the Asian partner's extreme value of family, which was evident by the "close-knit" nature of the Asian born spouses' relationships with members of her own family.

The Asian spouses reported.

We are close as a family. We know each other's business and we are always together.

Another Asian partner exclaimed:

I have my family here and my family in the Philippines. We are very close unlike his family.

In addition, the immigrant partners described their U.S. born spouses as being “not as close to their families.”

That's one thing that I would say, that my gosh his mom and dad are only 15 minutes away and we don't see them. But that's something I have learned that that's the American way [sic]. I have learned that everyone is independent (here in the US).

All of the Asian born spouses, 10 Filipinos and 1 Chinese, expressed valuing collectivism, and their dislike of individualism. The couples shared that “this took some adjustments for us; before she felt lonely a lot of times.” The immigrant spouses described this difference in the following ways: “it is quiet here in the U.S.”; “people are more private;” and “I just can't go next door to visit my neighbors, I have to call.”

One of the U.S. born spouses explained his observation regarding the Filipino relational needs:

The biggest thing in this transition is the Filipino support system. If my lovely wife was here by herself without Filipino friends I could see her being miserable. I have been able to see, as a culture, Filipinos like to be close physically and

emotionally, much more than Americans. America seems to be based on individualism. Filipinos are more....Filipinos without other Filipinos doesn't work so good. It's like they just like to be together. They just like the company. Moreover, most of the U.S. born partners agreed that the immigrant partners yearned to have closer relationships with their American families. Many of the American partners stated that they "had to explain" to their wives that many members of American families worked outside of their homes, which required them to be "gone all the time." They also elaborated to their Asian partners that American families often have to balance their routine with work and home life which prevents them from "just hang(ing) out outside" to talk to neighbors.

Family Hierarchy. The Asian partners also explained their confusion about the relationship between their Caucasian, U.S. born, husbands and their families. They reported being confused when they witnessed arguments or "disrespectful" attitudes or behavior towards the parents or elders in the family. All of the immigrant spouses reported that they came from a culture that displayed the utmost respect for elders in their families in general, including parents, older siblings, and anyone deemed older in age. Filipinos, for instance, display another layer of respect toward their elders by referring to an older brother as "Kuya," and an older sister as "Ate." The immigrant spouses explained that "respect for your elders" is an expectation with no room for negotiation and when they witnessed people in the U.S. disrespecting their elders, it "upset" them. Three of the Asian partners expounded that they had witnessed their spouse's siblings' disrespect their husband's parents and found this behavior very offensive.

We respect our elders, you know. We talk kind to them and we listen to them. Like in the Philippines, we call our oldest sister “Ate” because that is how we show that we respect them. We call our oldest brother “Kuya” as our respect to them. My parents they grow up to respect the teachers. In Taiwan we still respect the teachers.

One of the Asian partners shared the following:

I see his brother and sister about how they talk to their parents [sic]. I think that is very disrespectful and we just don’t do that in the Philippines. We don’t argue with our parents or our brothers or sisters because we are taught to show respect all the time.

All couples with children plan to instill the family value of having respect for elders in their own family unit. All of the Filipino participants explained the custom of younger individuals receiving “blessings” from elders. Reportedly, in the Philippines, when the younger family member greets their older relatives they immediately ask for their elders’ blessings by bowing and pressing his or her forehead on their elder’s extended right hand. This gesture is a sign of respect, a custom in which the couples with children collectively agreed to continue. Fascinatingly, the couples reported that receiving “blessings” from elders in the U.S. is only practiced when greeting Filipino elders. The couples with children shared that the children are often forgetful or hesitant to practice the blessings “maybe because they don’t do it all the time but I still encourage them to do it.”

Attitude Towards Work or Employment. Nine of the 11 American partners discussed their Asian partner's willingness to work hard. In fact, participants shared their frustration over the difficulty the Asian partners had in securing employment for varying reasons, such as language difficulty or due to the immigration process. The couples explained that their Asian spouses were all willing to work hard, and detailed their observations that Asians are more willing to work hard than their American counterparts.

One U.S. born husband explained:

Working hard was not a foreign concept for her. So, she is hardworking. She has been promoted many times through her own work.

Another U.S. born spouse shared about his Asian wife:

And the thing that immigrants are not afraid to work and if they do they get a reward for working hard, which they don't always get in the Philippines. My wife worked her way up from a janitorial role to an office management role.

Many of the individuals, both the Asian and U.S. born partners, articulated their annoyance when they observed "Americans not working hard and taking things for granted," as they explained that there are many immigrants who are "willing to put in the time" to earn money. One Asian partner explained, "we are more ambitious," talking about her Filipino culture, while another Asian spouse stated, "we are always willing to help," referencing her willingness to assist others in the workplace and in her home.

Personal Disposition. One of the many expressed concerns of the Asian-born spouses was the perception by other people in the U.S. that they were personally disposed to be "polite, kind, quiet, nice, and agreeable." Almost all of the Asian spouses reported

experiences in which they were treated differently because they were perceived as “not having a backbone,” because of their “docile disposition,” or “because I look different than others.”

One of the Asian partners stated that when she was with her husband, people around her would not talk to her and instead addressed only her American husband.

There has been many times that I was with him and people wouldn't talk to me [sic]. Like being in the restaurants, people will only address him and not me.

You don't want somebody to step on you. You know, I am Asian and I am supposed to be silent. There are some people that thinks because I am Asian they belittle me.

Another Asian partner shared that she believed that she was not taken seriously at work because she was “quiet and polite,” and that she “felt invisible” much of the time.

Like even when I got my position at work, I heard people say that she doesn't deserve it because my English is no good, she is young [sic]. It has always been a problem. For them to take me seriously.

Yet another Asian partner stated she believed the habit of smiling at another person was perceived negatively in the U.S. and a number of other Asian spouses expressed their desire to understand the perception of “niceness and politeness,” as being negative. As a whole the Asian participants in this study expressed frustration and

feelings of being treated “unfairly” because of what they called “innate characteristics of their culture.”

Managing Finances. Financial strain appeared to be one of the top stressors amongst the participant couples. These concerns varied from a lack of financial resources to disagreement over money management. The couples with larger age gaps between spouses, those of age differences of 20 to 30 years, reported tremendous differences between their views of how finances should be managed.

The American partner with the largest age gap between himself and his partner stated.

She thinks money grows on trees. She likes to spend and she is spending too much. It has been a learning experience now. I joke with her because she likes to spend money. I tell her “when you find that money tree in the backyard

These differences of opinion also led to arguments over what the American partner believed to be the immigrant partner’s tendency to spend an “excessive” amount of money. Other American partners explained that they had “worked hard” for what they had and reported their homes and automobiles were paid off because of their ability to manage their finances.

One American partner said.

I am trying to teach her about money so she stops spending. Trying to teach her how to maintain finances here [sic]. She likes to spend...you never know what’s going to happen. Need to be prepared [sic]. I am trying to teach her to be more prepared for down the road. So, when she finds that money tree...I tell you [sic].

Meanwhile, the Asian partners explained that they did not have money growing up, and expressed their desire “to spend money now that” they had it. This differing mindset reportedly continued to play a factor in these couples’ marriages over time. Conversely, the couples who were closer in age did not report any differing views related to money management. They reported being “on the same page when it comes to how we spend our money.”

Collectivist values including the importance of Asian born spouses supporting family members, such as parents, siblings, nephews, and nieces also presented difficulty within the couples’ relationships. According to the Asian partners, the expectation to financially support their families is prominent and, something both partners should consider. While the American partners stated they understood of the concept of financially supporting the Asian partner’s family, financial pressure brought stress into the relationship. One American partner stated that “there’s not enough to go around sometimes and we still have to consider what we can send back home to her family.” Another couple explained that the Asian partner’s family did not understand when the financial support was not consistent. The couples stated that there were times when their budgets were stretched in an effort to help the Asian partner’s family.

Eight of the eleven couples reported additional financial challenges. The Asian partners in those marriages expressed disappointment that their American husbands primarily managed the finances. One Filipino woman explained, “back home my Mom always managed the money and my Dad just gave her his paychecks.” Releasing control over money management was described as difficult for many of the Filipino women who

participated in this study. These women felt like they “had to ask for money” whenever they wanted something, which reportedly did not make them feel good. One of the female participants shared that she felt like a “child” having to ask for money from her husband. One of the American partners subtly shared his awareness that some Asian born wives he knew were not completely truthful with their spouses about their wages in order “to keep a little bit of money in their pockets for their own use.” The oldest female participant, who has been married for 42 years to her Caucasian husband, shared that she assumed responsibility of managing the finances several years after the couple was married.

Theme Three: Social Support

In this study, 10 of the Asian born spouses were Filipino and only one was Chinese. However, all of the Asian partners came from cultures in which they practiced collectivism. The practice of collectivism promotes the group as a whole rather than individual needs and values (Chang, 2015). The women in this study believed that the rights or needs of the families and communities were more important than those of the individual. They described their previous experiences working and cooperating with others, and most importantly they reported, “we support each other. We are there for each other all the time.”

As explained by one of the Asian partners:

My thing is, the culture here is like if I don't have it I can't help you [sic]. But in the Filipino culture, even if they don't have it they will still help you and find a

way to help you. So, it's like the Americans are like they won't get out of their way to help.

While a U.S. born husband affirmed the Filipino's strong commitment to one another:

Specifically in the Philippines, in fact, in the Asian culture there's more put into how do you treat your family? Are you a successful person? There wasn't as much necessarily what kind of car you got, are you good looking?

Because of the differences in the experiences they had in their native country, they reported feeling lonely as they migrated to the United States. The Asian partners found it to be unusual that spending time with their family members was not a perpetual occurrence when they migrated to the U.S. As aforementioned, one female partner reported that they only lived about 15 minutes away from the husband's family and yet they did not see them but maybe twice a month. The immigrant partners shared that spending time with their friends and family was very common in their native land. Furthermore, the idea that they did not see their neighbors outside or did not have the flexibility to stop by their neighbors' or friends' home to "chit-chat" affected their sense of belonging for many of the women. Four women reported there were times they felt confused about their decision to move to the US because "it was lonely here (U.S.)," yet at the same time acknowledged "opportunity" in residing the U.S. Aside from their spouses being here, they continued to recognize the meaning of being in the "land of the milk and honey," as described by one of the women. Loneliness appeared to be compounded by the geographical distances between them and their families. Many of the

women stated, “I miss my family.” The inability to physically embrace their family members when they wanted to was no longer an option. Moreover, missing family members’ important life celebrations, such as birthdays, anniversaries, or religious holidays was difficult for many of the women. Two of the women expressed that they missed attending their father’s funerals due to the lack of funds to return to their native land. Both women reported having a tremendous sense of “guilt” about not being able to “pay respect” to their loved one and for being absent from their family’s gathering during this time of need.

The women’s social support concerns were also attributed to their difficulties with the English language. They reported that due to their difficulties in expressing themselves in English, they were hesitant to engage with others outside of their native culture. A few of the participants shared their lack of desire to leave the home because of the language barrier, and therefore limiting their opportunities to make friends. Feeling hopeless in not being able to make friends outside her home was “sad,” according to one participant. Moreover, the women’s apprehension over being “treated differently” by the general public also limited their contact outside of their home. Three of the women described this experience as “discrimination” against them, explaining that others may be ignoring them because of the assumptions being made about them. For instance, several of the women stated that they had heard comments that they were “only marrying the American partner in order to gain citizenship,” or imaginably “for the money.” The women reported that comments like these were “very hurtful.” Most importantly, the

women attested that the public's supposition that they did not speak the English language was "wrong and hurtful."

Coming from a collectivist culture, the women in this study reported using their social support as a way to cope with the negative feelings they experienced, such as loneliness, hopelessness, and hurt. One participant who reported to have been immediately immersed into the American culture soon after arriving to the U.S., without making connections with anyone from the Philippines, described herself being "depressed" for a period of time. She stated that after many years she recognized the root cause of her depression as her being away from her friends and family and the lack of social support she had in the U.S. All 11 women described to me how they rely on each other's support and have become their own community of individuals from their native land.

An Asian partner explained.

I think it is also cultural because Filipinos are so close and they will do anything for you. And that's what I learned here (U.S.) that if they don't have it you can't expect for them to help you.

They added that they introduce each other to newcomers from their native country, and discussed the fact that when they are with their native friends, they are able to express themselves, which eliminates the fear of being judged by others. The couples all agreed that being with their native friends promoted "happiness" and "wholeness" for the Asian partner due to the connectivity that's present. The congregation with friends provides them a sense of belonging to a community. All women reported that they

tended to “stay within the group” for support. When asked if the couples had ever accessed any resources in the community as a form of support, all responded that they use their identified cultural group as their support, along with the American partner’s family. The couples mutually agreed on the benefits of staying within the identified cultural support system, although about half of the American partners believed that this could limit the ability to form friendships outside of the Filipino or Chinese cultures. A few of the husbands discussed how they believed that not making connections with American friends could hinder acculturation for the Asian women, from the improvement of their ability to speak English to “simply having American friends” and “adjusting better to the U.S.” While the women reported to be content with an immediate circle, the men expressed their continued hope and desire to expand the couples’ network beyond their Asian friends.

Summary

The role of acculturation, the individual’s adjustment process when migrating from one country to another, is a complex process for many individuals. In mixed Asian and American marriages, many factors may need to be considered when defining a couple’s marital satisfaction. As described above, the acculturative stressors, such as language proficiency, communication style, cultural learning in negotiating financial management and adapting to each other’s values and traditions, and perceiving necessary social support. It is imperative to note that both Asian partners and American partners develop their own impression of their experiences, and can therefore define marriage satisfaction differently. Both partners recognize that the concerns around language

proficiency, which was reported to be the biggest stressor in the relationships, generates tension between the couples because of misunderstanding, especially when assumptions are made as an effort to better understand each other. The American partners have observed, through the years, that their spouse's desire to stay within the Asian culture can provide "comfort." Preference to speaking their native language, for instance, can allow them to express themselves without having to translate. The desire to use their identified cultural group as a support system, again, promotes happiness for the immigrant partners. Additionally, the American partners' are often concern about how a lack of proficiency with the English language can hinder the Asian partner's ability to secure employment or to simply assimilate into the U.S. environment. The American partner's desire for his Asian partner to assimilate into the U.S. culture stems from his desire that his partner feels comfortable in their new home. While most American partners understand and support their wives' transition to the U.S., it is important to note that they are aware of how the Asian partner's ability to speak English can determine the availability of support networks within the American society. Most of the Caucasian men prefer for their Asian wives to also incorporate American friends into their network.

The couples' reported that the acculturative stressors in their relationships presented stress, but "nothing that we can't work out." The couples faced varying differences in their ways of expressing themselves, navigating through their finances, negotiating between the differences in their cultural values and traditions, and even in the use of their social network; however, all partners conveyed their willingness to

understand each other's perspective and agreed to make changes in their efforts to create harmony within the relationship.

The data collection process was enjoyable for me, and presented many learning points to better understand the role of acculturation in the marital satisfaction of the couples in mixed Asian and Caucasian heterosexual relationships. A number of the couples also presented some "aha" moments they experienced, which will later be discussed in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 will discuss the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and the conclusion of the research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The increasing numbers of interracial unions are not only emerging domestically, but also internationally. The purpose of this grounded theory study was to investigate the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among a specific group of interracial couples, heterosexual mixed Caucasian and Asian American couples. Recent research of acculturation has primarily focused on mental health issues associated with the process of acculturation (Gupta et al., 2013); therefore, investigating the role of acculturation and its influence in marital satisfaction was essential for contributing an additional vein of knowledge, previously unexamined, to the existing acculturation literature.

In this study, I interviewed 11 mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples in North Carolina to learn about the acculturation process and its influence on their marital satisfaction. All participant couples who participated in this study included male U.S. born and female Asian born individuals. The participants were willing to share their stories and their perspectives about the dynamics of their relationships as they related to their relationship where one member of the couple was an Asian immigrant. After the interviews, some couples revealed that they had gained insight into the process of acculturation and recognized “things I haven’t even considered as part of her being an immigrant to this country,” according to one U.S. born partner. I encouraged the participants to share as much or as little as they wanted about their marital experience and about how the immigrant partners’ acculturation process affected them as a couple as well as individually.

One of the main goals in using grounded theory is to construct theory that is *grounded* by the data (Charmaz, 2006). I engaged the participants in face-to-face interviews, maintained a researcher's journal and took detailed observation notes to collect data to support theory that emerged from the data. This chapter will discuss the findings, outlining the themes which emerged during data collection and analysis. This chapter will also review the limitations of the study, recommendations of the study, implications, ending with a final conclusion.

Interpretation of the Findings

This study included the participants' varying experiences as they assumed their marital commitments. The Asian partners and the Caucasian partners revealed individual challenges in their marriages, including unique intricacies in managing the immigrant partners' acculturation to the U.S.

Addressing the Research Questions

To gain an understanding of the themes discovered by the data analysis, it is imperative to apply the collected data to the central research question and its sub questions. Sub questions were deliberately crafted to narrow the main research question into smaller fragments, with the goal of answering the central research question. The sub questions will be discussed first, which will lead into the central research question.

Sub question 1: How is the process of acculturation perceived by the Asian American partner and the Caucasian partner?

Many of the Asian born partners anticipated some level of difficulties as they migrated to the United States, such as the language barrier. However, both partners also

discussed unexpected concerns like, the phenomenon of “saving face,” differences in the “language expression” between partners, or variances in “money management.” As both members of the partnership learned their individual cultural differences, they found constructive ways to manage those differences together in order to make the marriage work. The process of acculturation was different for each couple. For example, many experienced language proficiency concerns, negotiating whether to prepare and eat Filipino or American food, and how to include varying religious beliefs. Each immigrant partner had her own experiences, skills, or proficiency that she brought to the marriage that influenced her behavior. Likewise, the U.S. born partner’s age, life experience, or cultural competence influenced his ability to understand the Asian partner’s adjustment process.

The study data revealed the couples’ willingness to work with each other to understand and to better manage their challenges as they relate to being part of a mixed marriage. The couples’ willingness to adapt to one another’s beliefs and practices supports the concept of Behavioral theory that learned behaviors occur in new settings as individuals migrate to a new environment (Chavis, 2012). Additionally, the couples’ collaboration within their relationships exemplifies Berry’s bidimensional acculturation strategy in which the immigrant partner is willing to integrate the native and host culture’s practices, therefore experiencing a higher level of marital satisfaction.

Sub question 2: What acculturative stressors are experienced by the immigrant partner? (for example, language barrier, social support, acculturating/assimilating/or adapting to both culture’s values and traditions).

Major acculturative stressors that emerged in this study included: 1. “language proficiency,” with a subcategory of “communication style,” 2. “cultural learning,” and 3. “social support.” One of the American partners stated,

The biggest challenge right now is her English. We are working on that. We are working on her English some more and I will help her with that because I would never know when I have to go to work and that bothers me because I want her to be safe. I know she has my father across the street, she got her family but she just can't pick up the phone to call me.

One female immigrant participant shared,

Maybe in the beginning, of course, the communication, especially when I was just starting here. I couldn't really understand them. One of his nephews actually called me a “dumb dumb” because I was always smiling. I think that put a lot of stressors. Although I can speak but sometimes I have to put my thoughts in a lot of words. So, the language barriers and communications was definitely a problem.

The above statement is a good example of the Caucasian partners' concerns along with the limitation in interacting with others outside the couple's immediate circle because of the Asian partner's lack of English proficiency. Adjusting to the cultural nuances for both Asian and American partners was an additional stressor in their marriage. One Caucasian partner stated the following,

“I think some adjustments too, as Americans we just do things.... I just assumed things she didn't understand. As an example, I handed her a nail gun, to me I just

assumed that she knew what she was doing. But she never seen this before. And she was in tears and then the light came on she doesn't know what she is doing. No clue. Once I realized that I realized I had to slow down."

All American partners reported having to "slow down to think" about the couple's language interaction. Strategies like this helped the couples with better communication. This sub question illustrates the meaning of Behavioral theory in a way that is evident by the U.S. born partners' inclination to expose the immigrant partners to the English language. This also supports the theory of learning, that all behaviors are acquired through conditioning, as explained by Behaviorist's B. F. Skinner (Corey, 2009). Therefore, the more the U.S. born partners expose the immigrant partners to the English language, the greater the chances in enhancing their ability to learn the language.

Sub question 3: How does the Caucasian partner feel about the acculturative stressors, such as, language barrier, lack of social support, and acculturating/assimilating/or adapting to both cultures' values and traditions?

Both partners expected to experience some barriers as the immigrant partner migrated to the United States. As aforementioned, the Caucasian partners were understanding and willing to assist the Asian partners to adjust in their new environment. Many of the Caucasian partners were receptive to practicing the Asian culture because they did not foresee experiencing any negative effects from doing so. In fact, many of the Caucasian partners reported that the Asian culture was more attractive to them.

Well, she reminded me of somebody from another generation. She reminded me not the fast moving generation that I was a part of. I liked what I saw. I go, this

is more of a match for me than anyone else in America. She worked so hard. She is not afraid to work. So, I pretty much did what she said because of what I have seen from her family.

Another U.S. born partner expressed the following,

For her culture I just respect it. If she says it is then that's what it is. I'm not going to argue with it. And I trust her to not lead me astray with it.

All of the U.S. born partners were in favor of practicing the Asian cultural traditions to complement their own U.S. practices and beliefs. This finding is backed by the essence of social learning theory, where culture shapes the human behaviors as explained by the U.S. born partners' inclination to practice the Asian wives' culture.

Sub question 4: What experiences have both partners encountered because of misunderstanding or misinterpretation due to language barrier or cultural beliefs or traditions?

Each couple participant shared specific instances to elucidate the difficulties they experienced as a part of having an immigrant partner in the relationship. The chief complaint in the relationship for most of the participants was the language barrier and/or the differences in which both partners expressed themselves. The following illustrates some of the participants' communicational challenges.

We argue with that if I can't understand him. How else do I say it to you because that's how I say it to you. In my dialect that's how we say it. Yeah, we argue with that. I would prefer texting than talking.

Yeah, it is frustrated. He always smirks and I hate that. If it is a serious conversation and he smirks and if I don't laugh then he gets mad at me. I say to him "why would I laugh if it is not funny to me?"

I'm thinking in Cebuano first then I translate. Sometimes I stop I can't translate it in English. Yeah, communication and language barrier is the issue. We argue if I don't understand.

Each of the U.S. born partners shared his own story to illustrate the difficulties he had encountered due to the present acculturative stressors, such as the lack of English language proficiency. Likewise, as previously mentioned, the Asian partners experienced challenges in their marriage as a result of the language barrier. Both the Asian immigrant participants and U.S. born participants recognized the challenges that are present in the relationship due to the language concerns. The couples divulged their differences as a result of their own original cultural beliefs and practices.

Sub question 5: How do the acculturative stressors affect the marital satisfaction of the couple?

Each couple partner denied anticipating any major language or cultural issues prior to the development of the relationship. Invariably, each couple testified of experiencing challenges in their marriage due to the stressors that arose in having an immigrant partner. Most of the couples learned that there were issues in the relationship they needed to consider in order to enhance or maintain their level of marital satisfaction. One of the U.S. born partners recounted his experience with his family when he informed them that he was going to meet someone in the Philippines.

And then my grandmother didn't want me to go over there to get married. She didn't want me to meet somebody...she is old school. You don't mix marriages and stuff like that. One of the biggest problem, and it is not a problem in our relationship because we are going to be together, is that my family, they don't mean bad, they just don't know better. They are not doing things intentionally, they just say things that to them might be a joke and it may be insulting to her character.

There's about 19 years difference. I think culturally as far as marrying someone that's not much of a difference but here in America, it is kind ofit shouldn't be a stressor but it is.

The biggest stressor is she is not with her family. You know? Being away from her family. She misses them.

The acculturative stressors the couples experienced varied from language barrier to family resistance to cultural differences. The couples recognized the challenges they faced in being in a mixed marriage, such as the U.S. born partner's family not being supportive of his marrying outside of his culture or the idea that the couple may not be able to engage outside of their immediate circle because of the Asian partner's limited English proficiency. The cultural hurdles that the Asian partners encountered affected different areas in the couples' relationships. However, even though the acculturative stressors played a role in their marriage, the couples did not report any significant concerns that hindered them from ultimately experiencing marital satisfaction.

The answer to this sub question was indicative of the couples' strong rooted cultural belief that presented difficulties in navigating through the acceptance of the relationship by other family members, or simply navigating through the relationship due to the varying cultural practices that each person possessed. This notion is an illustration of the meaning of social learning theory that helps explain how culture influences human behavior.

Main Research Question. What is the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples?

The findings, supported by the study data, revealed that the couples experienced acculturative stressors that played a role in their marital satisfaction. The couples were able to identify their acculturative stressors, such as challenges with English language proficiency, difficulties understanding a culture different from their own. Additionally, a lack of social support hindered the couple from cultivating relationships with others outside of their marriage, and deterred the couple from finding support for the Asian partner for the stress she experienced being away from her family and friends.

The findings also indicated that helping professionals, family and friends, and even the couples themselves could consider different strategies to assist the couple in experiencing success in the relationship. Inman et al. (2011) stated mixed couples face challenges resulting from their cultural differences and how those challenges are experienced by the couple; helping professionals need to enhance their understanding of acculturative stressors in order to assist prospective clients with these challenges. Likewise, family and friends could receive important psychoeducational material that

might assist the couple with increased understanding some of the challenges that can occur in mixed marriages. Moreover, the couples themselves need an opportunity to reflect upon the challenges that are present, and attempt to understand their experience to create better solutions to increase their level of marital satisfaction. The inopportunity to address acculturative stressors can lead to serious psychological effects, such as depression, anxiety, or a change in the dynamic of the couple's relationship (Gupta et al., 2013; Kisselev et al., 2010; Mui & Suk-Young Kang, 2006).

The theoretical foundation of Social learning and Behavioral theories support the participants' experiences as they navigated through their intercultural marriages, the U.S. born partners to the Asian immigrant partners' cultural and familial beliefs, and the Asian immigrant partners to the American cultural practice. The Behavioral theory backs the notion of the immigrant partners' learned behavior as a result of their surroundings, such as the language competency, while the Social learning theory supports the concept that the immigrant partners' behaviors are influenced by the host country's practices (Corey, 2009; Chavis, 2012). Likewise, the Asian partners who practiced Berry's bidimensional acculturation strategy experienced an easier transition in the mainstream. For instance, the Asian women who were able to adapt the English language had a simpler time communicating with her spouse and the general public. The individuals who were less fluent in English experienced extreme difficulties in communicating with her spouse and others, and therefore experienced limited social support.

Limitations of the Study

Research limitations are complications and occurrences that are beyond the researchers' control (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). Although the data obtained through this research proved to be valuable information, study limitations must be addressed. One of the limitations encountered in this study was that 10 out of the 11 couples who participated in the study were mixed Caucasian and Filipino American couples, while the other couple was mixed Caucasian and Chinese American. Therefore, the results of the study are primarily representative of those Caucasian and Filipino American couples. Additionally, though I recruited for male and female immigrant partners, all of the couples who responded to the study solicitation included female immigrants, which resulted in the report of acculturation concerns and stressors of only females. Additionally, there was no control of the participants' life events (such as any trauma, pregnancies, or any other personal or familial dynamics) that may have affected their answers to the interview questions.

Another limitation of the study is that the research participants opted not to provide data from other collection methods, outside of the interviews. For example, other collection strategies proposed for this study included journaling and live observations. This limitation of the data to interviews only may have prohibited gaining additional information from the participants after the face-to-face interviews. Lastly, 10 out of the 11 couples were recruited by word of mouth by individuals who initially received the research announcement directly from me, while the other couple was directly recruited by

me. This exclusive method in accessing participants may have limited the diversity of the couples, and therefore may have limited the study data.

Recommendations

Creswell (2013) postulated that a large part of qualitative study is investigating the complex nature of the subject matter, issue, or problem under examination. This encompasses different assessments and evaluation, which generally involves narrowing down a large picture or perspective to reach the emerging patterns or themes. This study initially investigated the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples; however, as the study evolved, different factors emerged, which may prove useful in future studies on the acculturative stressors and challenges that immigrants experience in their new environment and the role they present in their relationships with U.S. born partners.

Based on the findings and limitations in this study, future studies are needed to examine the dynamics of mixed or interracial relationships, particularly the Asian with non-Asian partners. Because the sample size of this study was composed of predominantly Caucasian and Filipino-American couples, generalizability was limited, with only two Asian countries included in the study. Therefore, further research with equal representation across the Asian cultural ethnicity would increase the generalizability of the study. Additionally, having increased or equal Asian American male study participants would further enhance the understanding of acculturation and its influence on the level of marital satisfaction among the mixed heterosexual couples.

As stated, 10 of the 11 Asian American partners were Filipino Americans. The fact that this specific cultural group was willing to participate in the study may be indicative of a need within this ethnic group. Therefore, my recommendation for future studies would be to investigate what the Filipino Americans want to communicate with the general public. Is there a reason that they want their voices to be heard more than others? Or, is it necessary to investigate the silence of other cultural groups that may not be so willing to disclose? Specifically, among recommendations for future studies is to examine the acculturative stressors that members of other Asian ethnic groups experience and to consider the coping mechanisms or resources employed by these individuals.

The research participants for this study were recruited from the Eastern and Central regions of North Carolina. Including mixed Caucasian and Asian American couples from areas across the United States may offer enhanced understanding of the immigrant individuals' acculturation process and its role in marital satisfaction. It would also be interesting to compare the degree of acculturative stress experienced by mixed couples living in the Western United States, for instance, with that experienced by those in the Eastern part of the country.

Lastly, developing counseling interventions specific to mixed Caucasian and Asian American relationships is essential. Although counselors are ethically bound to exercise multicultural competency and the fact that there are several cross-cultural counseling interventions present, it is still imperative that counseling interventions are developed exclusively for mixed Caucasian and Asian and American couples, to assist them in managing their acculturative stressors.

Additionally, this present study participants' discussed and compared the attitudes toward the work ethic of Filipinos residing in the U.S. to those of Caucasian Americans. According to data from this study, Filipinos demonstrated industriousness, with a strong desire and focus for upward mobility. Future studies could explore what the differences are between Filipino and U.S. Born, American, attitudes towards work/employment.

Seven of the 11 couples met via online dating, while two met overseas during a job assignment, and the remaining two met here in the U.S. Future study can focus on the motivations of American males seeking a romantic connection across international lines, rather than domestically. Are there specific traits, qualities, or attributes that these men are seeking from an Asian partner that may not be present in an American or U.S. born partner? Or, what is it about these men that make them seek their lifelong partners in other countries?

Implications

Existing research about acculturation examines primarily its relationship to psychological effects on immigrant individuals; however, limited information exists as it relates to the marital satisfaction, especially among mixed heterosexual married couples (Gupta, Leong, & Valentine, 2013; Torress, Dirscoll, & Voell, 2012; Wie, Liao, Heppner, Chao, & Ku, 2012). The findings of this study offer implications for positive social change that suggests ways to identify and assist individuals who are experiencing acculturative stressors. The American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics mandate counselors to be culturally appropriate, and to place emphasis on multiculturalism awareness in their therapeutic work with clients (ACA, 2014). The

result is used to describe below on its application to the individual's key system to have a successful acculturation journey.

Literature Contribution

This current research is of critical value to add to the existing literature to better understand the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples. This study revealed that a number of the couples, Caucasian husbands and Asian wives alike, were not necessarily aware of the acculturation experiences they were confronted with; consequently, this study information is useful for mental health professionals to raise awareness to the migrant individuals and to their spouses. Moreover, the couples shared the stressors they experienced in their marriage, such as the challenges associated with language proficiency, the difficulties in navigating through their cultural learning, the lack of social support and its impact, and the task of developing and implementing coping strategies to address the expressed acculturation needs.

The objective is to assist these individuals in understanding the challenges that are likely ahead, and to provide them with resources in order to effectively cope with those challenging acculturating experiences. Lastly, the importance of the investigation of acculturation places emphasis on the prominence of the occurrences not yet considered or reported by the migrating individuals and their spouses. Bryant and Kim (2013) reported on the relationship between acculturation and a greater alcohol consumption by immigrants. These authors' study further illustrates the importance of awareness of the potential for acculturative stress in order to address and to intervene as necessary.

Consequently, the identification of acculturative stressors and their role in the couple's relationship will reduce the possibility of negative psychological effects developing in the relationship.

The Helping Professionals

The mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual relationships present many unique characteristics, as each partner possesses his or her own cultural beliefs, practices, and traditions. I recommend that practicing mental health professionals develop cultural competency skills to be better able to identify and address the distinctive factors that play a role in the couple's marriage. For instance, to be able to present appropriate interventions, it is imperative for the professional to understand the perspectives of marital values and practices of both the Asian partner and the American partner. Furthermore, cultural competency allows the clinician to comprehend the difficulties surrounding the cultural differences between the couples. Practitioners and future counselors need to possess the multicultural knowledge to effectively provide services with mixed Caucasian and Asian American couples. As the research participants of this present study shared, there are biases and stereotypes that exist in the Asian cultures; therefore, it is recommended for clinicians to have familiarity with and sensitivity to those biases and stereotypes. Two of the 11 Asian partners shared their concerns about the stereotypical idea that Asian women are submissive. These women were eager to refute this belief. They explained that perhaps the stereotype is based on the observation that Asian women are "quiet;" however, as the Asian women emphasize, having a docile disposition does not mean that the female is subservient. Therefore, it is

also crucial for mental health professionals to understand the multicultural factors of these mixed couples to be better able to communicate effectively with them. Lastly, it is essential for current and future clinicians to understand the immigrant partner's acculturation process, and to be aware of the acculturation framework to better guide the immigrant population. Where the individual is in the acculturation process will likely play a major factor in his or her behavior. Mental health professionals can benefit in applying this study's findings to provide valuable information for servicing individuals who are experiencing cultural adjustments. Moreover, the utilization of this study's results can equip mental health professionals with tools for developing an understanding to better provide treatment to mixed couples in addressing the relationship's present acculturative stressors.

Acculturating Individuals, Spouses, Friends, and Families

The courageous participants of this study shared private information that they otherwise would not have made a part of their casual dialogue with others. The Asian spouses reported feeling empowered by being able to share their thoughts about being an immigrant to the U.S. and about being a partner in a mixed relationship. Though it was not easy for the Asian spouses to share their challenges as immigrants, they were eager to share their experiences in order to help others who may be in the same position. These Asian American spouses wanted others like them to be able to understand that experiencing acculturative stressors is a natural process of migrating to a new country.

The repeated concerns of the Asian spouses were to dispel the assumptions and suppositions about why they entered into a mixed relationship. Many expressed that they

had been criticized by the U.S. born partner's families, friends and acquaintances for marrying an American citizen "to get her green card," or to "get a job in the U.S." These women described these comments as being "hurtful" and "wrong." Both members of the relationship pleaded for their friends, families, and acquaintances to support their marriage, as they encouraged others "to get to know" the individuals prior to making assumptions about their relationships. The Caucasian partners urged others to "please treat my wife fairly as you would the American girls."

The results of this study provided supplementary information to acculturating individuals and their families, friends, and their spouses of the need to further understand the individuals' circumstances specific to their adjustment process. Furthermore, acculturating individuals can gain knowledge and comprehension of their experiences as immigrants and be better able to seek resources to assist in their transition.

Collaboration for Success

Though acculturation is an individual experience, the successful progression is a collaborative approach (Figure 2). The study participants expressed their belief that acculturation is difficult for the migrating individual, that to be successful on his or her own depended on the assistance and guidance of those around him or her. The following model illustrates the key systems which help make the acculturative process effective.

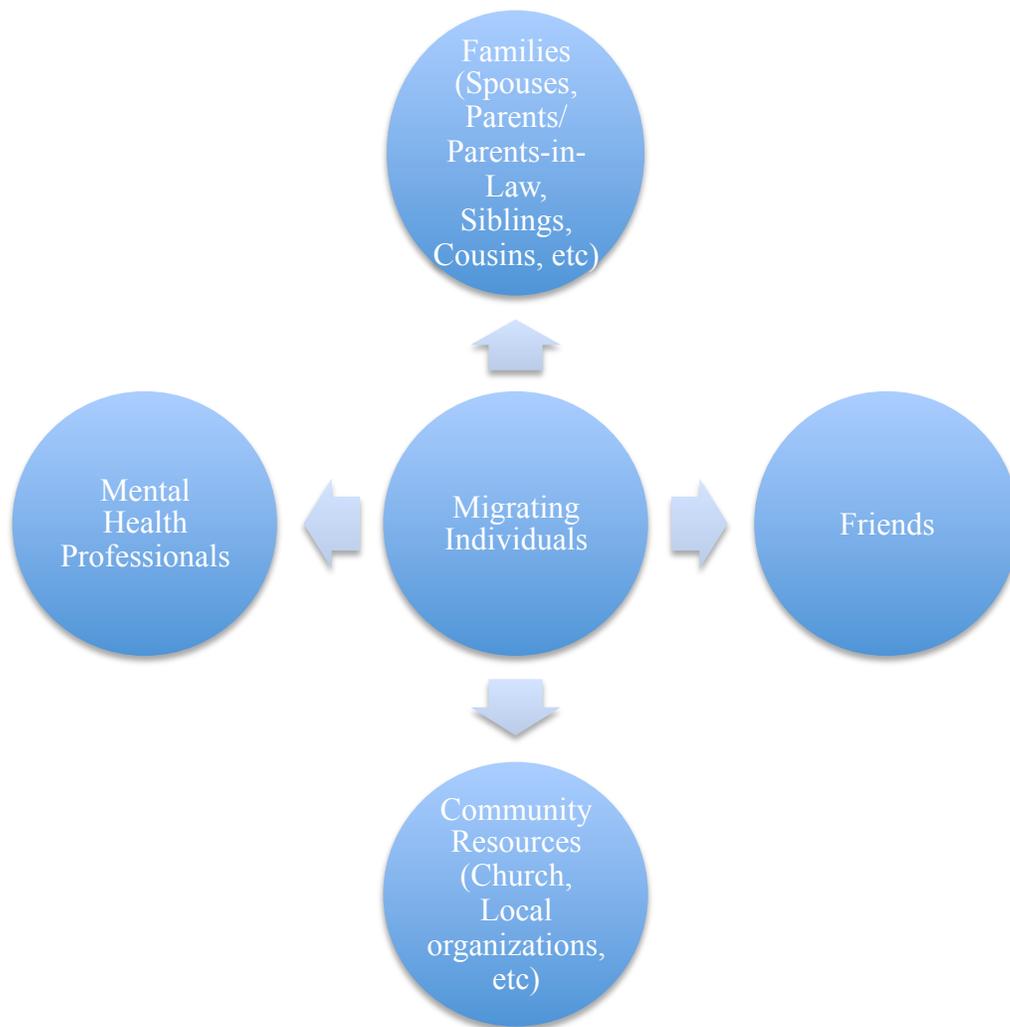


Figure 2. Acculturation collaboration for success illustration.

Theoretical Implications

This study responded to a research gap that exists in acculturation and its influence on an immigrant's behavior while adjusting to the host country. The theoretical foundation of social and behavioral theories continues to explain the research participants' dispositions towards their environment as evidenced by their actions and propensity to be shaped by the influence of their new surroundings. For example, many

of the female participants reported that they tend to “stay quiet and listen a lot,” in order to learn the subtleties of the English language. The participants also explained that they observed others in order to procure and exhibit similar behaviors to “fit in.” The participants expressed their belief in the importance of observing others to be better able to integrate into their new environment.

As Berry (1997) explained, the acculturation strategy of Integration, in which immigrant individuals maintain their original cultural identity and at the same time become a participant in the new host culture, can ensure a better adjustment process. Emotional and marital distress was reported prominently in situations when the participants encountered behaviors that did not match their native cultural beliefs and traditions. However, in the spirit of developing successful relationships in their current environment, the participants reported that they exhibited behaviors that were aligned with those of the dominant culture. Thus, Berry’s theoretical acculturation framework of a unidimensional and bidimensional process (1997) supports the concept that individuals exhibit their acculturating behaviors by either rejecting the host or native culture or embracing both cultures. Berry (1997) explained that practicing the bidimensional acculturation process provides the individuals the resources to navigate through both cultures, and therefore provides the possibility to more successfully acculturate into their environment. The research participants shared that learning the English language allowed them to better communicate with the general public and with their spouses, consequently promoting an easier adaptation progression to their environment.

Functioning in a bidimensional framework reduces the acculturative stressors and marital distress as the immigrant individuals may be able to better express themselves, and be able to better comprehend the American partner's perspective. On the contrary, functioning in a unidimensional framework reportedly can prevent the immigrant partners from adapting to their new environment, and therefore hinders them from mastering the English language. Many of the participants' husbands reported that their Asian partners' tendency to speak their native language with friends and family encumbered their proficiency in English. In addition, the Asian partners reported that being "lonely" was partly attributed to the lack of social support in the U.S. Consequently, the American partners expressed that their Asian partners' loneliness could be lessened if the Asian partners were more proficient in English. Finally, as discovered through this research, individuals operating in a bidimensional framework can negotiate through their host environment more easily by feeling the sense of belonging in the community.

Conclusion

As the United States' multicultural demography continues to evolve, as individuals continue to migrate to the country, acculturation will continue to be a factor for more people. The migration from one country to another offers a set of cultural experiences through which immigrants need to maneuver. Awareness of the acculturative process is necessary by individuals in the host country, to consider how the social and behavioral elements influence the immigrants' wellbeing. This study revealed the challenges that individuals experience as they attempt to navigate through their new environment, and how the couples' marital challenges were related to the present

acculturative stressors. Through the study, I learned the importance of a collaborative effort by the individuals in the community to assist the migrating persons successfully transition in his or her new environment. Recognizing the difficulties associated with the individuals' move is crucial in facilitating open dialogues to discuss those challenges. Based on the study findings, the collaborative approach is an integral part of the migrating individuals' success, in identifying and reducing acculturative stressors.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled, “The Role of Acculturation in Marital Satisfaction Among Mixed Caucasian and Asian American Heterosexual Couples.” You have been asked to participate because you are a married mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couple. This form is a part of the process called “informed consent” to ensure you understand about participating in the study before agreeing to take part.

This study is being conducted by Lotes Nelson, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. This research is for a dissertation project being conducted as part of the requirements of the Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral program at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to gain understanding of how Asian Americans adjust to living in the United States, to understand the stressors they experience as immigrants, and to learn about how those stressors influence the marital satisfaction among Caucasian and Asian Americans heterosexual couples. In addition, this study will increase the current research that has been done with mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in the following activities; however, please note that you have the right to decline participation in any or all of the stated activities:

- Complete a demographic questionnaire, which will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.
Participate in a face-to-face interview with your spouse/partner with the researcher. This interview will take about 45-90 minutes per couple and will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

Examples of questions that will be asked during the interview include the following:

How would you describe your experience/the experience of your spouse living in the United States? .

Why did you/or you as a couple choose to live in the United States?

Please describe challenges you and/or your spouse have encountered or may have experienced while adjusting to living in the United States.

How have challenges related to moving to the United States affected your marriage?

- If the researcher requires clarification or additional information from the interview, you may be contacted by phone to answer additional questions.

Additional Activities:

- You will also be given the option to journal as you deem relevant about your experiences related to being part of a couple in which one partner has immigrated to the United States from an Asian country. You will not be asked to complete a specific number of entries or length of entries. If you choose to complete the journal, you will be asked to return the journal to researcher in two weeks, via the provided self-addressed stamped envelope.
- You will also be given the option to identify public settings in your community in which you engage with your community and where you are open to being observed by the researcher. Should you agree for the researcher to conduct the observation, you will inform the researcher the estimated time in which you would like for the researcher to be present. Otherwise, the researcher will use her best judgment about the length of observations. Should observations occur, their anticipated length is 10-30 minutes.
- You will also be given the option to share copies of documents, such as photos or letters that you believe may contribute additional relevant information to the research.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one besides the researcher will know whether you choose to participate or whether if you begin the study, you decide to quit. If you decide to join the study now, you can change your mind later. You may stop participating at any time with no penalty to you.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as a negative reactions to the interview questions, feeling stress or becoming upset as a result of the interview or other aspects of this study. Participating in this study will not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

The researcher is a licensed professional in the state of North Carolina and is a mandated reporter, who is required by state law to report any abuse, whether past or present, of children or vulnerable adults. Should you disclose during your participation an intent to harm yourself, your spouse or others, you will be asked to step out of the study. In the

event that you disclose an intent to harm others with a clear plan, the researcher is bound by law to report you intention and plan to legal authorities to prevent harm.

The benefits of participating include helping professionals gain a better understanding of how acculturation may affect marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples. This information may be used to support couples as well as assist them in developing new coping strategies. While there may not be any direct benefit to you by participating, individuals who participate in interviews such as the one in this study may benefit unexpectedly by having a chance to tell their story to a neutral party, or by having the opportunity to reviews their process.

Payment:

There is no payment associated with this study.

Audio Recording and Transcript Review:

The interviews will be audio recorded. The researcher will complete transcriptions of the interview as soon as possible following completion. You will be provided with a copy of your interview transcripts and will be given 5 days to identify any errors in the transcript that may need correcting. All data collected included audio-recordings and transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet with only the researcher having access to the key. The electronic data will be stored in a flash drive and stored in a locked cabinet. A handheld audio recording device will be used during the interview and will be stored in a locked cabinet. The hard copy documents, such as the interview guide, interview notes, and archival data will be stored in privacy envelopes and will be locked in a cabinet with the researcher having the only access to the key. The flash drive containing the electronic data will be password protected. The collected research materials, any hard copies of observation notes, transcripts, and archival data will be shredded and electronic materials will be deleted five years after the completion of the research.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secured in a locked cabinet and password protected electronic database. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university, and will be destroyed thereafter.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via telephone at 704-965-2113 and/or email at Lotes.Nelson@Waldenu.edu. In addition, if you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can contact my dissertation chair Dr. Leilani Endicott at 612-312-

1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 04-15-15-0141492 and it expires on 4-14-2016.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

1. Gender (Please select one)
 - Female
 - Male

2. How long have you been married to your spouse (Please select one)
 - Less than a year
 - 1-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - 11 or more years

3. Ethnicity (Please select one)
 - Asian
 - African American/Black
 - Caucasian/White
 - Hispanic/Latino
 - Native American
 - Pacific Islander
 - Indian
 - Other (Please Specify)

4. Nationality (Please select one)
 - Chinese
 - Filipino
 - Indian
 - Indonesian
 - Japanese
 - Korean
 - Malaysian
 - Taiwanese
 - Thai
 - United States
 - Vietnamese
 - Other (Please Specify)

5. Age (Please select one)

- 18-20
- 21-31
- 31-41
- 41-51
- 51-56
- 57+

6. Languages that you speak (Please check any that apply)

- Chinese
- English
- French
- German
- Italian
- Japanese
- Korean
- Spanish
- Other (Please Specify)

PRIMARY LANGUAGE YOU SPEAK (PLEASE SPECIFY)

7. Religion (Please select one)

- None
- Buddhist
- Catholic
- Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Other (Please Specify)

8. Education (Please select one)

- High School/GED
- Some College
- Associate Degree
- Bachelors Degree
- Masters Degree
- PhD

9. Number of Children (Please select one)

- No Children

- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5 or more

10. Employment Status (Please select one)

- Not employed
- Student
- Part-Time (less than 40 hours per week)
- Full-Time (40 hours or more per week)

11. Total Household Income (Please select one)

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000-\$19,000
- \$20,000-\$49,000
- \$50,000-\$69,000
- \$70,000-\$99,000
- \$100,000 or more

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. What are the reasons you have chosen to live in the United States?
2. Please describe challenges or stressors you or your spouse have experienced as a result of being an immigrant to the US, for example, language barrier, social support, acculturating/assimilating/or adapting to both culture's values and traditions.
3. How have those challenges or stressors affected your relationship?
4. How do you negotiate your cultural differences?
5. As a couple which culture do you identify with more frequently? How does this affect your marriage?
6. In what language do you primarily read/write/think in? How does this affect your relationship?
7. What language do you prefer communicating in with others outside of your home? How have you negotiated language inside of your home?
8. Who in the community supports you as a couple?
9. What resources have you accessed in the community as a couple?

Appendix D: Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Signer:

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: “The Role of Acculturation in Marital Satisfaction Among Mixed Caucasian and Asian American Heterosexual Couples.” I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant’s name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I’m officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature:**Date:**

Appendix E: Resource Listing

1	Open Path Psychotherapy Collective	www.openpathcollective.org	Use the website to locate therapist nearest you
2	Safe Alliance	601 East Fifth Street, Suite 400 Charlotte, NC 28202	(704) 332-9034
3	Cameron Valley Psychotherapy & Counseling Associates	6845 Fairview Road Charlotte, NC 28210	(704) 364-4333
4	Catholic Charities	1123 S. Church Street Charlotte, NC	(704) 370-3232
5	Methodist Counseling & Consultation Services	1801 E. 5 th Street, #110 Charlotte, NC 28204	(704) 375-5354

Appendix F: Solicitation Email

Dear _____,

My name is Lotes Nelson, a doctoral student in Counselor Education and Supervision at Walden University. I am writing to you to obtain your support helping me locate research participants for my dissertation research and am asking you to forward this information to people you may know who may meet criteria for serving as research participants.

My study investigates the role of acculturation and the affects of acculturation on marital satisfaction. The title of the study is “The Role of Acculturation in Marital Satisfaction Among Mixed Caucasian and Asian American Heterosexual Couples.” If you know of individuals who might be interested in participating I am asking you to forward this

To be eligible for this study participants:

1. Must be at least 18 years of age or older
2. Must be members of a Mixed Caucasian and Asian American couple in which the Asian partner migrated to the United States. The Caucasian partner must be a naturalized US citizen.
3. Both members of the couple must agree to participate in order for the couple to meet criteria as participants.

If you know of anyone that may meet the above criteria, please feel free to provide them a copy of flyer. I would like to include at least 10 couples in this process. The approximate timeframe for beginning the interviews is around March/April 2015.

Participation in this study will include engaging in an interview and completing a brief demographic survey. If additional information or clarification is needed, a follow up interview may be conducted via telephone. The time commitment for the interview will be approximately 45-90 minutes. Please note that the interview will be conducted in English.

Participants will also be invited to journal relevant thoughts, feelings or memories following the interview and may elect to include copies of archival data, such as photos or letters to further enrich the research information. Some participants may also elect to engage in researcher observations in public areas in the community.

Thank you in advance. I appreciate the help.

Contact Information:

Lotes Nelson

704-965-2113

Email: Lotes.Nelson@waldenu.edu

Appendix G: Follow-up Email

Dear Friends or Colleagues,

This is a friendly reminder of my previous email seeking couples who may be interested in participating in my research project. The study will investigate the role of acculturation in marital satisfaction among mixed Caucasian and Asian American heterosexual couples. I am seeking heterosexual couples to participate who are mixed Asian American and Caucasian. If you or someone in your network may be interested in serving as a participant, please provide them with a copy of the attached flyer and/or my contact information so I can provide additional specifics about the research and criteria for participating.

As a reminder, this research is in partial fulfillment for requirements to complete my Ph.D. in Counselor Education and supervision and the approximate timeframe for beginning the interviews is March/April 2015.

Please feel free to share the attached flyer with individuals who may meet the above criteria. If you have previously responded to this email, thank you for your support.

I appreciate your help.

Contact Information:

Lotes Nelson

704-965-2113

Email: Lotes.Nelson@waldenu.edu

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!

RESEARCH TITLE:

The Role of Acculturation in Marital Satisfaction Among Mixed Caucasian and Asian American Heterosexual Couples

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to provide an explanation and to generate a theory that helps explain the role of acculturation and how it may affect marital satisfaction. Factors related to acculturation include stressors related to relocating to a new country such as managing language barriers or encountering a lack of family and friends support. This study is focused specifically on how acculturation may influence marital satisfaction between mixed Caucasian and Asian American couples.

What is involved? This research is being conducted as a dissertation project to obtain my Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision through Walden University. Participants who volunteer for this study will engage in one 45-90 minute face-to-face interview to discuss how acculturation has played a role in your life and in your marriage. If additional information or clarification is needed, a follow up interview may be conducted via telephone. Participants will also be asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire. In addition, participants will be invited to journal relevant thoughts, feelings and memories following the face-to-face interview. Participants will also be invited to provide copies of archival data, such as photos or letters to further enrich the research information. In addition, some participant couples may elect to engage in researcher observational activities in public areas in the community

You may be eligible to participate if you are:

- At least 18 years of age, heterosexual, a member of a married couple, in which one partner is Caucasian and the other partner Asian American. The Asian American partner will need to have been an immigrant to the United States, while the Caucasian partner must be a naturalized citizen of the United States. In order to qualify to participate, both members of the couple must agree to serve as participants.

Outcome: The findings of this research may support the development of counseling strategies designed to assist the migrant population in developing relevant stress-coping mechanisms and problem-solving skills.

For more information, contact:

Researcher: Lotes Nelson

Phone: 704-965-2113

Email: Lotes.Nelson@Waldenu.edu

Appendix I: Journal Prompts

Thank you for your participation in my research project entitled “The Role of Acculturation in Marital Satisfaction among Mixed Caucasian and Asian American Heterosexual Couples.” As we discussed during the interview, you are provided this journal to write any additional thoughts that you may want to further share related to the research topic. You may include as few or as many entries as you like. There is no right or wrong level of participation, although participant reflections tend to be of great value for qualitative studies like this one. If you choose not to journal it will in no way affect your inclusion in the study.

Below are examples of topics you may write about:

Please jot down any additional thoughts or questions you may have for the next 14 days following your interview.

Additional challenges or stressors you or your spouse have experienced as a result of being an immigrant to the US.

Additional cultural differences that you have experienced but not previously shared (please provide examples). How have you negotiated them?

How has your marital relationship been affected by the identified stressors or challenges?

Appendix J: Research Observation Protocol

The researcher will obtain permission from research participants prior to attending the event. The researcher will observe the couple's interactions with one another as well as within their immediate surroundings to gather data related to the participants' non-verbal and verbal communication when outside of their home environment and interacting in the community. To protect the research participants' confidentiality, the researcher will not acknowledge the participants during assembly or events. The researcher will only collect information about the research participants and will not gather any data about other individuals that may be present at the event.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Length of activity: ____ minutes	
Site: _____ Participants/Pseudonyms: _____	
Role of Observer: _____	
<i>Descriptive Notes</i> (Ex: Physical setting: Visual Layout)	<i>Reflective Notes</i> (Ex: questions to self, observations of nonverbal behavior, my interpretations)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of participants • Description of activities • Description of individuals engaged in activity • Sequence of activity over time • Interactions • Unplanned events • Participants comments: expressed in 	Reflective comments: questions to self, observations of nonverbal behavior, my interpretations

quotes	
The researcher's observation of what seems to be occurring:	

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Appendix K: Codes/Nodes

- Didn't know English
- Think in dialect and having to translate in my head
- Couldn't talk to each other, friends, and family
- Having to reword what I was saying or repeating what was said
- Point at things to help her understand
- Wanted American partner to learn dialect
- Talk to friends and family in dialect
- Not speaking her mind
- US partner is straightforward/more vocal
- Want more details
- Not saying no
- Shutting down
- Men (US partners) are controlling money
- Asian partner didn't understand how to manage money and spending a lot
- Sending money home (Immigrant partner's family)
- No one to talk to
- No other individuals from the same country in the US
- US family do not like the idea of marrying someone from outside of the US
- Family is not as close in the US
- Immigrant family is close
- There is no respect found amongst US family
- Immigrant family is more hospitable, kind, nice, and respectful than US family
- US individuals are more liberated
- Immigrant partner is conservative and sensitive
- US is private
- Supporting immigrant partner
- Better opportunity
- Economics
- Better condition
- High regard for immigrant partner to live in US
- Couldn't talk to spouse due to English language
- Misunderstood by others
- Missed family and friends.