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Experiences of Japanese war brides and assimilation into Appalachia: understanding the intersection of ethnicity and gender

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Experiences of Japanese War Brides and Assimilation into Appalachia : Understanding the Intersection of Ethnicity and Gender

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Abstract

This qualitative study analyzes the acculturation and assimilation of Japanese war brides into Appalachia. Although the Japanese female immigrants have lived in Appalachia for many years, their life experiences have been ignored by academia in Appalachian studies. A purpose of this study is to advance the understanding what social mechanisms impact the assimilation of the Japanese war brides and what it means for them to live in this society. By using oral history with open-ended questions, data is gathered from in-depth interviews with four Japanese war brides. The study finds retention of ethnic identity, recovery of cultural heritage, and social exclusion. These findings are interpreted as a consequence of intersecting oppression of ethnicity and gender socialization of the women in regards to assimilation process.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

As a Japanese woman, I personally have experienced a feeling of social isolation, threat, exclusion in the Appalachian region which is characterized by the white domination. I recognized what it is like to exist in a white dominated society as well. Through my experiences as a Japanese woman and consciousness of my ethnicity in Appalachia, I became aware that no one had conducted research into the social phenomena of Japanese women. There are a number of studies that reflect ethnic groups in the Appalachian region, such as Irish, Polish, Italian, Jewish, African-American, and Hispanic, but no Asian ethnic groups. Therefore, I want to give a voice to women whose previous existence has not been acknowledged, although Japanese war brides have been long-time residents of Appalachia. I do not intend to overgeneralize my findings, so that this study analyzes the findings from life experiences based on only Japanese war brides with whom I have interacted.

Direction of this study

This study focuses on the post-war female immigrants who do not fit into assimilation theories which have examined immigrants in terms of generations, but have not clarified the intersection of ethnicity and gender. I hope this research contributes toward the study of ethnic relations concerning Japanese immigrants in the Appalachian

region by providing interpretation of social phenomena of the Japanese war brides. My goal is to identify what social mechanisms affect the assimilation process of Japanese war brides through their life experiences in a rural area and to interpret what it means for the Japanese war brides to live in a "white" society. To accomplish this study, the focus is on in-depth interviews with four Japanese war brides who have lived in Appalachia for many years.

History

There have been two main groups of female Japanese immigrants in American history: the first generation of the Japanese American were called Issei and war brides. Most of Issei women arrived between 1851 and 1924 in Hawaii and on the West Coast (Glenn 1986). They were sent as the marital partners for Japanese men who came to the United States to seek a fortune. Issei women were employed as cheap laborers as the Japanese male laborers were (Takaki 1993). Due to endogamy, Issei women could share the same ethnic background at home or in the community, even though they arrived in the new land. They lived in Japanese communities with strong solidarity, spoke Japanese language and prepared Japanese meals. To the contrary, the experiences of the Japanese war brides present different pictures from that of the Issei women. This immigrant group came not as wives of Japanese men, but as wives of American servicemen. The Japanese war brides had to become involved in a different culture both at home and in the community.

Compared with an abundance of research on Japanese immigrants prior to World War II, literature on the recent Japanese immigrants as newcomers has been investigated

less. The newspaper, Hokubei Mainichi (1994) published, a letter from Mrs. Kazuko Umezu Stout, who previously proposed a 40th anniversary for the immigration of Japanese war brides. In the newspaper, she advocated that we should not ignore the life history of the past years of those women who came to the United States through interracial marriages after World War II, and, to some extent, emphasizes the great value of preserving the meaningfulness of interracial marriage for women. The literature on the first Japanese immigration -- in particular, the male immigrant -- has been extensive. Thus, I would stress the importance of studying the lives of these women.

The women who became war brides in the 1950s and early 1960s were adolescents or young women at the end of World War II (Glenn 1986:59). Most American-Japanese couples met at work or through a friend. Table 1 shows the number of Japanese women admitted to the United States as wives of American citizens annually the year from 1947 to 1960.

Table 1. The number of Japanese women admitted to U.S. from 1947 to 1960

Year	Number	Year	Number
1947	14	1954	2802
1948	298	1955	2843
1949	445	1956	3661
1950	9	1957	5003
1951	125	1958	4841
1952	4220	1959	4412
1953	2042	1960	3887

Kim, a social worker specializing in war brides (Glenn 1986:63), posits that the accurate data on their demographic characteristics cannot be ascertained (Kim 1977). However,

the U.S. Consulate in Japan has indicated that two-thirds to three-quarters of the immigrants in this table could be considered as women who married American servicemen (Kim 1977, Glenn 1986:36). Respondents in this research entered the United States from 1952 to 1958. Also, it should be noted that the number entering the United States remarkably increased in 1952. Although public law in December, 1945, allowed servicemen's brides to enter the United States, the law made no provision for Japanese brides until 1952 (Strauss 1954). The McCarran-Walter Act[1] of 1952 established token quotas for immigrants from Asia[2]. As a result of the law, the numbers in Table. 1 demonstrate an increase in Japanese female immigrants.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERUTURE REVIEW

Japanese War Brides

Almost all the studies on Japanese war brides were conducted in the two decades following World War II. Recent studies appear to have forgotten the presence of the Japanese war brides. Instead, researchers have asked questions concerning language ability, customs, and religion in relation to their investigation of ethnicity in the United States. Their focus has been on how and why exogamous marriages work and the relationship between American husbands and Japanese wives. Even though adaptation into the host society has been explored, it forms only a part of the investigation. Scholars have been inclined to focus on the causes of martial stability and problems leading to instability. In short, assimilation patterns have not been the focus of sociological researchers.

The concentration of all the literature has been on those who live in urban areas with a dense ethnic population. This differs from the Appalachian region where I have conducted this research. For the most part, the Appalachian region does not have the social or geographical characteristics of urban regions.

Given this, it is still important to summarize what work has been done, especially what findings in urban areas are still relevant for the focus of this research. Evelyn Nakano Glenn (1981), a third generation Japanese-American sociologist, presented her

research regarding the introduction of first and second generation of Japanese female immigrants and Japanese war brides into domestic work. Her paper studied the patterns of domestic work and the reasons for its persistence over generations. The bulk of her data came from semi-structured interviews with forty-six women who lived in the Bay area of San Francisco, newspaper files and secondary sources. Of all the respondents, only twelve are war brides. She found that structural barriers blocked their access to a variety of occupations. The intersection of gender and ethnicity prevents them from getting involved in other occupations. A lack of communication ability lessens their opportunities in the labor market. Consequently, the pattern of concentration in domestic work separates them from racial discrimination. This social segregation is also more likely to provide job opportunities in the ethnic community.

Although she conducted the interviews with war brides, analysis from their interviews placed less weight on the first and second generations. Furthermore, in her conclusions, she failed to distinguish the war brides from the other two generations. Glenn gave notice that the characteristics of the war brides differ from the others, without thoroughly discussing the research on the war brides.

Glenn (1986) published a book following her research on the three above groups a few years later. This book added more information about them, narrowing down the nature of social segregation in the labor market. Her investigation drew on Edna Bonacich's analysis of the mechanism of a capitalist society by which women of color have been segmented in the labor market. Bonacich theorizes that capitalism encourages competition between ethnic groups for the labor market secures better profit conditions by exploiting subordinate ethnic groups. The segments are structured to maintain race

and gender advantages. The war brides, as well as the first and the second generation, tend to do domestic work despite social changes leading to the breakdown of ethnic barriers in the post war period. Glenn's study on family relations (1986) also showed that marital conflict and problems have been more prevalent among war brides than the first and the second generations of Japanese. The social circumstances surrounding them brought social isolation through lack of English language ability and little support from husbands.

Other scholars focused on marital relationships between American husbands and Japanese war brides on the basis of the interview data.

Bok-Lim C. Kim (1977) collected data as a social worker. All the American-Japanese couples she met came to seek her help for their problems. It is less likely that she would meet a representative range of couples. She described that failure of their husbands to provide guidance and support for adjustment creates not only unstable marital relationship, but problem encouraged by Japanese women is the source of cultural conflict. According to her findings, these women are filled with fear, neglected and abused by their husbands. Therefore, she suggested that it is necessary to provide more services and improve conditions, such as language training classes and a counseling system for their adjustment into a different culture. Although her study discussed that oppression and role expectation of the women reveals unstable marriages, it lacked a discussion on the way in which oppression of ethnicity is affected.

Tsuneo Enari (1981), a Japanese journalist, introduced each of eight women who married American servicemen stationed in Japan during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. By necessity, interviewees were distributed into different

generations. He carried out the interviews all over California. His findings revealed that the term " war brides" lead to negative impressions for some of the war brides and it offended them. In each story, the respondent recited her experience from the time she met her husband to her present life, when she was interviewed. The women told us of their joyfulness, loneliness, or suffering in the United States. Enari noted that by communicating among the Japanese ethnic community and participating in Japanese culture activity, most of the war brides ease their loneliness and longing for their families in Japan. Yet, their hardships such as divorces, were emphasized. His work was a contribution as a narrative line for each life experience and depicts the experience of the women he interviewed from the viewpoint of the journalist. Therefore, he did not sufficiently analyze the interview data nor study it objectively, in contrast with other sophisticated academic works. On the other hand, the stories from the women of World War II have import for my study, as other scholars have oversimplified the in-depth interview data without nearly transcribing them.

John W.Connor (1976) examined the assumption that marriages between Anglo-American men and Japanese war brides would be unstable leading to cultural, religious, and racial differences. Based on survey-style interviews of twenty American-Japanese couples, the data indicated that these interracial marriages were as stable as Anglo-American couples. It is important to note that both husbands and wives were interviewed together. Examination of his interview questions showed a bias toward being answered positively. For example, when the husband and the spouse are sitting together, replying to a question such as "Do you ever regret your marriages?" (1976:75) suffers from bias, whether it is a successful marriage or not. For five divorced couples, his analysis is that

such failures are not caused by the social factors and their marriages, but are the consequence of early marriage and psychological disorders. His result did not discuss the problem of interracial marriage relating to social problems. Before insisting on psychological dysfunction, it is significant to investigate sociologically what factors cause problems in the relationship among the interracial marriages.

Schnepp and Yui (1955) also confirmed stability as a key factor, rather than cultural conflict. When the interracial marriages are examined from the standpoint of in-group and out-group relationships, religious practices, language and the roles of husbands and wives become critical. Fifteen American-Japanese couples in the St. Louis area and five in the Chicago area were interviewed. The authors seemed accurate in saying that "This is an exploratory study, and the conclusions cannot be unqualifiedly applied to all American-Japanese war brides," (1955:480). They let us know the possible bias in the data selection process because of the difficulties in locating research subjects. Even when they could locate couples, some were not willing to be interviewed.

Glenn's and Bok-Lim C. Kim's studies argued that marital unstability is due to poor adaptation, such as a lack of language ability. This is in contrast to the work of Connor, Schnepp and Yui. All in all, the investigators tended to understand marital stability as associated with social and cultural adaptation in American society. It is possible that there is a causal coincidence with marital relationship and nothing else would be different. I came to the conclusion that none of the studies emphasized the social phenomenon of assimilating into American society.

All of my respondents maintained marital stability for many years despite encounters with cultural conflict. A war bride I interviewed, said:

I have been happy to be here with my husband. It has nothing to do with the husband being of a different ethnic background and it is a personal matter. I might have been unhappy even with a Japanese husband.

I dissent from these studies that when research on Japanese war brides was done, the researchers did not address the issues and problems of adaptation into the host society.

Therefore, the focus of this investigation is how the Japanese war brides in a rural area have been acculturated into the core society. Based on the experiences from in-depth interviews with the war brides, it is important to interpret how they have been affected by their adaptation into society.

Assimilation Perspective

This section looks at the different theoretical approaches to levels of assimilation into the mainstream of American society. Comprehending the specific assimilation process is complicated, especially in the case of Japanese war brides who are different from other ethnic immigrants.

Milton Gordon (1964), who made a contribution to the conceptual distinction of assimilation, identifies seven different levels. One is what Gordon calls cultural assimilation and refers to the absorption of the cultural behavior patterns of the dominant culture. The focus of Gordon's acculturation is on adoption of values, beliefs, ideologies and language. The second level is what he calls structural assimilation and refers to the entrance of the minority ethnic group into organizations, social cliques and institutions of the dominant society. This involves formal organizational structural interacting with the

ethnically dominant institutions such as schools, workplaces and political arenas. Third, marital assimilation is the rate of intermarriage between subordinate groups and dominant ethnic groups. Fourth, identification assimilation is the process by which immigrants develop a sense of people or ethnicity in place of their own ethnic identity. The fifth, attitude and receptional assimilation is when the ethnic groups experience reduced intentional prejudicial attitude and stereotypes. After this stage, intentional discriminatory behavior decreases. Finally, conflict between the dominant and subordinate ethnic groups has decreased over their values and access to political power.

In Gordon's perspective, intermarriages are considered as the ultimate form of structural assimilation. This point cannot be applied to this study of the Japanese war brides. The process that Gordon analyzed is that the barrier to be broken in assimilation is not cultural but structural (O'Brien and Fugita 1991). Gordon noted that cultural assimilation happens to ethnic immigrants as time goes on, whereas there remains a lack of structural assimilation. Basically, Gordon's view assumed that individuals in the ethnic minority group interact with individuals in the majority group on the degree of basic acceptance.

Gordon linked the process of structural assimilation to discrimination by the dominant group. In short, he attributed the lack of structural assimilation to prejudice, discrimination, conflict between groups, and desire of some groups to maintain their ethnic identity. As Gordon argues,

> *Once structural assimilation occurred, either simultaneously with or subsequent to acculturation, all other types of assimilation will naturally follow. (1964:81)*

As a result, the structural assimilation process will gradually reduce ethnic identity. However, one could ask whether this necessarily applies to all ethnic groups.

Jeffery Reitz (1980) critiqued the traditional approach. Reitz said, for example, that there is a problem with Milton Gordon's view of the relation between assimilation and loss of ethnicity. His research made two distinctions of social process. According to Reitz,

> *Structural assimilation is not the opposite of ethnic group membership retention. There are two distinct social processes involved in the two conceptions. On the other hand, individuals may or not retain membership in an ethnic minority group on the primary group level. On the other hand, they may or may not gain acceptance into the institutions of the dominant society. The two variables are quite distinct and should be treated separately. (1980:101)*

This statement points out that scholars have regarded persistence of ethnic identity and assimilation as opposite social forces. In terms of retention of ethnic group identity, Reitz conceptualized two aspects. Ethnic identification refers to whether or not an individual thinks himself as being a member of the ethnic group without having any contact with his own group; social interaction refers to relationships with other members of the ethnic community. His theory clarified questions related to the research on the social experiences of Japanese war brides.

Hisako Matsuo (1992) studied two models of ethnic identity of Japanese Americans: primordialism and circumstantialism. Her research was conducted with two samples in Portland, Oregon, in 1989. One sample, second generation Japanese immigrants, was interviewed face to face. The data from another sample, third

generation Japanese immigrants, were collected through mailed questionnaires. Two questions were addressed: 1) whether the third generation of Japanese immigrants achieved identificational assimilation or not; and 2) what factors impacted the group's indentificational assimilation. She explained primordialism as attributes of identity that function as strong emotional ties, based on biological origin and the distinctive past of a group. Political and economic oppression forces ethnic groups to resist assimilation into the dominant society. On the other hand, the circumstantial approach argued that social circumstances, such as social roles and social class, are the significant factors in determining ethnic identity. In this view, identificational assimilation of an ethnic group is contingent on education and social experience. Her findings indicate that the importance of generation shift does not affect identificational assimilation. Rather, childhood and adult social networks have the greatest affect on ethnic identity when the second and the third generation are placed in the same circumstances.

Overall, the literature focuses on a theoretical approach that asks what the ethnic minority group has in common with the dominant white ethnic group. Depending on how similar the minority groups are to the dominant group, the ethnic group is perceived to be less or more assimilated into the dominant society.

Many studies of assimilation have centered on the experiences of European immigrants and black Americans into the mainstream of American society. When Japanese immigrants are examined, the focus is on those who were born or raised in American society. The Japanese war brides met their husbands in Japan during World War II and came to America. This is an important difference – one that has not been analyzed within the assimilation literature. Also, the Appalachian region in which this

research was conducted does not have the same social and cultural characteristics as a community with a large Japanese population. Therefore, this study will add to the importance of understanding and depth to the existing sociological literature on assimilation.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The primary focus of this research is to understand the process by which the war brides have assimilated as Americans. For this, we must understand meanings through their words as to how they interpret experiences and their social location within the host society. My intention is to pose exploratory findings through a qualitative research method. Historical human occurrences should be descriptive. The pattern of assimilation has been changing over time, and it is important to track these changes. The social construction of reality that emerges from convention is key to this type of the study. The qualitative approach requires physical observation of the subjects in their natural setting (Rubin and Rubin 1995).

In-depth Interviews

The descriptive analysis which follows is primarily based on in-depth interviews. Interview-based research is a very effective means of generating data about respondent's concerns, feelings and perceptions (Miller and Dingwall 1997:4). Rubin and Rubin (1995) describe strategies for qualitative research designs. The type of qualitative interview in this research is that of " life histories", according to Rubin and Rubin (1995:27). Life histories or oral history emphasize the individual experiences and seek to describe and understand the different stages of life of the interviewees. The life histories

have been utilized as classic research strategies which rest on the emphasis given to subjective experience. The basic theme of life history is the construction of a set of explanations that reflect one person's or one group's subjective experiences toward a predetermined set of events and present experiences from the perspective of the focal subject (Denzin 1976:415). Life history is also a useful research technique to present women and ethnic groups that do not lead public lives and are rendered historically voiceless.

Moreover, Rubin and Rubin (1995) underline the importance of interviewees being treated as partners in the research. This closes the social distance between respondents and the researcher. To elicit valid data, it is important to have a good relationship between the interviewers and interviewees. This is key for obtaining reliable data (Rubin and Rubin 1995).

In-depth intensive interviews were utilized for repetition of the questions and for breaking the research into sections. Reliability with this method was tested in two ways :1) I repeated the same question that had been previously asked. This was for the purpose of developing valid accurate data. I assume that a divergence of the context between the two interviews should be taken into consideration. They needed time to refresh in their minds old experiences, events, and feelings that occurred thirty and forty years ago. 2) We took a short break during the interview. The respondents might have felt stressed by the long formal interviews and physically uncomfortable sitting at a table.

Respondents

The respondents in this study were four Japanese war brides. War Brides in this study require clear identification. For this research, three conditions were set : 1) the marriage took place earlier than 1960; 2) thirty years of residence in the United States, and 3) their husbands were involved in the U.S. occupation of Japan after World War II, between 1946 to 1952. This seven-year period was historically when the United States occupied Japan under the leadership of Gen. Douglas MacArthur. Their ages are between the middle sixties and the early seventies. Restricting the age range has a significant influence on the analysis of interview data. This age group was appropriate to choose so as to cover these conditions. In addition, I believe that cohort shared similar historical backgrounds and values, raised in the midst of the war.

I had difficulties in finding war brides as there is not a large Japanese community in Appalachia. I needed to ask those I knew for introduction to the others. I approached them by making phone calls and explained the purpose of the interviews. I was previously acquainted with two of the four respondents, who live in a suburb of Huntington,[3] West Virginia. I met two of the women for the first time during this research. They live in a small town outside of Charleston,[4] West Virginia. I asked the individuals to tell me about their experiences and life. The women agreed to be interviewed on the condition of anonymity. I have removed specific information that might identify them.

Data Collection

Data was collected from November, 1998 through January 1999. With two exceptions, the two interviews with each were recorded in their homes and the meeting

time was arranged in advance. There were two exceptions: one interview was conducted in the shopping mall and another was a group-interview with two respondents at home. I made an effort to spend at least half a day with them in order to extract reliable information. Each interview lasted between 70 minutes and 90 minutes. All the respondents agreed to record the interviews. As part of the study, data was collected through both informal settings and formal settings.

Informal settings provide insight into the nature of the interaction between the researcher and respondents. I was able to gather fruitful data in the times before and after interviewing. For example, we had dinners together whenever I visited them. One of the war brides took me to the shopping mall. General lines of inquiry were embedded in a seemingly natural conversation in which the respondents play an important role in this study (Miller and Dingwall 1997:340). As I spent more time with the war brides, I gained knowledge of their understanding which is reflected in my account. Such opportunities allowed me to observe how they behaved in their daily life. In addition to the taped interviews and informal settings, I took reflective notes during the interviews and kept a diary to remember my feelings, reflecting on the research process. It is important to write down feelings and impressions, otherwise thoughts are apt to slip away. Contributions of note-taking ranged from problem identification to question development. The words jotted down helped me to remember the description that was completed later on.

Questions

Each respondent completed about twenty-five questions, using face to face interviews. The questions were designed to gather information on variables including eating habits, availability of language, work experiences, community participation, and kinship in both the United States and Japan. The questions were asked in an unstructured, open-ended format which provides maximum flexibility. The purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining them. The interviews were carried out in Japanese, which is a native language for both the interviewees and myself. All the respondents chose Japanese over English for the same reason as mine. Japanese is an appropriate language for both of us because we can thereby express our more subtle feelings and nuances fluently. It was surprising and interesting for me that they took it for granted that they would speak Japanese with a Japanese person.

The taped interviews were transcribed literally in Japanese and the transcripts treated as raw data. The transcripts were translated into English to be employed as quotations. Michael Q. Patton (1990:24) states that direct quotations are a basic source of raw data in qualitative inquiry, revealing respondents' depth of emotion, the ways they have organized their world, their thought, and their experiences. Furthermore, by replacing and transcribing the tape recordings, the researcher produces fine-grained analysis of the intersection of the social setting. Verbatim transcriptions are made available to inform analytical interpretations.

It is impossible for a qualitative approach to attain complete objectivity. I include personal experiences and insights. My standpoint based on experiences and beliefs

shaped by social relations in both gender and ethnic-stratified society is an important part of inquiry to interpret the experiences of the war brides. Standpoint enables me to produce description from the distinctive features of women and ethnic groups.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA

An understanding of the assimilation of Japanese war brides is clearly based on the intersection of ethnicity and gender. Under the patriarchy of both American and Japanese society, women are considered to be of lower status. Men and women have different ways of experiencing assimilation. In other words, sex and gender systems of marriage and family affect the social relations between men and women. It is clear that the study of ethnicity and assimilation patterns cannot be separated from the study of gender. Also, when combining the interactive relationship of two social categories, there is the complexity of historical context as to how to discuss the assimilation pattern.

Motivation for Marriages

In this part, the motivation for marriage to American husbands will be discussed. Motivation influences women's assimilation through their life experiences. All of the women agreed with " love " as the reason for marrying their husbands. Romantic love was the initial explanation for them. However, in discussing their motivation, an analysis of interview data includes the more intricate conditions that pushed the women toward intermarriage despite opposition by their families. The war brides marriages violated the most fundamental norms of Japanese society (Glenn 1986). Respondent 1

mentioned that she concealed even dating with her husband from her family, as well as meeting with opposition by them.

> *Of course, of course. I kept a secret. If I said my family that I was dating with an American, I must have been disowned.*

Under Japanese social norms, marriage is considered a family -- rather than an individual -- matter since marriage is tied to the preservation of the family's name and honor (Glenn 1986, Fugita 1991). Therefore, there are strong social norms against marriage outside the group. Particularly, serious relationships between Japanese women and American GIs were generally disapproved of by Japanese society (Schukert and Scibetta 1988:193). All of the women expressed a feeling of fear toward American servicemen before dating their husbands. For example, Respondent 2 recalled her feeling of American GIs in childhood.

> *I was, what is now called, a first grade in junior high school when the war was over. I was fearful. As my house owns a fish market, I saw many drunk Americans come there.*

War time images of Americans as murdering, along with warnings about looting and rapes were created in Japanese newspapers. These warnings sent women into hiding (Shukert and Scibetta 1998). According to the experiences of Respondent 1 and Respondent 3, during the war they were forced to spread ink on pages in English textbooks and to cross out English terms in other textbooks as these were considered to be as part of the culture of the enemy country. Besides being stereotyped during the war, the fact that the Americans defeated Japan and occupied a dominate position in post-war Japan made her more scared. Yet, their fear of the Americans decreased with frequent

contact. All the women had jobs in which they came into direct contact with American GIs. Respondent 1 described a change in her way of looking at them.

> *At first, I had fear. But once I worked for PX., I had noticed that there were both good men and bad men. So, with co-worker..., when a party at a company of military was held, said... please come. And they bring bouquets.*

When viewing the change of Respondent 1, there was not only falling in love with the American man, but anticipatory socialization to the Western culture. In Japanese culture, a man and a woman were usually married without having a date or without knowing each other intimately. Thus, a date with the American GI was an impressive experience for the Japanese war brides, since dating was not a Japanese custom.

Attractiveness of American Culture

Aside from romantic love, cultural attraction was a powerful impetus for marriage to American husbands. By knowing the American servicemen, the women who had changed their attitude were more attracted to American than Japanese men because they believed American men treated the women with more consideration. The woman typically assumes that in an "American marriage" she would enjoy greater social freedom than she would in Japan (Christpher 1983:1720).

> *As I was getting to know, a Japanese man is ... well, too domineering, isn't it ? ... I am disagreeable to the offensive word like he calls his wife "You". It is usual to say "You", isn't it? The Japanese men throw their weight around the women. Such a thing.., the American*

does not do so. Then, gradually, well.. it came to lead a feeling of preferring the American.

As Respondent 3 continued to date her husband, she started to notice differences between an American man and a Japanese man in the treatment of women. Like Respondent 3, the other women shared the same perceptions of differences between the American and the Japanese man. When they became involved with GIs, they were attracted by their open friendliness and kindness, compared to the reticence and aloofness of the average Japanese male (Shukert and Scibetta 1988). The favorable acceptance of American culture stems from the oppression that these Japanese war brides, had experienced male supremacy. Respondent 4 told the story of the persistent approach of her husband and her eventual favorable acceptance of him.

I stayed at my friend's in Shiga[5] for a several month. The friend had some American friends and a boyfriend. When looking at her, I didn't expect to have an American boyfriend as dating with a foreigners was against the Japanese society. Before coming to Shiga, I was working at a souvenir shop of a Japanese inn in my hometown. We sometimes had the American servicemen who came to buy the Japanese things. Sometimes as a guest, they stayed at the hotel where I worked. But there was a little fear. .....one day, her American boyfriend brought my husband to her house. I didn't pay attention to him at all and was not interested in him for a while. But it seems like, ... I seemed he looked very gently and kind to me. He always gave me a bunch of flowers and many things to make me happy. Anyway, compared with a Japanese man, an

American man looked kind to me and had a good treatment to the Japanese ladies.

Importantly, it might have been be their first experience in being treated as "ladies' first" – something that does not exist in Japan. The small things that American men did customarily for Japanese women were very much accepted and appreciated by the women. Having evaluated both the American and the Japanese culture, it can be argued that the women showed a degree of cultural attraction for the American mainstream before their entry to the United States.

Feeling Social Pressure

Another aspect of motivation for intermarriage should be analyzed. The social pressures of Japanese society concerning marriage were considered a significant motivation for their decision. The war brides had looked for something to escape the situation that they faced. Respondent 2 says,

Right before I met him, my parents forced me into an arranged marriage. This marriage condition can not be refused and I was on the edge. I think I wanted to get away from that. Strange and inscrutable is brought into wedlock.

The older generation, such as the war brides, were strictly brought up by parents with the notion of the importance of maintenance of household (Iwao 1993). With ideology of 'Ie'[6] system, the partriarchal head was equipped with almost absolute power over household matters, including the choice of marriage partners for the family members

(Sugimoto 1997: 138). Respondent 3 primarily insisted that she had been in love with her husband, but she also added a reason for marriage to the American.

> *After all, marriage to the American is ... there might have a feeling of wanting to go to America. Maybe..., I was not very young and was late for marriageable age. My marriage was by no means early.*

In Japan, marriage was, in a sense, mandatory for the young women. They were pressured by the norm that they should be married by a certain age. For them, to marry an American GI was an effective way to come to settle the social pressure they confronted.

Economic Circumstances

Defeated by the war and confused, Japanese society suffered from a shortage of food. Economic stability seemed to play a part of role in pushing the women toward intermarriages. Beside the pressure of age restriction, Respondent 3 indicated,

> *I was surprised that when I stepped into the military base, I felt it was just like another world. Because...., those days, after the war, there was not enough food. There were many people on the street who couldn't reach food. So many canned foods, and anything in the base. Everything looked much better than Japan of those days, I think. Somewhat, that made me so envious and that reason might partly influence marriage to the American. Maybe.*

Thus, despite their perception that romantic love was a main motivation for intermarriage, their social circumstances motivated them to marry American men.

Exposure to a different a different culture uncovered for them an oppositional view of the Japanese society. Needless to say, these factors affect the process of their cultural assimilation into the American mainstream after their entry to America.

Retaining Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity refers to one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group (Phinney 1987), what Gordon defines as sense of peoplehood (Gordon 1964). According to Milton Gordon, intermarriage is an ultimate structural assimilation, which he calls marital assimilation. If marital assimilation, an inevitable by-product of structural assimilation, takes place fully the minority group loses its ethnic identity in the larger host core society, and identification assimilation takes place (Gordon 1964:80). On the contrary, this study finds that the women have obstinately maintained their Japanese identity. This, then, challenges Gordon's assumption.

It is remarkable that a frequent linguistic pattern which refers to a foreigner is consistently raised during interviews. This is specific usage of what the Japanese people call American: 'Gaijin' in Japanese. The word 'Gaijin' provides a significant way to examine Japanese war brides understanding of their ethnic identity. This word is a Japanese term that points out the white American, barely identifying any other ethnic groups. Although they became American citizens and are no longer Japanese citizens by law, their identity is still predominately Japanese. The concept of 'in-group' and 'out-group' is manifested in the application of the term. The question regarding ethnic identity of the Japanese women was never directly addressed as to whether they consider themselves as Japanese or Americans. Rather, they were asked if they obtained American citizenship. All the women became naturalized American citizens a few years after they came to the United States. In this section, the research examines how and what

the Japanese war brides understand, and how they maintained, their ethnic identity by distinguishing the 'in-group and out-group'.

Impact on Discrimination

Gordon implies that once prejudice and discrimination is eliminated, assimilation will result in the loss of ethnic identity (Gordon 1964). Conversely, blatant discrimination can be traced to the maintenance of their ethnic identity. The degree to which these women experienced racism increased the consciousness of their ethnic identity (Uba 1994). Respondent 2 told a story about having a harsh discriminatory experience as soon as she moved to West Virginia in 1956.

> *I was called JAP and had thrown rocks. ...But then, I thought. Due to being a Japanese, I should not make myself degraded by American. I am not only Respondent 2, but a Japanese. So, as a Japanese, I have thought to try to make me humiliated. I have hung in there since then. So, even something difficult to do, I said that yes, I can do and accomplished.*

In addition to this blatant racism, Respondent 2 remembers that people often said "Hey, Ojou-san"[7]. She felt uncomfortable with this degrading phrase. Her understanding is that the phrase was employed by American GIs stationed in Japan during the Occupation period. They called this to young Japanese as a trifling joke. This phrase was sometimes employed to look for bar girls as sexual objects for the American GIs.

The literature suggests that there is a relationship between the individual's ethnic identity and social position. People in lower-status positions are more likely to have stronger ethnic identities than people in higher-status positions. People tend to lose their

ethnic identity through assimilation when subordinate groups face less discrimination and prejudice by the dominant group. American society is perceived as intrinsically built on an ethnic hierarchy that ranks people on ascribed status (Shibutani and Kwan 1964). The assimilation perspectives can be viewed as an aspect of the ideology of white supremacy. The Japanese war brides in the host society have been regarded, and treated, as lower status ethnic groups, reflecting structural placement on the basis of ethnicity. They are forced to learn the ideology of the white dominant group. From the perspective of the ethnically oppressed groups, this leads to a heightened awareness.

Impact on Historical Event

The role of historical incidents also has an influence upon the emergence of Japanese identity. For example, it is also necessary to understand the devastating consequences of the forced evacuation and relocation of Japanese-American citizens to concentration camps during World War II (Fugita and O'Brien 1994:22). Likewise, this is a factor that reflects ethnic identity among the Japanese war brides. Respondent 1 told,

> *When I was about my second year of the women's school, well... in wartime, all the books with alphabet and foreign word like an English book, everything was burned. The Japanese government spread an idea of American enemy by propaganda. I was raised under fidelity to Japan and believed that Americans were bad people. Around that time, I might seem to be taught involuntary as I was a Japanese. Then, Japan was defeated by American, wasn't it? Everyone thought MacArthur launched to capture Japan.*

This interview illustrates a way in which the historical experience of Respondent 1 had impacted the construction of her ethnic identity. Also, the immigration law before 1952 didn't allow. Respondent 1 to enter the United States, and separated her from her husband for a year. This supported the development of her Japanese identity.

> *Two years in Japan. But my husband came back to America one year after we married. He had to be hospitalized. But I couldn't come with him because I am a Japanese. So, we separated from each other and I was back to my parents' house. When the year of 1952 has come, my husband in America said to me " Be hurry. Although I don't know when the law has changed again to prohibit the Japanese immigrant, be hurry anyway.*

Respondent 4 is also the woman who was reflective of political attitudes, as well as Respondent 1. She mentioned the reason why she obtained American citizenship.

> *I obtained American citizenship as soon as possible. I thought it would be in trouble if the law has changed again. I have already had children and thought I had to live in this country. That is why I am no longer Japanese. There is no my name in family registration in Japan. I think I am a Japanese, though.*

At this point, the retention of ethnic identity underlines motherhood. All the women became naturalized American citizens within a few years after they moved to the United States. The reason why they obtained American citizenship was reflective of change in political attitude that resulted in a favorable immigration law for Japanese after 1952. Fluctuation in the U.S. immigration laws prior to 1952 created an atmosphere threatening to the stability of family unity for Japanese war brides. It is significant to note that no

matter how strong their ethnicity, the looming-threat of changes in immigration law provided the impetus for the Japanese women to choose American citizen.

Overall, Gordon oversimplifies the assimilation process, neglecting the role of conflict and tension (Ringer and Lawless 1989:136). He insists that the fact that the individuals live in a dominant neighborhood lack the degree of identificational assimilation, which naturally taken place in. However, none of the Japanese war brides, who have lived in the predominate white neighbors lose their ethnic identities. According to Respondent 3, in particular, at the time when she moved to West Virginia she had only white-neighbors. Gordon's assimilation perspective had no gender analysis and was applied regardless of the characteristics of the ethnic groups based on their historical background and racism. In other words, his analysis of the level of assimilation of the ethnic group ignored historical context and fact of racism among oppressed groups in conjunction with gender and ethnic differences (Hurtado 1997). Depending on how similar minority groups are viewed by the dominant white Euro-American group, they are perceived as less or more assimiliable in the dominant society.

Living with Family

Impact on Cultural Assimilation

Although the Japanese war brides have identified themselves as Japanese for many years, the intersection of ethnicity and gender deserves to be analyzed. This appears to be the cultural assimilation into the host society. By definition, cultural major determinant of assimilation consists of adapting values, food, ideologies, religion and language (Gordon 1964). This procedure involves the shifting from practices of immigrants in the everyday life of ethnic groups. I was particularly interested in focusing on the patterns of food consumption in the family and learning the English language.

Japan has been greatly influenced by Western culture since World War II. Today, due to social dynamics oriented to western culture, many Japanese people are familiar with Western foods -- such as pasta, dairy products, meat and bread. On the other hand, few western foods were introduced in the Japanese culture when the Japanese war brides grew up. Therefore, it was difficult for them to adjust to differences between American foods and Japanese foods -- which include rice, soy sauce, and seafood. Difficulties in adapting to American eating habits were discussed during interviews with all the women. Respondent 1 remembered being moved to tears at the prospect of tasting soy sauce after going without for several years.

> *There was nothing close to Japanese food when I came here. I ordered soy sauce from Katagiri-shoten in New York with Respondent 2 and other Japanese friends. Somebody came to hear about the store. It was only a place to enable us to get Japanese food. I started crying to be happy to have taste of soy sauce. I didn't have*

taste of soy sauce for several years. I still remember that impressive moment very well.

Respondent 2 answered a question of whether she had American food before she came to West Virginia or not.

Well, I haven't had eaten. I had no idea what they were. But, one month and two month... I stayed at an older sister of my husband. And, breakfast is cereal, isn't it? The children go to school. For lunch, the sister ate sandwiches of peanut butter and jam. She was one who doesn't like meat. So, beans and potatoes... I didn't feel to eat even if I ate such lunch. I got hungry soon and lost my weight. Then, when I went to market, I found canned salmon. But, although I wanted to buy the can, I didn't know about money. A quarter doesn't write twenty-five cents and a ten cent doesn't write ten-cents, either. So, I didn't know how many cans I could buy.

It is a fact that when they moved to Appalachia, Japanese food was almost non-existent, in comparison to the recent decades when Japanese food has become more easily accessible. All of the Japanese war brides took the initiative to discuss their preference for Japanese food. Less availability of Japanese groceries was described as one of the factors leading the war brides to culturally assimilate into the Appalachian culture.

More importantly, the role of the mother and wife makes ethnicity of the Japanese war brides invisible in the household and led to assimilation into the Appalachian culture. Respondent 2 illustrates her role of gender and ethnicity in her family.

I had to learn American cooking from my husband's mother, because my husband doesn't like to eat

> *Japanese food. My children do not like to eat, either. So, I cooked spaghetti, meatloaf, mashed potatoes, beans and so on. And I ate them with my family. But these foods didn't make me satisfied.*

In recognizing her role as motherhood and wife, she was responsible for such feeding her family. Only one woman, Respondent 4, occasionally had obtained some Japanese groceries sent from her families in Japan. But, as her family preferred American cooking, she hardly used them to cook for her family and mostly ate them when her family was not at home.

Obtaining the English language is the important communicative tool for interaction with the host society. Whereas none of the women spoke any English when they left Japan, their husbands and children didn't speak Japanese language with the exception of basic greeting conversation. All of the women made efforts to learn English through watching TV or practicing pronunciation by sitting beside their children while they were doing homework. Glenn's finding that the war brides' lack of English ability overturned the mother-child relationship was not found among the Japanese women in this research (Glenn 1986). It is a fact that the women I interviewed find it difficult to deal with complicated readings and writings, although they have acquired communicative skill for daily conversations. All the women reported that there is not much trouble with speaking English. However, while they tend to get around reading and writing, intricate English still gives them trouble. In discussing ways of learning English, the marital relationship between the women and their husbands is embedded in complex intersection of gender and ethnicity. Respondent 3 explicitly presented how she was treated by her husband when she asked for his support in acquiring English language.

> *... the time when my children grew up, I didn't help them study at all. I didn't know about school. My husband studied so hard with our children. I have asked him why you taught such something difficult to children, but why not to me. My husband said, "You cannot understand such the difficult once I teach you, it is in vain. It is not comprehended to you. I don't have time." He says, "You don't understand. Never mind." U-huh, there was no time to explain to me. For our children, it relates to their grades. He taught them and look something difficult up in the dictionary.*

Her narrative makes it clear that there is male domination of the husband over the wife in the household. Whereas a father becomes involved in academics, such as teaching them when his children are five to fifteen years old (Curren and Renzetti 1995:213), a mother is considered to be fundamentally in primary charge of child care, such as feeding. Also, she was not classified as a member of the same ethnic group who shared culture. Respondent 1 says,

> *I hardly used Japanese at home. My way of speaking Japanese is a little strange, I think. To learn English, my husband helped me, and then I listened to very carefully English my children spoke. Like when the children did homework. I worked so hard to master English, because no one didn't completely understand me. Someday, I might realized that people in this country are not interested in those who don't speak English well. Although I don't remember when, my daughter talked about a Japanese boy who came to her high school, maybe exchange student. I asked her, 'did*

you help him? Are you kind to that boy?'. But, she said, 'I don't understand his English. Maybe he cannot speak English'. You see, if you have lived in this country. ...it's no choice but to speak English.

The core cultural characteristics of English sufficiency dominated her attitude toward cultural adaptation. English has become a test for immigrants' right to be American (Aguirre and Turner 1998). To play a mother role, the woman gave up her native culture to be accepted in the dominant society. However, rather than describing conflict between mothering and ethnic identity, the women emphasize the meaning of being a mother.

Impact on Structural Assimilation

Issues of structural assimilation were raised in the context of how the Japanese war brides interacted with dominant structural institutions. Structural assimilation refers to shifting to interaction with the dominant ethnic institutions such as school, workplace and political arenas (Gordon 1964). In addition to marriages to American husbands, the Japanese war brides were introduced through established family unit of their husbands, leading to involvement in social organizational structures in the dominant society. All of the Japanese war brides had to take responsibility for a role that is taken for granted -- to take care of kinship relationship. In the words of Respondent 1,

I was sometimes forced to go to church with my family because I had my mother-in law and family on my husband's side who were very religious. People treated me good. Some of them came to have a conversation with me. I took only my children to church several times, because my husband had to work. Although I didn't

> *know what's wrong with me or them, I felt something different than when my husband went with me. No one came to say greetings to me. Maybe, I was only an Asian at the church and they were indeed the white, I remember.*

Her social position enabled her to place herself in the dominant society by establishing her place as Mr. Respondent 1's wife. By contrast, her place without the presence of her provider in the dominant institution highlights her "outsider status. Respondent 1 gave a description of participation in school activities of her children.

> *PTA or at school when there was something going on, I went to. That festival... fall festival. At such an event, I took various things. I baked cookies, make many things, and sold at a bazaar. I did like that thing. What else..., my daughter and son. When they belonged to sports activities in high school, like football, my daughter played majorette. So, as a parent, how I can say... I thought I felt guilty if I didn't support, for my daughter played it. Such an event, at bowl game, well...sold hot dogs and drinks. Just like volunteer. Those things were what I did.*

Working experiences were described by two women. Respondent 2 with a blue-collar worker husband, who was often laid off, has learned to support her family until her children grew up. Respondent 4 had a couple of years' experience working for a restaurant in the local community due to the financial burden of raising children. But, eventually her occupational sequence brought her back home through her husband's suggestion that it was not necessary to work outside. His suggestion that the woman was

better off staying at home is easily understandable. Like Respondent 4, two other women believed that the women should do the domestic work, such as caring for children and husband. Respondent 1 put the reason why she became a full-time housewife this way.

> *I haven't had a job outside since I lived in America. I told my husband once whether I may work outside or not. But, somewhat, he said. "You don't need to go to work. It is not necessary for you to do. It is my responsibility to take care of my family. Your English might make you hard to find a job." So, I have been a full-time housewife since then. Nothing special happens to my life. Very simple, simple...*

Her description implies that the division of labor in the household had an influence upon structural assimilation. There is a distinction between the men's role to be the family provider and the women's role to be the housewife. To put another way, she is to devote herself primarily to domestic work, rather being involved in the "outsider" social institutions -- which are considered the man's role. Pointing out a lack of language skill evidently conveys the notion that she is a member of the ethnic minority group and has less capability of living in the host society, as well as restriction of keeping her at home. Thus, ethnic identity reinforces patriarchal ideology.

Thus, the gender socialization of the Japanese war brides in their own society impacted their cultural and structural adaptation into the dominant society. They had been raised to believe in the importance of women as wives and mothers, i.e. the "traditional" gender role. Mothering provided the war brides maintenance of her place in the family and helped them assimilate into the society. Social norm that women are an agent for the

men assigned to be the family provider relates to the Japanese war brides' place in ethnic hierarchy. Social power over the Japanese women affects assimilation.

Living without Family

As noted previously, the family is the important in the analysis of the assimilation of the Japanese war brides in the Appalachia region. It is also of critical significant to describe their experiences after their children grew up and left home, or they became widows.

Respondent 2 lives with only her husband after her children left home. During a visit to her, I saw her cooking baked ham and hash browned potatoes for her husband, and Japanese food for herself. In response to my question of whether she prepared that kind of food every meal, she said,

> *Yes, yes. I don't want to eat American food. I had plenty of beans cooking, or meat and so on. When I make Sukiyaki..etc, he sometimes eats a little. Basically, but, separate. Since my children are no longer living here, I don't need to make food for them. I just make what I want to eat.*

She said told a story about how she always takes a rice cooker and soy sauce with her when she travels with her husband. Nowadays, it is much easier to get Japanese food in Appalachia than the past years when it was less accessible. Her response is change in accessibility is to return to that part of her Japanese heritage which identifies her as a Japanese woman, rather than a wife and mother. The other three women I interviewed lost their husbands and live by themselves. They reported an increase in the number of times they have Japanese food, just as Respondent 2 does. Respondent 4 explained to me the differences between being by herself and living with her family.

My husband just passed away this April, though. Yes, maybe, I seem to eat Japanese food more and more. Well, yes, absolutely. Of course, I don't always cook a several dishes. Sometimes, Ochazuke[8] is all I have. Easy, isn't it? And good, too. My daughter is sometimes coming back and sleep upstairs. That time, or when all my children are here, I prepare meatloaf, fried chicken, etc for my children. My children tell me that meatloaf I make is very delicious.

When questioned further of linguistic availability of both Japanese and English, Respondent 3 openly described recovery of her Japanese culture.

I now read many Japanese novels and magazines. .....
I have been forgetting many Kanji, although I remember when starting it. Sometimes, I call her and ask just like how to this kanji. As Japanese is my native language, it is important for me to maintain it. I am alone at home now, so that it is not necessary to feel hesitant about my family. Once my children stayed home and my husband was alive, definitely I had a life that was away from Japanese language and culture. For this, there was no circumstance to allow me to eat Japanese food and to speak Japanese at home. My husband didn't seem to be interested in something of Japan. Japanese food...he didn't like it. He often said, "you had better to improve your English." He hardly taught me directly and took care of the children's study, though. He was very stern, but gentle to me nevertheless.

She is not conscious of herself as oppressed by ethnicity and gender. This narrative indicates, however, that once the choice was open to her, within the household, she reestablished her status as a Japanese woman by becoming more independent of the family.

Thus, being widows or living without children has influenced their structural assimilation. I asked all the women how they have interacted with the community since they became widows or living with only a husband. All the women presented responses to indicate their decreasing contact with the community since the loss of their husbands or independence of their children. Two women have experienced exclusion from the community. For example, Respondent 1 put in this way,

> *I talk to my next door, just like how are you. Well, it's just general greetings. She is nice, though. But, that's all. Around when my daughter and son were at school, sometimes the neighbors brought my children cakes or cookies they baked or something. Now I have few to keep in touch with them. My husband passed away, and in a meanwhile after his funeral, the neighbors cared about me well. About those neighbors now... I haven't heard anything from them. I see them pass the street here when I am outside. But, they don't talk a lot as before. I am feeling reluctant to contact to them.*

This example illustrates that her relationship to social institutions was indirectly mediated by her husband and children. Furthermore, Respondent 3 voluntarily refused to participate in parties or social organizations consisting of the dominant groups despite invitation by acquaintance.

I don't go to parties or something at all. I don't want to join. I went to most of the parties with my husband long time ago, like Christmas party that held in my husband's workplace. What else...home parties at friends of my husband's. I always had a good time. My neighbors occasionally ask to go the parties. When my husband just passed away, once in a while, I went with them. But it's not fun, somehow. I don't feel like to go that kind of a party. Because only the American get together and talk. And, people I first met there say to me, 'Where are you from? Your English is very good.' Of course, I reply to say thank you. But I don't know if it is complement or looking down on me. I am not very happy with these words. I haven't experienced such a thing at my husband's parties.

This example shows how attitudes reinforce negative beliefs about the perception of Asian immigrants. This belief is perceived as a common social problem among recent Asian immigrants as they tend to be considered as non-American citizen due to unique physical appearance (Aguirre and Turner 1998).

The decline of interaction with the dominant society leads to a tendency to depend on members of the ethnic group. Respondent 2 described the social distance between the dominant group and the subordinate group and appreciation of support from Japanese friends in the community.

A couple of years ago, I have got my back hurt and couldn't wake up from a bed by myself. Neighbors around my house... not much. Since I am considered as Japanese in the neighborhood and they seem to keep the distance between me and them, I don't ask for any help.

When my children went to school, there were some kinds of relationships through children. ..... My children and grandchildren came to help me take care, but they have lived in America and don't know about Japan. So, they apparently don't get me. But at that time, my Japanese friend and ---san, they are much younger than my age. They are Japanese and know about Japan, so that they understand me, for example, how to take a bath when I have my back hurt. Do you see what I mean? ..... It's like our feeling pass along, ... made a perfect feeling of each other. Thanks to them, that's very helpful. But, they are not living here. As everyone is getting old and I am over seventy years old, it might be difficult to help each other. At a pinch, I will depend on my children.

The experience of Respondent 2 implies her ethnicity prevents involvement into the domination society. At the same time, it illustrates her reliance on her ethnic group.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This study insists that theories of assimilation cannot be segregated from gender issues. Ethnic relations are intertwined with gender distinctions.

The findings, through the interview data, suggest that the interracial marriages among the Japanese war brides took place as a result of an association of attraction to American culture with romantic love. The respondents, in greater or lesser degrees, expected to be culturally assimilated into the American host society.

But ironically, once they started their lives in the host society, they had been forced to assimilate into the society. In the household, the women's reproductive role of feeding and nurturing forced them to assimilate culturally. On the other hand, their ethnicity prevented the Japanese war brides from structural assimilation. In a society where ethnic minority group are oppressed, the family unit could be turned to for comfort, self-worth, and confirmation of the individual (Glenn 1986). However, by exogamy, the Japanese war brides were not expected to uphold their native culture. They were isolated as housewives or regarded as appendages to their husbands if they made the change with their families. That change transforms them from wife to the status of a mother. While the war brides have attempted to construct their position as a mother in the household relating to when they have assimilated into the host society, the relationship between the Japanese war brides and the dominant society was not created on their own,

but through their husbands and children. This study found it important to see the assimilation process is relation to gender oppression in the household and ethnic oppression.

The concept of assimilation does not take into account how social power differentials in society affect patterns of cultural and structural assimilation. In other words, the processes of prejudice and discrimination are separately analyzed rather as integral parts of the negotiation of assimilation. Based on my findings, it appears that the Japanese war brides have been ethnically oppressed in this part of Appalachia. Milton Gordon argues that a lack of assimilation is a consequence of the individual living in predominately ethnic neighborhood and marrying a member of the ethnic group. All the women, with the exception of one, do not directly mention their experience with overt discrimination. Rather, during the interview, they stated that discrimination was not a major factor. Asian immigrants do not know that they have been victims of racism because racism is subtle (Uba 1994). I suggest the image of the prevailing model minority in the recent years manipulates the awareness of the oppressed in the society. As a matter of fact, all the women I interviewed agree that the growth of Japanese economy in recent years changed negative images of the Japanese to positive and images of the "yellow peril" to one of hard-working people.

Only recently have gender studies analyzed the role of ethnicity.[9] Gender socialization shape the distinctive process of assimilation between women and men. For the Japanese war brides, an intersection of people of color and specific role expectations as a mother a wife makes it more likely that women accept assimilation into the host society.

This study has raised the issue of security for the aged among the Japanese war brides. To some degree, although they strive to adapt to the host society, dependence on the same ethnic group should not be overlooked. The problem of social isolation within the dominant society underlines the importance of establishing a network to support and protect the Japanese women. While I have conducted this research, I acknowledged that there are more Japanese immigrants over generations in the area. Moreover, I suggest that women in the Appalachian community must organize social support groups beyond ethnic boundaries. This study does not allow me to examine how the family and the community look at social phenomena of the Japanese war brides and their ethnicity. As a Japanese woman, I would hope that this study proves insightful and significant for Appalachian residents who encounter people of different ethnic groups in their communities.

Notes

1. The McCarran-Walter Immigration and Naturalization Act, for the first time, people from Japan and other Asian countries to become naturalized citizens. It took 162 years, from 1790 to 1952 to eliminate "color" as a criterion for eligibility to citizenship (Nikkei Heritage 1998).
2. In my interview data, Respondent 1 narrated her experience of not being allowed to enter the United States with her husband due to the ethnic preference immigration law.
3. Huntington is located in the southwestern West Virginia, along the border between Ohio and Kentucky.
4. Charleston is approximately fifty-five miles to the east of Huntington.
5. Shiga is a prefecture located in the western part of Japan.
6. 'Ie' literally means that house, home and family in Japanese.
7. This term means a young girl in Japanese, which is used in both positive and negative way.
8. Ochazuke is rice poured green tea. Usually topped with salted salmon, seaweed, pickled and so on.
9. See, for example. *Women's Lives : Multicultural Perspectives* edited by G.Kirk and M.Okazawa. Mayfield 1998. Mountainview,CA. The classic reader is *Race. Class, and Gender* edited by M.L. Anderson and P. H. Collins. Wadsworth 1997. New York.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

Name:

Age:

Hometown in Japan:

Education in Japan:

Education in USA:

When did you come to the United States?

When did you move to West Virginia? Before you come WV, where did you lived in?

How did you meet your husband?

How long did you have a date with your husband before your marriage?

Do you have children?

Did you speak English before you came to the United States?

How did you learn English?

Did you have a job in Japan before you moved to the United States?

If Yes, When?
How long?

What jobs?

If No, why not?

Did you have a job when you moved to WV?

If Yes, When?

What jobs?

Why?

How long?

If No, why not ?

Did you participate in community activity?

If yes, what a kind of community activity?

(PTA, Churches, Scouts, Children's athletic league, helping at hospital, Clubs)

Why did you participate in ?

If no, why?

How do you communicate with Japanese friends in Appalachian community?

How often?

How do you communicate with your neighborhoods?

How often do you go back to Japan?

How often do you get in touch with your families, relatives and friends in Japan?

What kinds of food do you eat at home?

What kinds of food do you cook for your husbands, children and yourself?

How often do you use both Japanese and English?

Did your parents, family in Japan approve of your marriage?
If Yes, why?

If No, why not?

Did parents and family of your husbands approve of your marriage?
If Yes, why?

If No, why not?

How do you interact with husband's parents and relatives ?