

Intercultural Marriages Between Chinese and Japanese: Chinese Wives' Perspectives

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Abstract: This study focuses on intercultural marriages between Chinese wives and their Japanese husbands, who are residing in China as expatriates of Japanese companies. In-depth interviews were conducted with six participants in their native language Mandarin Chinese; general questions such as how the couples met, what brought them to marriages, what kinds of conflict they have had between them, and how they managed it were integrated in a natural flow during the interviews. The results report the perceptions of Chinese wives regarding each other's cultural backgrounds as well as their choice to manage their marital relationships with their Japanese spouses.

Keywords: Chinese wives, expatriates, intercultural marriage, interpersonal communication, Japanese husbands

1. Introduction

Globalization and technology advancement have created opportunities for people with various cultural backgrounds to come into close contact more than ever. As a result, romantic and marital relationships between culturally diverse individuals are becoming more common (Frame, 2004; Waldman & Rubalcava, 2005). In Japan the number of foreign residents has also been increasing.

As the statistics (Ministry of Justice, Japan, 2017) indicate, in comparison to 1990, the number of foreigners living in Japan in 2015 doubled, among which the majority are from Asian countries with China ranking at the top, followed by Korea and the Philippines. (Table 1, Table 2).

Table 1. Registered Foreigners by Resident Status and Nationality (Top Ten): 1990, 2015

| Nationalities | 1990 | Proportion | 2015 | Proportion |
|---------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Total | 1,075,317 | 100.0 | 2,232,189 | 100.00 |
| China | 150,339 | 14.0 | 714,570 | 32.0 |
| India | 3,170 | 0.3 | 26,244 | 1.2 |
| Indonesia | 3,623 | 0.3 | 35,910 | 1.6 |
| Korea | 687,940 | 64.0 | 491,711 | 22.0 |
| Philippines | 49,092 | 4.6 | 229,595 | 10.3 |
| Vietnam | 6,233 | 0.6 | 146,956 | 6.6 |
| Europe | 25,563 | 2.4 | 68,179 | 3.1 |
| North America | 71,495 | 4.2 | 66,064 | 3.0 |
| South America | 71,495 | 6.6 | 234,633 | 10.5 |
| Australia | 3,975 | 0.4 | 9,843 | 0.4 |

Table 2. Proportion of Registered Foreigners by Nationality (Top Six): 1950-2015

| Year | Total (%) | China | Korea | Philippines | Brazil | Vietnam | Nepal | U.S.A. |
|------|-----------|-------|-------|-------------|--------|---------|-------|--------|
| 1950 | 100.0 | 6.8 | 91.0 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | ----- | 0.8 |
| 1955 | 100.0 | 6.8 | 90.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.0 | ----- | 1.3 |
| 1960 | 100.0 | 7.0 | 89.3 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | ----- | 1.8 |
| 1965 | 100.0 | 7.4 | 87.6 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.4 |
| 1970 | 100.0 | 7.3 | 86.7 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 2.7 |
| 1975 | 100.0 | 6.5 | 86.1 | 0.4 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 2.9 |
| 1980 | 100.0 | 6.8 | 84.9 | 0.7 | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.0 | 2.9 |
| 1985 | 100.0 | 8.8 | 80.3 | 1.4 | 0.2 | 0.5 | 0.0 | 3.4 |
| 1990 | 100.0 | 14.0 | 64.0 | 4.6 | 5.2 | 0.6 | 0.0 | 3.6 |
| 1991 | 100.0 | 14.0 | 56.9 | 5.1 | 9.8 | 0.5 | 0.0 | 3.5 |
| 1995 | 100.0 | 16.4 | 48.9 | 5.5 | 13.0 | 0.7 | 0.1 | 3.2 |
| 2000 | 100.0 | 19.9 | 37.7 | 8.6 | 15.1 | 1.0 | 0.2 | 2.7 |
| 2005 | 100.0 | 25.8 | 29.8 | 9.3 | 15.0 | 1.4 | 0.3 | 2.5 |
| 2010 | 100.0 | 32.2 | 26.5 | 9.8 | 10.8 | 2.0 | 0.8 | 2.4 |
| 2011 | 100.0 | 32.5 | 26.2 | 10.1 | 10.1 | 2.2 | 1.0 | 2.4 |
| 2012 | 100.0 | 33.2 | 26.1 | 10.0 | 9.4 | 2.6 | 1.2 | 2.4 |
| 2013 | 100.0 | 33.0 | 25.2 | 10.1 | 8.8 | 3.5 | 1.5 | 2.4 |
| 2014 | 100.0 | 32.8 | 23.6 | 10.3 | 8.3 | 4.7 | 2.0 | 2.4 |
| 2015 | 100.0 | 32.0 | 22.0 | 10.3 | 7.8 | 6.6 | 2.5 | 2.3 |

Among the foreign residents in Japan, a good number of them are married to Japanese. From the following graphs, it can be observed that since 1990 the number of intercultural marriages between Japanese nationals and foreign wives had been steadily increasing until the beginning of the twenty-first century. The number of foreign brides and Japanese grooms is much more than the number of foreign grooms and Japanese brides. Figure 1 by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, Japan (2018) indicates the changes of marriages between Japanese grooms and foreign brides by nationalities of brides in 1965 and 2015, with the number of Chinese wives increasing the most among all. The 2016 Vital Statistics on nationality of foreign wives and foreign husbands by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, Japan revealed a similar result that Chinese wives constituted the majority, followed by wives from the Philippines, and Korea (Figure 2, Figure 3).

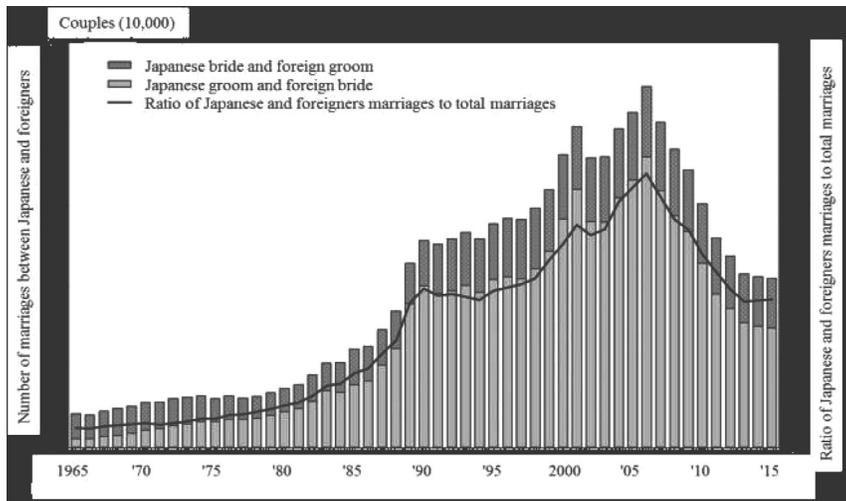


Figure 1. Annual Trend of Marriages Between Japanese and Foreign Citizens Between 1965 and 2015 (Ministry Of Health, Labor And Welfare, Japan, 2018)

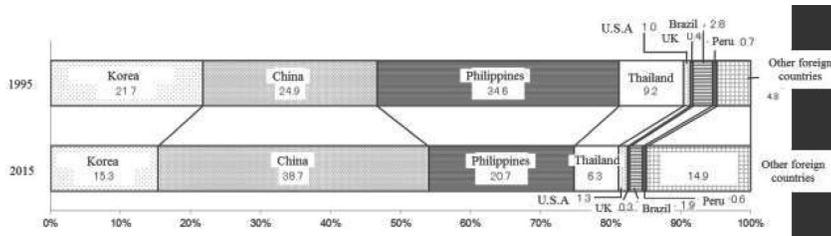
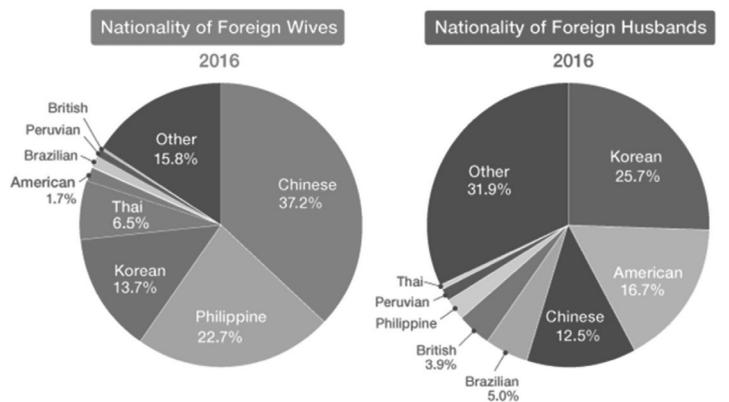


Figure 2. Percentages of Marriages Between Japanese Grooms and Foreign Brides by Nationalities of Brides in 1995 and 2015



Source: "2016 Vital Statistics" report issued by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare. nippon.com

Figure 3. Nationality of Foreign Wives and Foreign Husbands: 2016

However, in clear contrast to the increase of intercultural marriages in Japan, the statistics on divorce rate are surprisingly high. Take the data of 2005 in the following two statistics by the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (2007, 2014) as one example: among 33,116 couples of Japanese husbands and wives, 12,430 couples were reported to have ended their marriage with divorce. Among the 11,644 Chinese wives, 4,363 were reported to have divorced their Japanese husbands. This indicates that while the rate of intercultural marriage between Japanese and foreigners has increased, the divorce rate has also remained high; this is especially true between Chinese wives and Japanese husbands (Table 3, Table 4).

Table 3. Number of Marriages, by Years and Nationalities of Husband and Wife

| Nationality | 1985 | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total number | 735,850 | 722,138 | 791,888 | 798,138 | 714,265 | 730,971 | 719,822 |
| Both Japanese | 723,669 | 696,512 | 764,161 | 761,875 | 672,784 | 686,270 | 679,550 |
| Either husband or wife foreigner (total) | 12,181 | 25,626 | 27,727 | 36,263 | 41,481 | 44,701 | 40,272 |
| Husband Japanese/wife foreigner | 7,738 | 20,026 | 20,787 | 28,326 | 33,116 | 35,993 | 31,807 |
| Wife Japanese/husband foreigner | 4,443 | 5,600 | 6,940 | 7,937 | 8,365 | 8,708 | 8,465 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Husband Japanese/wife foreigner (total) | 7,738 | 20,026 | 20,787 | 28,326 | 33,116 | 35,993 | 31,807 |
| Korea | 3,622 | 8,940 | 4,521 | 6,214 | 6,066 | 6,041 | 5,606 |
| China | 1,766 | 3,614 | 5,174 | 9,884 | 11,644 | 12,131 | 11,926 |
| Philippines | ... | ... | 7,188 | 7,519 | 10,242 | 12,150 | 9,217 |
| U.S. | 254 | 260 | 198 | 202 | 177 | 215 | 193 |
| Brazil | ... | ... | 579 | 357 | 311 | 285 | 288 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Wife Japanese/husband foreigner (total) | 4,443 | 5,600 | 6,940 | 7,937 | 8,365 | 8,708 | 8,465 |
| Korea | 2,525 | 2,721 | 2,842 | 2,509 | 2,087 | 2,335 | 2,209 |
| China | 380 | 708 | 769 | 878 | 1,015 | 1,084 | 1,016 |
| Philippines | ... | ... | 52 | 109 | 187 | 195 | 162 |
| U.S. | 876 | 1,091 | 1,303 | 1,483 | 1,551 | 1,474 | 1,485 |
| Brazil | ... | ... | 162 | 279 | 261 | 292 | 341 |

Table 4. Number of Divorces, Years and Nationalities of Husband and Wife

| Nationality | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total number | 199,016 | 264,246 | 261,917 | 251,378 | 235,719 | 235,406 | 231,383 | 222,107 |
| Both Japanese | 191,024 | 251,879 | 246,228 | 232,410 | 217,887 | 219,118 | 216,187 | 207,792 |
| Either husband or wife foreigner | 7,992 | 12,367 | 15,689 | 18,968 | 17,832 | 16,288 | 15,196 | 14,135 |
| Husband Japanese/wife foreigner | 6,153 | 9,607 | 12,430 | 15,258 | 14,224 | 12,892 | 11,887 | 10,930 |
| Wife Japanese/husband foreigner | 1,839 | 2,760 | 3,259 | 3,710 | 3,608 | 3,396 | 3,309 | 3,205 |
| | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Husband Japanese/ wife foreigner | 6,153 | 9,607 | 12,430 | 15,258 | 14,224 | 12,892 | 11,887 | 10,930 |
| Korea | 2,582 | 2,555 | 2,555 | 2,560 | 2,275 | 2,003 | 1,724 | 1,619 |
| China | 1,486 | 2,918 | 4,363 | 5,762 | 5,584 | 4,963 | 4,573 | 4,093 |
| Philippines | 1,456 | 2,816 | 3,485 | 4,630 | 4,216 | 3,811 | 3,457 | 3,245 |
| U.S. | 53 | 68 | 76 | 74 | 66 | 64 | 63 | 73 |
| Brazil | 47 | 92 | 116 | 103 | 96 | 92 | 93 | 101 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Wife Japanese/ husband foreigner | 1,839 | 2,760 | 3,259 | 3,710 | 3,608 | 3,396 | 3,309 | 3,205 |
| Korea | 939 | 1,113 | 971 | 977 | 915 | 811 | 747 | 791 |
| China | 198 | 369 | 492 | 632 | 632 | 610 | 568 | 582 |
| Philippines | 43 | 66 | 86 | 119 | 126 | 109 | 109 | 106 |
| U.S. | 299 | 385 | 398 | 397 | 397 | 415 | 384 | 356 |
| Brazil | 20 | 59 | 81 | 140 | 112 | 120 | 133 | 130 |

What caused the high percentage of divorce? What happened between the couples that made them decide to terminate their marital relationship by divorce? And why did they marry? What does divorce mean to them? These questions remain unanswered. It is unquestionable that getting married to someone of a different culture poses numerous challenges that can be unpredictable; however, deciding to end a marital relationship requires the couple to have much more courage and face much more serious and realistic challenges. If they knew that they would end up with divorce, would they even have wanted to get married in the first place? Although both Chinese and Japanese cultures are perceived by the West as collectivistic and high context cultures, the trivial but subtle similarities and differences which shape people's perspectives and behaviors have not been thoroughly and systematically examined.

As a Chinese who has been married to a Japanese for more than fifteen years, the author's marital life has not been a smooth one. There were countless times that new unpredictable challenges had to be faced and managed, sometimes with struggles between maintaining self-identity and coping with the Japanese culture, a process that is accompanied with feelings of helplessness and desperation. Being one of the thousands of Chinese women who married a Japanese, I am very curious and interested to find out the answers to the questions such as, how do the other Chinese wives manage their intercultural marriage? Is my case an exception? If not, how? I would like to go beyond my personal experience, and go into other Chinese wives' lives, to explore their reality of intercultural marriage to their Japanese husbands. I am eager to find out how those wives who are in the same shoes as me view their marriage and handle the challenges and conflicts that may be influenced by their cultural differences in their marriage. This personal experience serves as my motive and starting point of this study.

2. Literature Review and Background Information

2.1. Background Information

2.1.1. *Kokusai Kekkon* in Japan

In Japanese intercultural marriage is called *kokusai kekkon*. As Nitta (1988) explained, “*kokusai kekkon* (literally, international marriage) is the Japanese cultural category commonly used to designate any marriage pairing Japanese and non-Japanese nationals.” According to Nitta, there are three categories: the first is between Japanese and Americans as international; second to be “interethnic” (or “interracial”) marriages in which the technically non-Japanese partner is a Korean or Chinese born and raised in Japan but without Japanese nationality (or citizenship); and the last, marriages with a non-Japanese partner that are *gaikokujin* (foreign) wife or husband even if he or she is a Korean or Chinese resident who has lived in Japan. Nitta argued that *kokusai kekkon* “overemphasizes the international nature” possibly linked to the “common perception that Japan is the most homogeneous society comprising one race which speaks one language” whereas in heterogeneous cultures such as the United States or China the term “intercultural marriage” is generally used in the intermarriage literature when referring to marriage between spouses of different cultural backgrounds.

The increase of *kokusai kekkon* in Japan is closely related to various political, social, and economic backgrounds.

2.1.2. Political and Socioeconomic Backgrounds of *Kokusai Kekkon* in Japan

2.1.2.1. Economic Background

The postwar Japanese economy had experienced rapid economic growth between the late 1950s and early 1970s. Since 1960, when trade was liberalized, Japan’s major exports have been manufactured goods such as automobiles, and electronic goods. By 1968, the Japanese gross national product was ranked number two after the U.S. According to Chiavacci and Lechevalier (2017), this period was characterized by common perceptions of stability and security as the top priorities; high educational attainments were directly related to stable employment and internal careers in the cooperative and protective community of the employer. Strongly differentiated gender roles were also observed with men being the breadwinner and lifetime employed salaryman (*salariman*), and women as education mothers (*kyoiku mama*). During the mid-1980s to 1990s, the Japanese economy experienced the bubble economy which was characterized by inflation. However, after 2000, deflation has been a problem that Japanese economy faced. The current Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe proposed a set of policies, namely “*Abenomics*”, in the hope of stimulating economic growth and improving the long deflation. It is widely believed that with these policies the Japanese economy has been gradually recovering, and as the Japanese yen depreciates, which was another goal, foreign people can purchase Japanese products at lower prices, so demand for Japanese products increases (Takayama, 2017).

2.1.2.2. Social Background

2.1.2.2.1. Gender Equality

In accordance with the economic development after World War II, the Japanese government has been integrating a few policies to improve the gender equality in Japan. In 1947 the Fundamental Law of Education enacted for Japanese women the equality of educational opportunities at all levels; in the same year, the Labor Standards Law came into effect, ensuring equal treatment for women in the workplace and equal pay for equal work. The new Japanese Constitution, based on democratic ideals of equality and respect for individual human rights, finally granted political rights to women, freeing women from the *ie* (literally meaning house/home) system which required women to be filial and obedient to her husband's family, a system that prevented them from enjoying their equality within marriage and in the home, and guaranteed equality of educational opportunity for women in Japan (Hara, 1995; Kaneko, 1995).

The Japanese government continued to promote gender equality in Japan. In 1986, the passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEO), called for equal pay and other improvements in hiring and working conditions. More gender equity plans were issued in the following years, for example, the Gender Equality Bureau, a Cabinet level council created in 1994, produced a Basic Plan for Gender Equality in 1999. All these promotions have served as a better platform for Japanese women's equality. As Fujimura-Fanselow (1995) observed, today it is both a common and socially accepted practice for women to work following college graduation. However, there are a few categories with regard to the purposes of receiving college education. Some view a job as a temporary activity in which they can gain some social experience and meanwhile earn their own money before they marry; some see themselves as independent individuals financially who do not like being supported by their husbands or family; another type of women is called the "self-actualization" type, women who see work as a path to their self-fulfillment.

Although more and more women wish to work for various purposes, getting married and having children have still remained as the norm in Japanese society. Despite the enactment of the Child Care Leave Law in 1991 which aimed to encourage both parents to take child care leave, it is usually the mother who takes it. For most of the women who work, they have to constantly juggle between their work and family as well as child care. Lindsey (2011) pointed out that married women know that their roles as wife and mother will limit employment opportunities, but the issue is almost always resolved in favor of home over workplace. Though women represent half the workforce, employed women in Japan are constrained by restrictive, stereotyped gender roles. Even if they re-enter the labor force after bringing up the children, they are more likely to be concentrated in part-time or temporary employment and take lower-level jobs not commensurate with their education (p. 155). Lindsey argued that as part of a common global pattern in which a lower fertility rate, especially for highly educated women, is associated with higher labor force participation, Japan has also faced the challenges of low birth rate and declining number of children. Meanwhile, the traditional salarymen are fast disappearing, replaced by men eager to live a fuller life outside the confines of conventional jobs and conventional marriages (p. 156).

2.1.2.2. Increase of Aging Population and Life Span, and Decline of Birth Rate and Marriage Rate

Japan has the most aging population in the world and a very low fertility rate. According to the U.N. statistics on world population (2015), as the following graph shows (Figure 4), Japan (in red) has been ranked as the top with the most aging population since 2005; in 2017 the aged population (65 years old and above) had reached 27.7% of the total population of Japan, indicating 3 senior citizens among every 10 Japanese. The aged population is estimated to rise to 38.8% by 2050 (Table 5). Meanwhile as shown in Figure 5, the average life span for Japanese men was 80.75, and women 86.99 in 2015; this trend is estimated to continue to rise in the future (Cabinet Office, 2015).

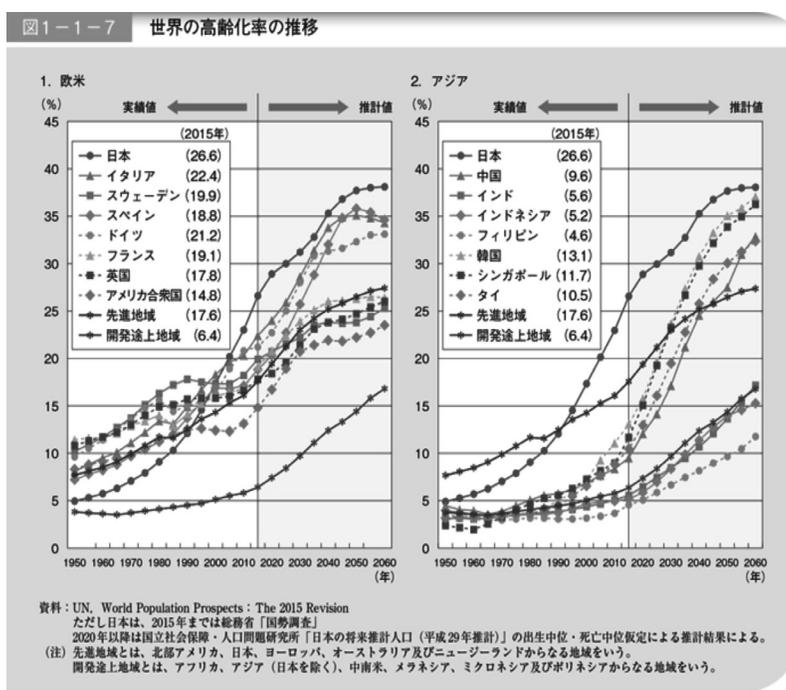


Figure 4. Changes in the Global Aging Rate

Table 5. Aging Population in Countries (%)

| Year | Japan | China | South Korea | U.S. | Germany | U.K. | Singapore |
|------|-------|-------|-------------|------|---------|------|-----------|
| 1950 | 4.9 | 4.5 | 2.9 | 8.3 | 9.7 | 10.8 | 2.4 |
| 1955 | 5.3 | 4.1 | 3.4 | 8.8 | 10.6 | 11.3 | 2.2 |
| 1960 | 5.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 9.1 | 11.5 | 11.8 | 2.0 |
| 1965 | 6.3 | 3.4 | 3.4 | 9.5 | 12.5 | 12.2 | 2.6 |

| | | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1970 | 7.1 | 3.7 | 3.3 | 9.7 | 13.6 | 13.0 | 3.3 |
| 1975 | 7.9 | 4.0 | 3.5 | 10.5 | 14.9 | 14.1 | 4.1 |
| 1980 | 9.1 | 4.5 | 3.9 | 11.4 | 15.7 | 14.9 | 4.7 |
| 1985 | 10.3 | 5.1 | 4.3 | 12.0 | 14.5 | 15.1 | 5.3 |
| 1990 | 12.1 | 5.3 | 5.0 | 12.5 | 14.9 | 15.7 | 5.6 |
| 1995 | 14.6 | 5.9 | 5.9 | 12.6 | 15.4 | 15.9 | 6.3 |
| 2000 | 17.4 | 6.7 | 7.3 | 12.3 | 16.2 | 15.8 | 7.3 |
| 2005 | 20.2 | 7.5 | 9.2 | 12.3 | 18.8 | 16.0 | 8.2 |
| 2010 | 23.0 | 8.2 | 11.1 | 13.0 | 20.6 | 16.2 | 9.0 |
| 2015 | 26.7 | 9.6 | 13.1 | 14.8 | 21.2 | 17.8 | 11.7 |
| 2020 | 29.1 | 12.1 | 15.8 | 16.7 | 22.7 | 18.4 | 15.1 |
| 2025 | 30.3 | 14.2 | 19.7 | 18.9 | 25.0 | 19.6 | 19.3 |
| 2030 | 31.6 | 17.2 | 23.7 | 20.7 | 28.0 | 21.4 | 23.3 |
| 2035 | 33.4 | 21.3 | 27.4 | 21.4 | 30.8 | 23.1 | 26.7 |
| 2040 | 36.1 | 24.6 | 30.8 | 21.9 | 31.3 | 23.8 | 29.8 |
| 2045 | 37.7 | 26.0 | 33.3 | 21.8 | 31.6 | 24.1 | 32.2 |
| 2050 | 38.8 | 27.6 | 35.1 | 22.2 | 32.3 | 24.7 | 33.9 |
| 2055 | 39.4 | 31.0 | 35.9 | 22.7 | 33.0 | 25.4 | 35.0 |
| 2060 | 39.9 | 32.9 | 37.1 | 23.5 | 33.1 | 26.0 | 36.3 |

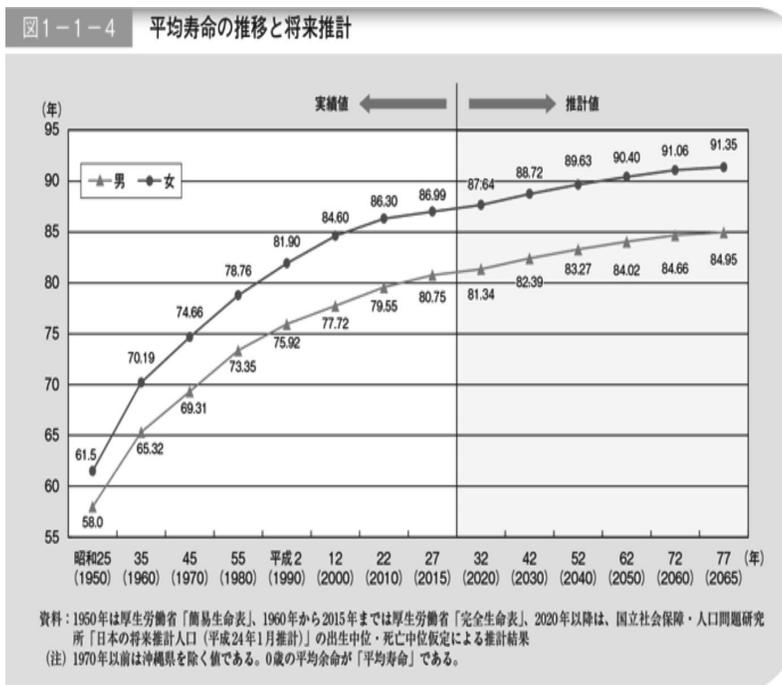


Figure 5. Average Life Expectancy and Future Estimates

On the other hand, in 2017, the child population (0-14 years) in Japan amounted to 15.59 million, 12.3 percent of the total population, which broke the record for the lowest percentage (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2018). As Japan Times (2019) reported, the number of new born in Japan hit the lowest record in 2018, with the total fertility rate (the number of children a woman will bear in her lifetime) falling to 1.42.

All the issues such as the increase of aging population, the low fertility rate, and the decline of marriage rate, are intertwined and have posed various new challenges to Japanese society. According to the Statistics Bureau of Japan (2018), the marriage rate (per 1,000 population) in Japan has been declining, and it was only 4.7 in 2018. As a result, labor shortage is one of the serious tasks that the Japanese government has to deal with.

In order to reduce the shortage of brides and labor insufficiency, the Japanese government has undertaken various efforts and policies, among which one of the strategies was *hanayome*.

2.1.2.3. Political Background and Government Policies

2.1.2.3.1. *Hanayome*

Hanayome literally means flowery brides which implies a magnificent image of marrying Japanese. Because of social and economic backgrounds, more and more women choose not to get married and to pursue their career, while many of the Japanese men, especially those in rural areas have faced the *yome kikin* (bride famine) since the 1980s. This caused severe depopulation in rural Japan. Under this circumstance, the Japanese government made efforts to attract “‘compliant’ (*sunao*) women from ‘poor, backward Asia’” as *hanayome* (Suzuki, 2003).

Filipina *hanayome* were the first to come to Japan; as Suzuki (2003) stated, Filipina *hanayome* “are considered subordinates and ‘victims’ in power relationships because of poverty in their homeland - a ‘Third World’ country - and of their gender, ethnicity, nationality, class, and geopolitical location in Japan.”

Chinese *hanayome*, in 1997, outnumbered Filipina *hanayome*. Davin (2007) argues that women undertake marriage migration in the hope of achieving a better life for themselves or being able to help their families, and suggests that a similar phenomenon can be observed in international marriage migration chains such as those from the Philippines, China and Korea to Japan. Until 1995, the ratio of 34.6% between Japanese husbands and their wives of the Philippines ranked the top, followed by China as 24.9%. This situation was turned around in 2015 when China took the lead with 38.7%, followed by the Philippines (20.7%).

Asian women migrants have been largely perceived as either overseas workers or “mail-order brides”. Nakamatsu (2005) examined the issues of “Asian brides” who married Japanese through agent introduction in the late 1980s and mid-1990s by interviewing 32 marriage agents, several local government officials, and 45 Asian women from South Korea, China, and the Philippines, who married Japanese men through the introduction agency, and concluded that migrant women from other Asian countries predominantly were portrayed as “entertainers”. This articulation of poverty in a way implies a sense of superiority of Japanese women over foreign *hanayome*; it also portrayed the foreign *hanayome* as non-threatening to the prevailing gender hierarchy in marriage, and submissive because of their perceived poverty in their home country.

2.1.2.3.2. Policies of Attracting Skilled Labor and Elites

The Japanese government has also revised related laws and policies in order to solve the shortage of labor. Not only did the government issue the Revised Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition in 1990 which aimed to absorb more labor from abroad by simplifying procedures of entry, but also in 1983 and 2008, Japan enacted the plan in order to attract 100,000 exchange students by 2000; and 300,000 by 2020. These plans served as a solid platform and attracted more foreign students to come to study in Japan.

From April 1, 2019, the New Amended Immigration Control Act was enacted in order to solve the serious labor shortage. The new law has loosened up visa restrictions for those foreign workers having a certain level of skill, who can stay in Japan for up to five years but are not allowed to bring their family; and those with higher levels of skill who can bring their spouses and children, and may be permitted to live in Japan indefinitely if certain conditions are met (Japan Times, 2018).

All the above policies and strategies have attracted and will continue to attract more foreigners to Japan, which will definitely increase intercultural encounters. With more and more foreigners entering Japan or Japanese going abroad for various purposes, intercultural marriage between Japanese and foreigners will continue to increase. This study will examine the challenges faced by Chinese wives in their intercultural marriage and how they manage conflicts, if there are any, and how this affects their perceived marital satisfaction.

2.1.3. Literature Review

While the majority of the studies on marriage have been focused on white Americans, the studies on marriage in Asian cultures have caught the attention of Asian and Western scholars (e.g., Fujihara & Uchikoshi, 2018; Hidaka, 2010; Leung & Bond, 2009; Lindsey, 2011; Murray & Kimura, 2003).

Murray and Kimura (2003) found that both individualist and collectivist dimensions are present in Japanese marital relationships; the couples value individual happiness and personal freedom, but meanwhile expect loyalty and family obligation. Influenced by Shinto religion and the imported Confucianism and Buddhism, the traditional gender role portraying women as a “good wife and wise mother” is still dominating (Fujimura-Fanselow & Kameda, 1995). Similarly, Lindsey (2011) argued that career aspirations of Japanese women are partly constrained by the cultural expectation that they become full time homemakers and mothers despite equal rights and women’s educational achievements. Leung and Bond (2009) reported that love and caring in Chinese couples is characterized by harmony, unity, and togetherness, but also a control of strong emotions. In contrast, for Japanese couples it’s characterized by satisfaction of social expectations (Hidaka, 2010).

Kline et al. (2012) examined cross-cultural similarities and differences in marital role conceptions in six countries: the U.S., China, South Korea, Japan, India and Malaysia, and indicated that recent cross-cultural studies have focused on the characteristics young adults prefer in a spouse typically with lists of preferred traits developed from U.S. samples. East Asian cultures have emphasized a common preference that a good wife should display respectfulness

and modesty. For example, Gabrenya and Hwang (1996) and Gao et al. (1996) concluded that Chinese value face support and the Confucian concepts of seeking respect, modesty, warmth and refinement; similarly, Japanese also reveal great concern for *wakimae*, or discernment of one's role in a given situation, and face, expressed as the desire to show modesty (*kensun*) as well as respect and consideration (*omoiyari*) (Elwood, 2001).

A number of studies examined international marriage as a means for women to migrate across cultures (Kim, 2010; Lan, 2008; Lee, 2008; Piper & Lee, 2016). Davin (2007) suggested that marriage migration is highly gender specific in that women are using marriage to escape poverty in the hope of achieving a better life for themselves and being able to help their families, and also to move up through the spatial hierarchy to more prosperous areas, which is considered predominantly a rural phenomenon. The increasing number of women from China, the Philippines and Korea coming to Japan as marriage migrants corresponds to this finding. Piper (2003) suggested that "marriage migration appears to be a secure way of achieving a less precarious life legally, socially, and economically", but it was also argued that the men who marry such women are often categorized as undesirable men by local women given their less favorable socio-economic backgrounds.

Japanese women's social position as well as domestic roles have undergone great progress (Fujimura-Fanselow & Kameda, 1995). The government's policies have made it possible for women to have equal rights in education and social participation. Over the decades, women in Japan have gradually had more opportunities to pursue higher education as well as their professional career. Meanwhile, women's attitudes towards marriage and divorce have been undergoing tremendous transformation. Many women, particularly those with university degrees or higher, are postponing marriage or choosing to remain single. The divorce rate is also getting higher because women can achieve financial independence without having to relying on men. Similar results have been reported in Lan's (2008) study that much more Taiwanese women of marriageable age are now pursuing university degrees, participating in the labor market, building careers, and enjoying financial independence in comparison to the past. They combine a concern for the high costs of child rearing with a desire for an equal partnership.

The research studies on more diverse cultures in Asia have been steadily increasing. Liu and Liu (2004) categorized the marriages of Chinese women to Japanese men into three types: well educated single women, divorced or widowed women, and low educated women. A number of studies on marriage have focused on the second and the last, that women from rural areas migrate by marriage as a means of improving their life quality. The marriage migrants have to face various practical issues such as citizenships of their own, and their children, access to employment and public welfare services, custody of children. International couples must deal with the issues not only of how to gain citizenship and rights upon entering a nation-state, but also on how to exit a nation-state if necessary (Jones & Shen, 2008).

A growing number of researchers examined Chinese culture and Japanese. For example, Chen and Starosta (1997-8) categorized the factors that influence Chinese conflict management: harmony, inter-relation (*guanxi*), face (*miantze*), and power. Chen and Starosta explained that harmony, the Chinese ultimate goal of interaction, is supported by *guanxi* and *miantze*. *Guanxi* forms the structural pattern of the Chinese social fabric and *miantze* is the operational mechanism that connects the nodes of *guanxi* network. *Guanxi* refers to relationships between two parties,

which include friends, family, supervisor/subordinate, and many others. Based on this, a clear boundary is drawn to distinguish in-group and out-group relationships. This distinction has a great impact on how Chinese treat others depending on whether they are perceived to be in-group or out-group members. The “we feeling”, also called *ziji ren* (insiders), means that among in-group members the possibility of confrontation or conflict is greatly reduced, while harmony often becomes a victim of distrusting out-group membership (outsiders). *Miantze*, or face, is another important concept in Chinese culture; it refers to the projected image of ourselves in a relationship network (Ting-Toomey, 1988). One should show due respect for others’ feelings and act to save their face. Having no concern for face saving in social interactions often leads to emotional uneasiness or to a serious conflict.

Miyahara et al. (1998) compared conflict resolution styles between two “collectivist” cultures: Japanese and Koreans; the results indicated that the Japanese are simply not as collectivistic as the Koreans in their preferred conflict management behaviors; Japanese appeared to value directness and frankness more than did the Koreans. This seemingly other-centered style of communication may be a manifestation of the Japanese desire to protect their own ego and save their face, rather than their genuine concern for others’ feelings. The findings indicated that, as the authors suggested, “there are many subtler dimensions in the ‘collectivistic’ styles and strategies of communication than may have been believed.”

Therefore, this study focuses on exploring the Chinese wives’ perceptions of their intercultural marriage with their Japanese husbands. Both cultures are viewed as collectivistic and yet, they have not been thoroughly and sufficiently examined. This study aims to explore how Chinese wives who marry Japanese view their marital relationships, and how the perceptions affect their ways of managing challenges that may be caused by cultural and/or individual differences. Specifically, the following questions served as main guidelines during the qualitative interviews.

1. How do the Chinese wives view their intercultural marriage with their Japanese husbands?
2. What are the challenges or conflicts perceived by the Chinese wives?
3. How do the couples manage the challenges, and what are the effects as perceived by the Chinese wives?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

There was no specific restriction such as age or current residing regions; however, those who have received college education or above were preferable in that most of the existing literature focused on *hanayome*, women who came to Japan seeking a better life because of the less favorable situation in China. Chinese who don’t belong to this category of the less fortunate, who may be the only child in the family, were the focus of this study.

3.2. Procedure

The participants were recruited through friends' introductions. The researcher sent out a request to the friends' groups on LINE and WeChat explaining the major purpose of the study and asking for help. As a result, six participants now residing in China agreed to take the interviews. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in China in their preferred time and place upon their requests. Before each interview, confidentiality of data was ensured and recording permission was taken. The recorded content was transcribed after the interview and then translated into English. Back translation was conducted by another bilingual researcher for accuracy.

4. Results

All the Chinese participants' husbands are expatriates who were dispatched to China by their companies in Japan. All of them have children who go to the Japanese school. Five are university graduates and one has a Master's degree. Except one who has an older sister, the other five are the only child in their family. From the following basic information, it can be seen that all of them are at least bilingual in their native language and either English or Japanese, while half of them are trilingual. Similarly, the languages they use to communicate with their Japanese husbands are either Mandarin Chinese or Japanese, indicating their husband's proficiency in Chinese. As a matter of fact, most of the Japanese husbands are reported to have an excellent mastery of Mandarin Chinese and a good understanding of Chinese culture.

Table 6. Basic Demographic Information

| No. | Age/whether only child | Educational level | Marital status | Years of marriage | Number of children | Country of current residence | Language(s) spoken | Language(s) used between couples | Years of residing in Japan | Naturalization |
|-----|------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 36 Only child | Bachelor | Married | 12 | 2 | China | Chinese, Japanese | Chinese Japanese | 5 | No |
| 2 | 48 Only child | Bachelor | Married | 18 | 2 | China | Chinese, Japanese, English | Japanese, Chinese | 24 | No |
| 3 | 41 | Master | Married | 12 | 2 | China | Chinese, English, Japanese | Chinese, Japanese | 4 | No |
| 4 | 42 Only child | Bachelor | Married | 8 | 1 | China | Chinese, Japanese | Japanese, Chinese | 0 | No |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|----------|---------|---|---|-------|----------------------------------|----------------------|---|----|
| 5 | 33 Only child | Bachelor | Married | 9 | 1 | China | Chinese, Japanese | Chinese, Japanese | 0 | No |
| 6 | 36 Only child | Bachelor | Married | 7 | 2 | China | Chinese, English, Japanese | Chinese, Japanese | 3 | No |

After carefully listening to the recording and examining the transcripts, the following categories emerged as the most frequently mentioned by the participants.

1. First Encounters and Impressions
2. Reasons for Getting Married
3. Attitudes towards Intercultural Marriage
4. Gender Roles
5. Relationships with In-laws
6. Money
7. Naturalization
8. Self-understanding and Identity
9. Perceptions of Marriage and Future Plans

4.1. First Encounters and Impressions

Most of the interviewees met when they worked in the company in China where the husbands were; only one was a classmate of her husband's when she was studying in a Japanese university. The participants reported positive first impressions of their husbands in that they looked smart, dressed neatly and in a fashionable way. Beyond that, the participants felt that they were very polite, humble, have a very serious attitude in doing things. Meanwhile, good manners, generosity, rich life experiences and life style also contribute to the good first impression. These perceived images and qualities fit in the category of ideal partners that the interviewees had been seeking.

4.2. Reasons for Marriage

Whatever the incidents that triggered the marriage, all participants reported common individual traits that appeared attractive to them. Love comes first and most fundamental, followed by perceived good qualities such as being kind, reliable and trustworthy, honest and straightforward, unselfish and generous, knowledgeable and having very rich experiences but not arrogant. Some of the husbands were reported to be practical though not romantic, and that they would truly care for the family. Sharing similar values and hobbies was also important, and the couples didn't suffer from language inabilities because most of the husbands had a good understanding of Chinese language and culture. The husband's family background was also one indicator of a potential harmonious and happy marriage.

4.3. Attitudes toward Intercultural Marriage

Attitudes of family, friends or important others toward intercultural marriage may to some

degree influence the participants' decisions and their views of their marital relationships. One participant who is a local Shanghainese explained her attitude toward marrying a foreigner as the following:

I had never thought of marrying a person outside of Shanghai city, even a Chinese from other cities. So it meant the same to me whether I marry a person from Tokyo or Beijing. To me a Japanese man just means he is not a Shanghainese, and this didn't bother me at all since I had never considered that I would marry even a non-Shanghai Chinese guy. My parents were against our marriage because they thought he lived too far from Shanghai, but my husband said that his parents weren't against it.

A similar attitude was reported by another only child in the family who is from a big city. Her explanation not only demonstrated how her parents viewed intercultural marriage but also how they expected to be connected to their daughter after she was married.

My parents are from the city, so they can accept an international marriage. However, considering that in the future it would be hard to see me, they were a bit against it at first. Because many people around them had their daughters marry Westerners or study in the West, and they told my parents that in the future it would be more convenient, like flying only two hours to Beijing, so they were kind of having it thought through. My parents were a little worried, and they thought that I should get married in China and then they could take care of my children.

In contrast to her parents' concern about losing touch, her husband's parents seemed to respect their son's decision by simply asking "are you sure?", "Is it really OK?" which indicated a more independent relationship between her husband and his parents.

4.4. Gender Roles

Gender role differences can be reflected in daily routines such as doing housework, taking care of children, and attitudes toward working.

4.4.1. Housework

Many of the participants, especially the only child in the family, reported that they had never done any housework before they got married because her parents would do everything for her. A few participants considered housework as the responsibility of the wife. One commented that she has full control with domestic matters and would ask her husband for help if needed, so she didn't see that there is a need to get into any conflict with her husband simply because of these daily chores. Another interviewee expressed similar opinion, and doesn't mind doing these house chores at all partly because she felt that "men should work outside and women should take care of the family". One more participant explained that she was doing everything simply because her husband was too busy with work; since they were colleagues, she knew perfectly

well how busy it could be, so she didn't expect him to help at all. She concluded that there is no need to be bothered at all because many families in the company were like this.

Although half of the participants reported that they didn't really mind doing most of the housework, one participant had very strong negative feelings about her husband's not sharing housework and child raising as well as his insensitivity and ignorance to her situation when they lived in Japan.

As a wife, I thought I should support him, but this support had really hurt me so deeply. During the first two years he hardly did anything for the child, and he had never even changed his diapers or bathed him. One Korean mom once even asked me if I was a single mother! I realized that all my problems lay in the fact that I had done everything by myself! Every time we got into a fight, even now, I would say to him that "you owe me, and you really hurt me so much before our elder son was two. If I were in China, my situation would be much better because I am Chinese."

From her point of view, he had not been able to take the responsibilities of being a husband and a father as she expected, although she felt that she had tried all her best to support him as a wife. She associated his problem with his family background where his father was mostly away because of his work, and his mother had to take care of all three children. Lacking a good role model, he didn't know what a father should be like. However, her family was very different, her parents, especially her father, has devoted more time than her mother to the family. She emphasized that "Chinese fathers really do housework" and expressed her feeling of helplessness and desperation when she was busy making the milk for her crying baby son while her husband was sleeping soundly.

In intercultural marriages, problems can be caused easily when one party is insensitive to differences, and takes things for granted. Understanding and acceptance of the spouse's culture can definitely help eliminate the possibilities of conflicts. One interviewee said that her husband knows Chinese language and culture very well, and understanding the meaning of her being the only child in her family, he had never expected her to do the chores. In China having parents' help is also quite common especially when a baby is born. Although one participant said that her husband was busy and didn't have time to help, he had a good attitude in that every time she asked he would try, so she didn't have much to complain about. She tried to manage everything until her mom came to help, and so far her mom has lived with them for about three years, and both of the couple are happy with the situation because the possibilities of getting into fights have been greatly reduced with her mom's help.

4.4.2. Child Rearing

Once a child is born, the couple faces new challenges and much more has to be done. Although it is usually very common in Japan that the mother mainly takes care of the children and manages house chores while her husband is working, in China child raising involves not just the parents, but also helpers and/or parents of both sides. Chinese wives may find the situation in Japan hard to cope with without anyone's help, not to mention the fact that they don't speak

the language and lack help from the husbands and others.

4.4.3. Work

Balancing work and family has become a common reality for most working women in Japan nowadays. To the Chinese participants, working is a norm through which they realize their independency both financially and mentally; working also allows them to make new friends, build up pride and enhance their self-esteem. All the participants expressed their willingness to work and to be independent. One expressed her opinion of work by comparing herself to Japanese housewives.

I love working. I felt that I didn't want to be like those Japanese moms who just enjoy life every day by eating, and having fun. The topics they were talking about were too boring. I want to work, and make some new friends, Chinese friends.

4.5. Relationship with In-laws

Relationships with in-laws may be the most challenging reality the participants had to face and deal with. Although none of the participants live with the Japanese in-laws, they expressed various opinions about their experiences with their in-laws, positive and negative.

One participant whose parents divorced when she was 10, said her husband's being unthoughtful and naive has been compensated by his parents. She said that her parents-in-law are really kind to her, and treat her as if she were their own daughter. Although they don't see each other often, every time they went back to Japan to visit, her parents-in-law would prepare many things she likes. She commented that because of their love, she likes them much more than her own parents.

In clear contrast, most of the participants reported the difficulties and confusion when dealing with in-laws. One interviewee mentioned that she spent three months with her mother-in-law in order to learn how to cook when her first child was just born; she called it "training" where "my mom was teaching me with love, but my mother-in-law with a stick."

My parents would feel very sad if they saw me doing housework while carrying my baby on my back. In the past my mom did everything, and she is very happy to take care of my baby and me. It was my parents who helped me a lot especially when my children were young. But my mother-in-law wouldn't take care of my child for me. So when she asked me to do something while I was very tired or didn't want to, I would pretend that I didn't understand. My mother-in-law and I never got into any conflict on the surface, but we knew we were not happy with each other. She cares about face very much, and will not give us any trouble, so with certain distance we get along very well.

Since having the mother come over to help seems very common in China, one participant actually went through great confusion and frustration in dealing with the problematic situations caused by this between her family and her husband.

After I became pregnant, I quit my job and became a housewife. I tried very hard to do housework, and learn to cook, also learn Japanese in preparation of going back to Japan someday. It was not easy, but the hardest part, which bothered me the most, in comparison to the physical labor, was the mental misery, which was the relationship between him and my parents, and my sister. When I was pregnant, I knew nothing about housework. Although I was trying hard, it was a great comfort to have my parents here help me.

To her it is a relief to have her parents come over to help, and it is normal for most Chinese. However, her husband “couldn’t stand the situation”, and thought they should have their own life and space. This mismatch of distance has become their first “cultural clash”. Confusion regarding keeping an appropriate distance with the in-laws has been reported a few times. As one participant said,

Because my parent-in-law are old, I wanted to be nice to them, and take good care of them. But their culture is different from mine in everything. Sometimes I couldn’t help wondering: was I too enthusiastic? Showing too much filial piety? It is very hard to keep the right distance.

4.6. Money

Money and finance have always been a practical issue in marriage. Although most of the participants are in control of their husbands’ bank accounts, they see it as a trust, a sign of strong interdependency among family members. On the flip side, not being given this control can be viewed as negative, which is related to self-esteem. One participant stated her feelings of having to be given monthly allowance by her husband when they lived in Japan, “I can’t stand this feeling that he gave me [which made me feel like a beggar], because I also have my self-esteem.” Because she was working and had her own income and pride, being given money had hurt her pride. She had quite a lot of thoughts on her mind.

When I was in China I earned my own living since college. I think I am very independent. I also received higher education, my self-esteem is not worse than yours. Even though you grew up in a developed country [Japan] and I in a developing country [China], my education level is higher than yours. I am a person with much pride, but I felt that finance is really the base of marriage, and I had to solve the problem.

Actually most of the interviewees expressed the strong preference for being independent with regard to finance or money. Many of them are from families where money was not an issue, they see work as a necessity in life not just for becoming financially independent, but also as a chance to get connected to others and improve themselves.

4.7. Naturalization

Getting permanent residence or becoming naturalized is a big decision to make. None of

these participants choose to get naturalized for the reasons of feeling pride as a Chinese, and keeping connections with their family in China. Although getting naturalized can bring certain convenience, it felt like “a tree being pulled out from the root”, as one participant explained.

4.7.1. Self-Understanding and Identity

The ideal couple relationship has to be equal and both parties respect, support and learn from each other. Whereas it is significantly important to strengthen the interdependency among family members, the participants emphasized frequently the importance of being an independent individual with pride. This perception has been reflected in various aspects such as money, work, and child raising.

4.7.2. Perceptions of Marriage and Future Plans

Most participants reported a high degree of marital satisfaction. The perception of *yuan* (destiny) seems to play a role. One commented that “regardless of nationalities, I think it is *yuan*, destiny brought us together.” Although *yuan* brought the couples together, the participants emphasized how important it is to make an effort in managing their marriage. One suggested that “marriage really needs to be managed with heart. I feel that we shouldn’t take everything for granted, you have to devote yourself to it by actions.”

Regarding the future, some of them said that they would live in both China and Japan after their husbands retire, whereas one concluded that they will live in Japan in the future by emphasizing the lack of *guanxi* in China.

In the future we probably will go back to Japan. In China you need human relationships (*guanxi*) like when you go to hospital, etc. without *guanxi* there is no way to survive. However, we have been without it for so long, and if I have to beg for others’ help when I get old maybe others won’t even care to give me face. I’d better stay in Japan. I have got used to living in Japan, with few family members, relatives and friends. So I need to maintain the strong bond with my family. I really don’t have relatives or friends in Japan, but on the other hand, those who have relatives and friends are also bothered by how to get along with them.

5. Discussion

Based on the above categories, the following characteristics can be induced.

- Chinese wives reported stronger interdependency with insiders than their Japanese husbands.
- Chinese wives reported strong independency as individuals.
- Chinese perceived identities are closely related to and reflected in their meanings of having a career, ways to spend their time, and how they manage conflicts.

5.1. Strong Interdependency with Insiders

Chinese wives reported a higher degree of interdependency with insiders. This tendency can be observed in making big decisions. The Chinese parents are willing to help and support the daughter; some parents were against their daughter marrying a foreigner at first because they felt the distance would make it difficult for them to see their daughter often. In contrast, Japanese husbands seemed to be more individualistic, and more independent from their parents. To their Japanese spouses, the Chinese wives' strong interdependency with her parents was too much and hard to understand and accept. Conflicts arise from the different viewpoints originating from these differences. Japanese revealed less interdependency than their Chinese wives, who never quit providing for or getting support from their parents or siblings. To the Japanese husbands, it is normal that the parents or in-laws mind their own business and live their own lives instead of getting themselves much involved in children's family matters. In Japan, when a couple is married, they form another individual unit, and it is important to make their best on their own instead of troubling others, even parents.

Monetary issues also reflect the difference of interdependency of Chinese and independency of Japanese. Most Chinese have or had their own jobs, and didn't have to worry much about money, however, their parents would still offer financial help if needed. This is not common in Japan, where children need to be on their own and remain independent once they reach adulthood.

5.2. Importance of Being Independent

Chinese wives show strong awareness of becoming an independent individual both financially and mentally, in particular mentally, because Chinese wives seek an equal marital relationship with mutual respect and support where both parties can learn from each other and improve themselves. While they wish to keep their interdependency strong, all advocated the strong will to be independent both financially and mentally. Working helps them reach independency, to keep their self-esteem, to improve self, and to build *guanxi* by making more friends. Among the commonly perceived identities of being a mother, a wife, a daughter, a career woman, most participants revealed their prioritized and preferred identity as an independent woman, rather than a wife, a mother, or a daughter. This is different from the dominating cultural expectation in Japan that women should be "homemakers and mothers" (Lindsey, 2011).

The above discovery resonates with Murray and Kimura's (2003) finding that both individualist and collectivist dimensions are present in Japanese marital relationships. Some of the conflict caused accordingly can be found in the couples' varied dimensions. Japanese husbands were reported to show individualistic characteristics in valuing individual happiness and personal freedom, and would feel threatened when the Chinese wives' mother moved in to help.

5.3. Conflict Management

Although the couples have faced various conflicts due to the differences such as perceptions of gender roles, and personal distance, Chinese wives cherish their marriage and make great effort

to manage conflict with the family members. Partly because of the perception of *yuan*, they don't think of divorce easily even when they experience hard times.

In situations of conflict, Chinese wives and their Japanese husbands revealed different strategies of managing conflict. The Chinese wives tend to value more positive face of hoping to be understood, respected and approved, and utilize more verbal communication with their husband; whereas their husbands are more avoidant and revealing more negative face need of autonomy. One party's degree of assimilation helps reduce the frequency of conflict and strengthens marital satisfaction. Higher degree of marital satisfaction was reported by those whose husbands show great understanding and support. The higher marital satisfaction may also relate to the couples' living in China where the norms are taken for granted by the Chinese participants. Most of the unsatisfactory situations occurred when the couples lived in Japan where norms changed. When managing conflicts, the participants pointed out that both parties need to show mutual understanding and stand on the same platform. As one of them suggested, "marriage really needs to be managed with heart", both parties "shouldn't take everything for granted" and "devote themselves to marriage by actions".

Face was mentioned by one participant in explaining how Chinese and Japanese reacted to the word *baka* (which literally means stupid or silly). This word may be quite commonly used in the hierarchical Japanese relationship, usually from superior to subordinate; the subordinate most probably will not talk or fight back due to the power imbalance and the damage to harmony. One participant shared the incident of a Japanese saying it to his Chinese staff, causing a fatal damage to the Chinese face. As Ting-Toomey (1988) suggested, having no concern for *Miantze*, or face, which is important in Chinese culture, can lead to a serious conflict; this Japanese superior had to apologize to the Chinese staff in front of all others in the company risking losing his own face to make up for the face loss of the Chinese. In failing to do this he would risk turning all Chinese into his "enemy" by not showing enough concern to the Chinese face need. It can be implied from this example that Chinese don't have strong hierarchical relationships like Japanese, and value more self positive face than Japanese.

Face issues can also arise from conflicts borne from eating habits. A couple of the participants complained about their Japanese husbands finishing all dishes served on the table without leaving any to them. The Japanese husbands might have tried really hard to finish all so that they won't hurt their wives' feelings which can be interpreted as a way of giving face; however, the Chinese wives consider it as completely embarrassing and disrespectful. According to them, in China family members will always leave food for insiders such as family members if they will be late; it is a way to give face to others, to show respect and inclusiveness, despite the Chinese wives' self positive face need with insiders.

Different perceptions of gender roles have resulted in some conflicts, as reported by the Chinese participants. As most of them are the only child in the family, they didn't get trained to do any housework or cooking, or rather, they didn't have to. As the only child, they carry the hopes of a few generations: their parents', their grandparents'. The family tends to invest heavily in the child's education, while anything else such as doing housework is viewed as interruptions and will hinder their bright future. This bright future is guaranteed by studying hard and getting into a good university which in turn ensures a better career. As a result, most of the interviewees, especially the only child, reported that they didn't know how to do housework before getting married.

In Japan, the Japanese have tried very hard to train the children to be self-independent since an early age. Once a couple is married, they become an individual unit, and although they are interdependent as a family, there is still a clear boundary regarding gender roles such as who is responsible for housework and child raising. Although various policies such as the Child Leave Act have been implemented, the traditional role of a woman as a wife and a mother remains dominant, and most of the domestic burden falls on her shoulder even though she has to work. This individualistic feature is strong in Japanese society, and it is highly valued that each person does his/her job well, and minds his/her own business; it is a virtue that they try not to bother others and cause trouble even to parents. However, in China, there seems to be a much more interdependent tendency; family, not only the immediate family, but also the extended family as well as relatives and friends, are considered insiders, who depend on each other and help each other when needed. This interdependency is necessary and important for Chinese to stay strong and survive in the harsh competitive society. A good relationship network guarantees good exchange of information, more opportunities, and more privileges.

In Japan a person needs to communicate with the other properly based on the context, age, gender, social status, and the relationship with the counterpart. Not only choosing appropriate words is important, being sensitive to other people and the atmosphere is also key to the success of communication. The ambiguity of verbal communication as well as the difficulty of reading the nonverbal cues accurately made Chinese participants feel confused and troubled. Most of them commented on Japanese society as suppressing, and coming back to China made them feel free and liberated. Not just the Chinese wives, one Japanese husband also expressed the feeling of not wanting to go back to Japan with his wife because he felt the human relationships in Japan were too complicated with too many rules, and the hierarchy was so strong like the military. In China, there are diverse ethnicities and cultures with countless dialects in different regions and 55 minorities, so it is more important to convey the intended meaning to others by speaking directly and clearly, which is different from Japanese.

6. Conclusion and Future Implications

Being categorized as “collectivistic”, this study has some small-scale but subtle findings between Japan and China, which calls for more research studies within collectivistic cultures. As neighboring countries, and both being ranked on the top in GDP, the interdependency between China and Japan has become stronger and stronger. Maintaining a good relationship by understanding intercultural marriage between Chinese and Japanese serves as a starting point of reducing divorce, and enhancing mutual understanding, which will ultimately contribute to a more peaceful and harmonious global world.

Although this study has findings that can answer some of the questions of intercultural marriage, due to the small sample and their unique characteristic of being expatriates' wives, it is hard to draw conclusions that can be applied to intercultural marriage of others who are in different situations. Future studies can focus on more diverse variables such as different age groups, educational levels, regions, and social status. Equal attention should also be paid to how the Japanese husbands view their marriage and deal with the conflicts that may occur, which would add new insight to intercultural marriage among “collectivistic” Asian cultures.

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Appendix 1. Percentage of Marriage, Years and Nationalities of Husband and Wife

| 第1-6表 婚姻件数, 年次×夫妻の国籍別 | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Table 1-6: Percentage of Marriage, Years and Nationalities of Husband and Wife | | | | | | | |
| 国 籍 (nationality) | 昭和60年 (1985) | 平成2年 (1990) | 平成7年 (1995) | 平成12年 (2000) | 平成17年 (2005) | 平成18年 (2006) | 平成19年 (2007) |
| 総数 (total number) | 735 850 | 722 138 | 791 888 | 798 138 | 714 265 | 730 971 | 719 822 |
| 夫妻とも日本 (both Japanese) | 723 669 | 696 512 | 764 161 | 761 875 | 672 784 | 686 270 | 679 550 |
| 夫妻の一方が外国 (either husband or wife foreigner) | 12 181 | 25 626 | 27 727 | 36 263 | 41 481 | 44 701 | 40 272 |
| 夫日本・妻外国 (husband Japanese・wife Foreigner) | 7 738 | 20 026 | 20 787 | 28 326 | 33 116 | 35 993 | 31 807 |
| 妻日本・夫外国 (wife Japanese・husband foreigner) | 4 443 | 5 600 | 6 940 | 7 937 | 8 365 | 8 708 | 8 465 |
| 夫日本・妻外国 (Husband Japanese・wife foreigner) | 7 738 | 20 026 | 20 787 | 28 326 | 33 116 | 35 993 | 31 807 |
| 妻の国籍 (wife's nationality) | | | | | | | |
| 韓国・朝鮮 (Korea) | 3 622 | 8 940 | 4 521 | 6 214 | 6 066 | 6 041 | 5 606 |
| 中国 (China) | 1 766 | 3 614 | 5 174 | 9 884 | 11 644 | 12 131 | 11 926 |
| フィリピン (Philippines) | ... | ... | 7 188 | 7 519 | 10 242 | 12 150 | 9 217 |
| タイ (Thailand) | ... | ... | 1 915 | 2 137 | 1 637 | 1 676 | 1 475 |
| 米国 (U. S.) | 254 | 260 | 198 | 202 | 177 | 215 | 193 |
| 英国 (U. K.) | ... | ... | 82 | 76 | 59 | 79 | 67 |
| ブラジル (Brazil) | ... | ... | 579 | 357 | 311 | 285 | 288 |
| ペルー (Peru) | ... | ... | 140 | 145 | 121 | 117 | 138 |
| その他の国 (others) | 2 096 | 7 212 | 990 | 1 792 | 2 859 | 3 299 | 2 897 |
| 妻日本・夫外国 (wife Japanese・husband foreigner) | 4 443 | 5 600 | 6 940 | 7 937 | 8 365 | 8 708 | 8 465 |
| 夫の国籍 (husband's nationality) | | | | | | | |
| 韓国・朝鮮 (Korea) | 2 525 | 2 721 | 2 842 | 2 509 | 2 087 | 2 335 | 2 209 |
| 中国 (China) | 380 | 708 | 769 | 878 | 1 015 | 1 084 | 1 016 |
| フィリピン (Philippines) | ... | ... | 52 | 109 | 187 | 195 | 162 |
| タイ (Thailand) | ... | ... | 19 | 67 | 60 | 54 | 68 |
| 米国 (U. S.) | 876 | 1 091 | 1 303 | 1 483 | 1 551 | 1 474 | 1 485 |
| 英国 (U. K.) | ... | ... | 213 | 249 | 343 | 386 | 372 |
| ブラジル (Brazil) | ... | ... | 162 | 279 | 261 | 292 | 341 |
| ペルー (Peru) | ... | ... | 66 | 124 | 123 | 115 | 127 |
| その他の国 (Others) | 662 | 1 080 | 1 514 | 2 239 | 2 738 | 2 773 | 2 685 |
| 資料: 統計情報部「平成19年人口動態統計」 | | | | Vital Statistics of Japan, 2007 | | | |
| 「その他の国」に含まれる。 | | | | | | | |

Appendix 2. Percentage of Divorce, Years and Nationalities of Husband and Wife

| 第1-7表 離婚件数, 年次×夫妻の国籍別 | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--|
| Table 1-7: Percentage of Divorce, Years and Nationalities of Husband and Wife | | | | | | | | | |
| 国籍 (nationality) | 平成7年 (1995) | 平成12年 (2000) | 平成17年 (2005) | 平成22年 (2010) | 平成23年 (2011) | 平成24年 (2012) | 平成25年 (2013) | 平成26年 (2014) | |
| 総数 (total number) | 199 016 | 264 246 | 261 917 | 251 378 | 235 719 | 235 406 | 231 383 | 222 107 | |
| 夫妻とも日本 (both Japanese) | 191 024 | 251 879 | 246 228 | 232 410 | 217 887 | 219 118 | 216 187 | 207 972 | |
| 夫妻の一方が外国 (either husband or wife foreigner) | 7 992 | 12 367 | 15 689 | 18 968 | 17 832 | 16 288 | 15 196 | 14 135 | |
| 夫日本・妻外国 (husband Japanese・wife Foreigner) | 6 153 | 9 607 | 12 430 | 15 258 | 14 224 | 12 892 | 11 887 | 10 930 | |
| 妻日本・夫外国 (wife Japanese・husband foreigner) | 1 839 | 2 760 | 3 259 | 3 710 | 3 608 | 3 396 | 3 309 | 3 205 | |
| 夫日本・妻外国 (Husband Japanese・wife foreigner) | 6 153 | 9 607 | 12 430 | 15 258 | 14 224 | 12 892 | 11 887 | 10 930 | |
| 妻の国籍 (wife's nationality) | | | | | | | | | |
| 韓国・朝鮮 (Korea) | 2 582 | 2 555 | 2 555 | 2 560 | 2 275 | 2 003 | 1 724 | 1 619 | |
| 中国 (China) | 1 486 | 2 918 | 4 363 | 5 762 | 5 584 | 4 963 | 4 573 | 4 093 | |
| フィリピン (Philippines) | 1 456 | 2 816 | 3 485 | 4 630 | 4 216 | 3 811 | 3 547 | 3 245 | |
| タイ (Thailand) | 315 | 612 | 782 | 743 | 665 | 652 | 649 | 603 | |
| 米国 (U. S.) | 53 | 68 | 76 | 74 | 66 | 64 | 63 | 73 | |
| 英国 (U. K.) | 25 | 41 | 28 | 23 | 14 | 18 | 21 | 22 | |
| ブラジル (Brazil) | 47 | 92 | 116 | 103 | 96 | 92 | 93 | 101 | |
| ペルー (Peru) | 15 | 40 | 59 | 59 | 49 | 47 | 38 | 29 | |
| その他の国 (others) | 174 | 465 | 966 | 1 304 | 1 259 | 1 242 | 1 179 | 1 145 | |
| 妻日本・夫外国 (wife Japanese・husband foreigner) | 1 839 | 2 760 | 3 259 | 3 710 | 3 608 | 3 396 | 3 309 | 3 205 | |
| 夫の国籍 (husband's nationality) | | | | | | | | | |
| 韓国・朝鮮 (Korea) | 939 | 1 113 | 971 | 977 | 915 | 811 | 747 | 791 | |
| 中国 (China) | 198 | 369 | 492 | 632 | 632 | 610 | 568 | 582 | |
| フィリピン (Philippines) | 43 | 66 | 86 | 119 | 126 | 109 | 109 | 106 | |
| タイ (Thailand) | 8 | 19 | 30 | 45 | 37 | 42 | 32 | 37 | |
| 米国 (U. S.) | 299 | 385 | 398 | 397 | 397 | 415 | 384 | 356 | |
| 英国 (U. K.) | 40 | 58 | 86 | 77 | 98 | 71 | 71 | 60 | |
| ブラジル (Brazil) | 20 | 59 | 81 | 140 | 112 | 120 | 133 | 130 | |
| ペルー (Peru) | 7 | 41 | 68 | 70 | 70 | 74 | 73 | 62 | |
| その他の国 (Others) | 285 | 650 | 1 047 | 1 253 | 1 221 | 1 144 | 1 192 | 1 081 | |
| 資料：統計情報部「平成26年人口動態統計」 Vital Statistics of Japan, 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

Appendix 3. Aging Population in Countries

図表2-2 主要国における高齢化率の推移
Table 2-2 Aging Population in Countries

| 単位 :%) | | | | | | | 単位 :%) | | | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 年次 (year) | 日本 (Japan) | アメリカ (U.S.) | フランス (France) | ドイツ (Germany) | スウェーデン (Sweden) | 英国(UK) | 年次 (year) | 日本 (Japan) | 中国 (China) | インド (India) | インドネシア (Indonesia) | 韓国(South Korea) | シンガポール (Singapore) |
| 1950 | 4.9 | 8.3 | 11.4 | 9.7 | 10.2 | 10.8 | 1950 | 4.9 | 4.5 | 3.1 | 4.0 | 2.9 | 2.4 |
| 1955 | 5.3 | 8.8 | 11.5 | 10.6 | 10.9 | 11.3 | 1955 | 5.3 | 4.1 | 3.2 | 3.8 | 3.4 | 2.2 |
| 1960 | 5.7 | 9.1 | 11.6 | 11.5 | 11.7 | 11.8 | 1960 | 5.7 | 3.7 | 3.1 | 3.6 | 3.7 | 2.0 |
| 1965 | 6.3 | 9.5 | 12.1 | 12.5 | 12.7 | 12.2 | 1965 | 6.3 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 3.3 | 3.4 | 2.6 |
| 1970 | 7.1 | 9.7 | 12.8 | 13.6 | 13.7 | 13.0 | 1970 | 7.1 | 3.7 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.3 |
| 1975 | 7.9 | 10.5 | 13.4 | 14.9 | 15.1 | 14.1 | 1975 | 7.9 | 4.0 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 4.1 |
| 1980 | 9.1 | 11.4 | 13.9 | 15.7 | 16.3 | 14.9 | 1980 | 9.1 | 4.5 | 3.6 | 3.6 | 3.9 | 4.7 |
| 1985 | 10.3 | 12.0 | 12.7 | 14.5 | 17.2 | 15.1 | 1985 | 10.3 | 5.1 | 3.7 | 3.6 | 4.3 | 5.3 |
| 1990 | 12.1 | 12.5 | 14.0 | 14.9 | 17.8 | 15.7 | 1990 | 12.1 | 5.3 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 5.0 | 5.6 |
| 1995 | 14.6 | 12.6 | 15.1 | 15.4 | 17.5 | 15.9 | 1995 | 14.6 | 5.9 | 4.1 | 4.2 | 5.9 | 6.3 |
| 2000 | 17.4 | 12.3 | 16.1 | 16.2 | 17.3 | 15.8 | 2000 | 17.4 | 6.7 | 4.4 | 4.7 | 7.3 | 7.3 |
| 2005 | 20.2 | 12.3 | 16.6 | 18.8 | 17.3 | 16.0 | 2005 | 20.2 | 7.5 | 4.8 | 4.8 | 9.2 | 8.2 |
| 2010 | 23.0 | 13.0 | 17.0 | 20.6 | 18.2 | 16.2 | 2010 | 23.0 | 8.2 | 5.1 | 4.9 | 11.1 | 9.0 |
| 2015 | 26.7 | 14.8 | 19.1 | 21.2 | 19.9 | 17.8 | 2015 | 26.7 | 9.6 | 5.6 | 5.2 | 13.1 | 11.7 |
| 2020 | 29.1 | 16.7 | 20.8 | 22.7 | 20.7 | 18.4 | 2020 | 29.1 | 12.1 | 6.5 | 5.9 | 15.8 | 15.1 |
| 2025 | 30.3 | 18.9 | 22.4 | 25.0 | 21.5 | 19.6 | 2025 | 30.3 | 14.2 | 7.5 | 7.0 | 19.7 | 19.3 |
| 2030 | 31.6 | 20.7 | 23.9 | 28.0 | 22.2 | 21.4 | 2030 | 31.6 | 17.2 | 8.5 | 8.4 | 23.7 | 23.3 |
| 2035 | 33.4 | 21.4 | 25.1 | 30.8 | 23.5 | 23.1 | 2035 | 33.4 | 21.3 | 9.5 | 9.9 | 27.4 | 26.7 |
| 2040 | 36.1 | 21.9 | 26.0 | 31.3 | 23.8 | 23.8 | 2040 | 36.1 | 24.6 | 10.7 | 11.4 | 30.8 | 29.8 |
| 2045 | 37.7 | 21.8 | 26.1 | 31.6 | 23.7 | 24.1 | 2045 | 37.7 | 26.0 | 12.1 | 12.8 | 33.3 | 32.2 |
| 2050 | 38.8 | 22.2 | 26.3 | 32.3 | 23.8 | 24.7 | 2050 | 38.8 | 27.6 | 13.7 | 14.0 | 35.1 | 33.9 |
| 2055 | 39.4 | 22.7 | 26.5 | 33.0 | 24.4 | 25.4 | 2055 | 39.4 | 31.0 | 15.5 | 14.6 | 35.9 | 35.0 |
| 2060 | 39.9 | 23.5 | 26.4 | 33.1 | 25.3 | 26.0 | 2060 | 39.9 | 32.9 | 17.2 | 15.3 | 37.1 | 36.3 |

資料 :各国に関しては、UN World Population Prospects : The 2015 Revision のうち中位推計日本に関しては、2010年以前は総務省統計局「国勢調査」、2015年は、総務省統計局「人口推計」平成27年国勢調査人口速報集計による人口を基準とした平成27年10月1日現在確定値)2020年以降は国立社会保障・人口問題研究所「日本の将来推計人口(平成24年1月推計)」(出生中位・死亡中位推計)

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This research study was presented at the 25th annual conference of IAICS at Masaryk University, Brno, July 13th, 2019 upon receiving the special grant from Fukuoka Jo Gakuin University, Japan.

The data of this study has been a part of the author's PhD dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Akira Miyahara, at Seinan Gakuin University, Japan.

My sincere thanks to Dr. Miyahara for his guidance; appreciation also goes to those who helped to contact the potential participants, and the participants who agreed to take the interviews. Without all their support, this study would not have been completed.