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Taiwan's Fifth Ethnic Group: A Study of the Acculturation and Cultural Fusion of Women who have Married into Families in Taiwan

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One of the under-studied effects of global migration has been an increase in transnational marriages. This phenomenon has greatly impacted Taiwan as women from Southeast Asian nations and Mainland China, through professional marriage brokers or personal contacts, enter into marriages with Taiwanese men. How well these women adapt to Taiwan's culture and learn its local languages is studied through the lens of two theories of intercultural communication: Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptation and Kramer's theory of cultural fusion. Based upon in-depth interviews with 28 women, results show some support for both theories. However, the postulates of cultural fusion demonstrate a better fit: Learning is an additive process; long-term association with co-ethnics appears to correlate with greater satisfaction and adaptation; and women's negotiated identities follow a range of outcomes.

Keywords: Acculturation; Cultural Fusion; Cross-Cultural Adaptation; Taiwan; Transnational Families

While the anthropologist Geertz (1973/2000) is often cited for his use of the phrase "thick description," it seems few take the time to understand what it means. Geertz advocates thick description in the service of theory building: "The essential task of

theory building here is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them" (p. 26). Geertz argues against a "stratigraphic" view of people that they are composed of "levels" that are cultural, social, and psychological and that underneath one can find the universal image of a person. Instead, culture and humanity evolved at the same time. To be human means to be cultural. And cultural is *not* clusters of behavior such as "customs, usages, traditions," but "control mechanisms—plans, recipes, rules, instructions" (p. 44). He is interested in discovering the meaning system of symbols which guide "social-structural and psychological processes" (p. 125). To discover the symbols themselves requires the anthropologist to dig deeply into the culture, that is, do thick description.

While we find Geertz's perspective on theory building compelling, one problem is that it fails to map out a middle ground or even ask if there is ground that lies between theories which claim to ride above culture and those which are deeply embedded within a culture. This question is most relevant in today's increasingly "flattened" world (Friedman, 2006) where people are crossing national boundaries in greater numbers and the dimensions of space and time are shrunk through advanced communication technologies. While the cockfighting which Geertz observed (1973/ 2000) may still be an important symbolic activity in Bali, today's Bali is increasingly impacted by its vibrant and growing tourism industry which draws visitors from cultures all over the globe. Presumably, this mixing of people and the symbols they bring with them has impacted Balinesian culture; this same mixing is occurring in many other cultures throughout the world.

Two theories of intercultural communication endeavor to help us understand the middle ground where we find the mixing of individuals and groups across national and cultural boundaries. One is Kim's (2001, 2006) theory of cross-cultural adaptation, a theory which lies on the universalist end of the spectrum as it explains the experience of any individual "stranger" who moves from one culture to another. It predicts that "successful" adaptation requires the individual to move along a path toward assimilation with the host or dominant culture. The second is Kramer's (2000, 2003a, 2003b) theory of cultural fusion. This theory shares greater affinity with Geertz's understanding of theory building as it is not prescriptive and claims that the human condition is marked by creativity and the search for novelty. However, it goes beyond Geertz by looking not only at the single culture, but at the unpredictable mixing of cultures and the potential for creating something new.

In this paper we look at the case of intercultural communication in one context, Taiwan. Recent years have witnessed a rapid increase in the number of "transnational marriages" whereby one spouse, usually the wife, is from China or Southeast Asia, and the other, usually the husband, is a native of Taiwan. Understanding how these recent immigrants adapt and/or fuse with the culture of Taiwan will help us better see the processes of intercultural communication. To do this we proceed according to the following. In the first part we briefly describe and present Kim's (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003; Kim, 2001, 2006) theory of cross-cultural adaptation and Kramer's (2000, 2003a, 2003b) critique and theory of cultural fusion. This is followed by a review of

the relevant literature on families and transnational families in Taiwan. Next we discuss the design, procedures, and findings from our study of these families and individuals. Fourth we discuss how findings challenge or support Kim and Kramer's theories. Finally, we discuss the implications of this study for building theories of communication.

Kim's Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Interest in how recent immigrants adapt when they move from one culture to another has long been of interest to scholars in such fields as sociology (e.g., Gordon, 1964; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), cross-cultural psychology (e.g., Berry, 2006), anthropology (e.g., Kroeber, 1948), and communication (Kim, 1988). Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptation differs from most approaches because it focuses on the acculturating individual rather than the group. The core of the theory is the "stress-adaptation-growth dynamic ... fueled by a continual and cyclic tension between stress and adaptation, resulting in a form of psychic growth" (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p. 381). When an immigrant enters a new host environment, a psychological sense of tension arises due to differences between the old and new cultures in the domains of both interpersonal and mass communication, and is influenced by a range of factors both macro and micro. Macrolevel factors include such items as the conformity pressure of the host culture, the receptivity of the host culture, or the ethnic group strength. Microlevel factors include the individual's predisposition—"preparedness for change, ethnic proximity"—and intercultural transformation—"functional fitness, psychological health, intercultural identity" (Kim, 2001, p. 87). These factors cause tension that may be perceived as a threat to the immigrant's existence resulting in adaptive responses, and if managed successfully, may lead to growth (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003; Kim, 2001, 2006). Growth is a learning process involving simultaneously unlearning the old ways of the immigrant culture, "deculturation," and learning the new host culture, "enculturation." Gudykunst and Kim (2003) claim adaptation is a "lifetime goal" with individuals "falling at some point on a continuum ranging from minimally adapted to maximally adapted" (p. 360).

The immigrant who is "maximally adapted" is able to achieve a "third-culture perspective" (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003) or "intercultural personhood" (Kim, 2001, 2006). Such a person has "an expanded psychological orientation beyond national and ethnic boundaries ... [who] does not emphasize numerous subcultural groups within a society" (Kim, 2001, p. 196). This person is able to transcend the boundaries of culture, seamlessly flow between cultures, gain a "wider circle of identification," and lead a life of pure communicative competence (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p. 385). Kim likens this to the Buddhist goal of reaching a state beyond opposites, where balance is achieved between good and bad, and one can see the world clearly. It is like reaching a mountaintop after a long and arduous journey and then seeing that "all paths below ultimately lead to the same summit and that each path presents unique scenery" (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p. 385). The immigrant who achieves intercultural personhood reaches a state of happiness, whereas one who does not,

who fails to adapt, who has poor host communication skills, suffers poor psychological health including "a negative self-image, low self-esteem, low morale, [and] social isolation" (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p. 372).

Kramer's Critique of Cross-Cultural Adaptation

In a number of works Kramer (2000, 2003a, 2003b) offers a critique of Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptation which warrants our attention. The heart of his critique is that the abandonment of cultural identities—called for by Kim in the concept of "intercultural personhood"—is the problem, not the solution. "Adaptation goes to the core of a psychological restructuration. This amounts to nothing less than the total hegemonic control of identity" (Kramer, 2000, p. 196). It is hegemonic because the host culture is elevated, given supreme power over the immigrant and the culture(s) he or she comes from. This is "nationalistic and penultimately ethnocentric" (Kramer, 2003a, p. 251). Taken to its extreme, cross-cultural adaptation theory teaches immigrants self-hatred. By psychologically adopting the host culture as their own, immigrants see themselves as "the other" (Kramer, 2003a). Thus, in order to adapt to the host culture, immigrants must see themselves from the outside-in rather than inside-out, leading to self-hatred. Kramer's second criticism concerns how Kim characterizes growth and learning, namely the "deculturation-enculturation" process. Drawing upon insights gained from hermeneutics, he claims "growth is not a zero-sum closed system. Instead, it is additive and integrative, so that as a person learns new ways of thinking and behaving, old ones are not necessarily unlearned" (Kramer, 2003a, p. 239). Finally, he argues the only thing that could fulfill the position of maximum adaptation would be a robot: "The robot is the perfect slave, the perfect 'model minority.' Automation and mindless repetition insures predictability: sound sleep" (Kramer, 2000, p. 199).

   Kramer offers an alternative understanding of acculturation, proposing a theory he calls cultural fusion. "Cultural fusion [is] the combining of elements within two or more cultures to create new cultural forms. ... The theory of cultural fusion is not prescriptive, as in social engineering. It does not ideologically justify any certain and singular course of action for all people in their efforts to be happy" (Rainwater-McClure, Reed, & Kramer, 2003, p. 222). Cultural fusion is a fluid and integrative approach that celebrates niches and difference.

> Under the currently hyperactive conditions, migrating populations, commercialism, and progressivism, are creating niches, changing the faces of nations, lifestyles, and energizing a fusional "in-between" of cultural interaction I call cultural accent. Today cultural fusion and accent is ubiquitous because of tremendous cultural churning. (Kramer, 2000, p. 203)

The goal of adaptation should not be to mechanize humanity into streamlined "model minorities" but rather, as our world becomes more pluralistic, to celebrate and embrace differences between and within cultures. "According to the hermeneutics of cultural fusion, 'adaptability' is not a unilinear, single dimensional sort of

variable. Hence, it is unpredictable. Life is a continual experiment" (Kramer, 2000, pp. 220–221). Unlike cross-cultural adaptation which claims all paths lead to a single, predictable mountaintop, cultural fusion claims the future is unpredictable. Balance between host and immigrant groups is achieved through negotiation and the celebration of difference, not uniformity.

The Rise of Taiwan's "Fifth Ethnic Group"

Since the 1600s Taiwan has received immigrants from nearby China, creating a society dominated by Han Chinese culture, but open to different languages and cultural practices from its four major groups: Malayo-Polynesian Aborigines, Hakka, Mainland Chinese who came to Taiwan in 1949, and the majority Taiwanese Hoklo—also known as *Benshengren* (Rubinstein, 1999). Recent years have witnessed a new wave of immigration. Beginning in the late 1980s and increasing through the 1990s, Taiwan began to import foreign laborers from the countries of Southeast Asia to work in factories and on construction projects (Findlay, Jones, & Davidson, 1998; C. Lu, 2000). Many middle- and upper-class Taiwanese families also hired live-in domestic workers to care for children and the elderly (Young, 2004). All told, the number of foreign laborers in Taiwan is now 320,000 persons ("New immigrants", 2007).

As the face of labor in Taiwan changed, another kind of immigrant began to appear—"foreign brides." Beginning in the mid 1990s, advertisements for "Mainland China brides" or "Vietnamese brides" were displayed across Taiwan's landscape. Men, mostly from rural areas and of lower economic status, working through personal connections or international marriage brokers (H. Z. Wang & Chang, 2002), entered into these marriages. Statistics kept by Taiwan's Ministry of Education on the number of marriages registered annually bear this out (Ministry of the Interior, 2006a). For the 5-year period of 2001–2005, on average 97.5% of males who married were Taiwan ROC citizens. Among females, the average was 76.2%. The largest percentage of these non-ROC citizens (13.7%) came from Mainland China and the second (9.8%) from Southeast Asia (or of 784,921 females married, 110,445 were from China and 76,341 from Southeast Asia). Likewise, one sees the impact of this wave of immigration in registered births. From 2004 to 2005, on average 86.9% of babies were born to mothers who were ROC citizens; the remainder was born to mothers from China, Hong Kong, Macau, Southeast Asia, and other nations (Ministry of the Interior, 2006b). That is, of all registered births 21,102, or 1 in 20 babies, were born to mothers of Chinese (PRC) citizenship, and 33,543, that is, nearly 1 out of 10, were born to mothers of Southeast Asian nationalities. This group of women and their children has gained attention from scholars and the media and is now referred to as Taiwan's "fifth ethnic group," as the number of "foreign brides" living in Taiwan in late 2007 reached 390,000 ("New immigrants", 2007). Combined, the total population of foreign-born brides and foreign laborers was 720,000, comprising more than 3% of Taiwan's total population of 23 million.

Acculturation Pressures Faced by Foreign Brides in Taiwan

Kim (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003) uses the figure of the "stranger" to conceptualize the acculturating individual. The stranger is defined as "people who are members of different groups and unknown to us" (p. 24). Examples include individuals who cross national borders, a "Vietnamese refugee in the United States," or racial boundaries, "a European American teacher in a predominantly African American school." Also mentioned is the "new bride visiting the groom's family" (p. 24), a kind of "stranger" experience similar to the focus of this study. Note, however, that Kim envisions the new bride "visiting" the groom's family. Conceivably, the bride and groom have established their own, separate home, which would be the norm for American culture. However, in the case of Taiwan the cultural norm is for the newly married woman to live with her husband, his parents, and quite often live in close proximity to his family members (see Sandel, 2004; Wolf, 1972/1987). Hence, as the cultural circumstances differ for these women the range of acculturation pressures differ.

While recent studies have identified such issues as language (e.g., Hsia, 2003), health care (e.g., Yang & Wang, 2003), negative perceptions spread through the media (Chao, 2001; Hsia, 2001, 2007), and the commodification of marriage (Tien & Wang, 2006; H.-Z. Wang, 2007) as salient, what they share in common is a portrait of women not as self-defining and adapting individuals, but as participants in a mutually adapting cultural system or one in which mutual adaptation is a necessary condition in order for the adaptation to count as "successful." For example, while nearly all Southeast Asian women become conversant in Mandarin, Taiwanese, or both local languages after living in Taiwan for 6 months or more (Yang & Wang, 2003), and they may take free Mandarin language literacy classes offered at many local elementary schools (see Hsia, 2003), the path to language acquisition is not always smooth. Some may not attend literacy classes because they are too busy with work and childcare. Others are discouraged from attending by their husbands and/or his family members, who believe that if they go out of the home they will meet other women and get "infected" with bad ideas, much as we see expressed in the following words of one mother-in-law of a Vietnamese woman:

> I am afraid that she [Vietnamese born daughter-in-law] will learn something bad from other girls. They always like to compare with each other. For example, they will compare how much betrothal money they got when they got married. Or to show off how rich they are, and do not have to work. It is better not to go with other women. She should stay at home to take care of her children. (H.-Z. Wang, 2007, p. 721)

A qualitative study of 15 Indonesian women's health care issues by Yang and Wang (2003) identifies a number of challenges due to "socio-cultural adjustment." For example, many women find that the diet in Taiwan, where pork is commonly consumed, problematic as they come from a land influenced by Muslim practices. They are also affected by cultural beliefs about skin color and claim that because their skin color is darker they are stigmatized: "called 'barbarians' to their faces." Many said: "I wish I had a lighter skin color, so that I could blend into a crowd without

being recognized as an Indonesian immediately" (p. 171). Another issue is the belief that because most women met their husbands through the services of a professional "marriage broker," they are perceived as "bought" and their motivations for entering into marriage are suspect: People say they only agreed to marriage because of the economic gain to be received by their family in Indonesia. Finally, much as we see in the above quote (H.-Z. Wang, 2007), Yang and Wang (2003) found that women felt there was a lack of trust in the family: A woman's husband (and mother-in-law) does not want her to go out with other Indonesian friends, fearing she will "run away."

Cultural beliefs about gender relations and the responsibility of the "good wife" to patiently forbear ill-treatment by her husband often pose the greatest challenge for these women. H.-Z. Wang (2007) indexes the cultural and historical roots of this issue by recounting the experience of his Taiwanese aunt when she was a newly married woman in the 1950s. Soon after her marriage, she was abused by her husband and returned to her natal home to ask her parents for help and support. Her mother's advice was to "endure and be submissive to her husband and parents-in-law" (p. 715). She returned to her husband. A few years later her parents were told that their daughter, who was only 28, had died. They suspected she had been "abused to death." The belief that Taiwanese women today are not as submissive to their husbands as those of a generation ago plays a role in the advertising strategy of marriage brokers who arrange marriages between Taiwanese men and Southeast Asian women. Tien and Wang (2006) found businesses claimed in their advertising that Southeast Asian women are more "traditional" than Taiwanese women, will be subservient to their husbands, and not make him share in household chores or childcare. The culture of female subservience is also evident in a recent incident reported in a newspaper (Tsai, 2008). A man in his 40s was reported to the police for abusing three generations of women: his mother, grandmother, and wife. The man's mother recounted that for the past 12 years her son had the habit of coming home late at night after drinking; in his inebriated condition he would swear and threaten to hit his mother and grandmother. She decided to "change" her son by contacting a marriage broker and finding a foreign bride for him, which she did. However, after only a few months he started to abuse his wife and resumed abusing his mother and grandmother. Finally, seeing her daughter-in-law's fear, she decided she could not bear to see such suffering and reported her son to the police, who, after confirming the story, put a restraining order on the man.

In sum, these studies highlight the pressures faced by foreign-born women who have married into Taiwanese families. (We want to draw attention to the fact that in both Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese—also called Tai-gi, to be discussed below—there are two verbs to mark the act of marriage. One verb in Mandarin is *jia*, as in a woman will *jia chu qu* or "marry out of her natal home." The other is *qu*, as in a husband will *qu laopo* or "marry in a bride," or *qu xifu*, an expression uttered by the husband's parents as they will "marry in a daughter-in-law.") She has made the bold and ostensibly risky decision to leave her home, family, and country to enter into marriage with a husband, to become a daughter-in-law to his parents, a future mother to their children, and a member of a tight-knit community with beliefs about

foreign brides that may be negative. At this point we recall Kramer's criticism of Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptation that adaptation "amounts to nothing less than the total hegemonic control of identity" (Kramer, 2000, p. 196). In the context of Taiwan where gender roles are more strictly marked, especially for newly married women (Sandel, 2004), and women are subservient to their husbands, the woman who attempts to be "maximally adapted" to an abusive man may do so at her own peril.

Method and Procedures

Data for this study were collected via interviews and ethnographic field notes from a number of rural locales in Taiwan. Rural locales were chosen, as data from Taiwan's Ministry of Interior indicate that is where the proportion of foreign-born spouses and their children is highest. Interviews were conducted with members of transnational families, whereby one spouse, in most cases the wife, was born and raised outside Taiwan, and the other, most often the husband, was Taiwan-born and raised. Furthermore, in cases where the family arrangement was extended, and, following local cultural practice, the husband lived under the same roof as his parents, efforts were made to interview either the mother-in-law or father-in-law.

While all questions were designed by the authors, they were intended to explore a number of topics in Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptation (e.g., 2001, 2006). For example, one claim is that while interaction with co-ethnics may initially help the adapting immigrant, over time such ties are harmful. We asked participants questions that explored this issue such as: "Who helped you adjust to life in Taiwan? Your husband and his family members? Fellow co-ethnics? Do you often have contact with fellow co-ethnics who live in your neighborhood?" Another claim is that adaptation is a process that progresses over time and that more adapted persons will more strongly identify with the host culture and have a higher degree of satisfaction. Hence we asked participants how long they had lived in Taiwan, how they self-identified and how other people identified them. We also tried to assess the sense of satisfaction by asking them to describe the nature of their relationship with their husband, mother-in-law, and other people in Taiwan, drawing comparisons between when they first arrived and the present. Finally, we asked if they would advise someone they knew in their home country who was contemplating marriage with a Taiwanese national, and whether they would advise the person to enter into the marriage, to wait and consider, or to say no. Other questions were based upon a number of adjustment issues identified in previous studies, such as health issues (Chen, Lee, Yu, & Huang, 2005; Jou, Hsu, Lee, & Tang, 2006), language learning (Hsia, 2003), adjustment to Taiwan's weather and food (Hwang & Chang, 2003). All told, 44 interviews were conducted with 28 foreign-born women (15 Vietnamese, 6 Cambodian, 5 Mainland Chinese, 1 Indonesian, and 1 Filipino), 5 foreign-born husbands, 7 Taiwanese husbands, 5 grandmothers, 1 grandfather, and 20 elementary school teachers. (For this study we focused our analysis on interviews with women. We also chose not to focus on one particular group of foreign-born women, such as

Vietnamese, and instead interviewed whomever local contacts perceived as falling under the category of *waiji xinniang* or "foreign-born brides.")

Locations for conducting interviews varied and were based upon access through personal contacts. That is, since previous research was conducted in a rural town in Changhua County, we began by returning to this place. One local man who is related by marriage to the first author explained that 3½ years earlier, he and five other Taiwanese men traveled to Vietnam and each, through contacts made via a brokerage firm, married a woman from Cambodia. (Taiwan does not have diplomatic or official ties with Cambodia. Hence, Cambodian women who wish to marry Taiwanese men must travel to Vietnam to process visas.) This man, his wife, and co-resident mother were separately interviewed. He then made introductions to two of the Cambodian women who were married at the same time and lived nearby. In a similar manner we contacted and interviewed Vietnamese-born women and family members. The contact was a woman, known to the first author through family connections, whose two sons married women from Vietnam (who incidentally are near cousins). Next door to this family was another Vietnamese woman married to a Taiwanese husband. They then introduced a fourth Vietnamese woman who lived in a different town, and was a frequent visitor. These four women and the mother-in-law of the two women married to her two sons were interviewed. Other interviews were arranged with participants in various locales in central Taiwan through other friends and family members. Elementary school teachers were contacted through a professor in Changhua County. A final set of interviews, mostly with foreign-born husbands, was conducted by students at the university where the authors teach. They interviewed participants known through friendship or family ties using the same or slightly modified interview protocol. Students were enrolled in a class in intercultural communication and received training in interviewing as part of the curriculum. However, data from interviews conducted by students are not included in this study.

The language (or languages) used in the interview varied. Interviews with foreign-born women or their husbands were mostly conducted in Mandarin, while those with mothers-in-law were conducted in Tai-gi (also known as Taiwanese, Minnanhua, Hoklo—for a discussion of this term see Sandel, 2003; Sandel, Liang, & Chao, 2006). All interviews were transcribed in the original language(s); excerpts were translated into English by the authors.

Evidence supporting the validity of our research procedures emerged in an interview with a mother-in-law whose two sons married Vietnamese women. She said that other people, apparently from the government or official organizations had come to interview her daughters-in-law. However, she dismissed them by saying that they had gone to work and were unavailable:

> They come [or came, verb tense is unmarked in Tai-gi] to ask. I said they [daughters-in-law] are not here, they went to work. [They wanted to] ask some questions about something, kept asking. They come [came] and ask. If they are outsiders that we don't know, their grandfather said, "If they are [people] we don't know, don't let them come and ask." ... you already know that you are [my daughters-in-laws'] aunt's sister, so you can ask [questions].

Faced with requests by "outsiders" to conduct interviews, the family came to a decision voiced by the grandfather—the oldest male member of the extended family—that they would not be allowed to interview family members. Access was granted because of a familial relationship, making us "insiders."

This study, however, cannot claim that the participants comprise a representative sample of foreign-born spouses and their family members in Taiwan. Gaining access through local informants is a two-edged tool, as we found in one community. After visiting with a woman who told a sad story of troubled relations with her husband, that evening the contact person felt disturbed by the visit and did not want to continue with the research as he said it was meddling in "other people's affairs." Inevitably there is selectivity bias when arranging interviews in this manner.

Data Analysis

Following data collection, ethnographic notes regarding the circumstances of the interview, how contact was made, the number of participants, and other impressions were typed. These notes (edited to remove any personal identifying information) were appended to a computer file that was then distributed to one of five university students who were hired to transcribe verbatim the audio file of each interview. They were subsequently checked for accuracy by a second person, that is, one of the other five university students who worked on this project. Throughout the transcription process students met regularly with the authors to discuss their thoughts and impressions. These comments in turn helped guide decisions over where and how to conduct subsequent interviews.

Data coding was done by the authors, and involved reading carefully through the transcripts in order to identify emergent and common themes in the manner of grounded theory (see Strauss & Corbin, 1999). For example, some of the themes which emerged and involved much discussion included the management of finances and the desire that native Taiwanese people see foreign-born women as no different from other married Taiwanese women. For example, in response to an open-ended invitation to share whatever she wanted to say, one woman replied:

> [I] don't want it when some say, "Ah, you have come here just because you want our money. You want to become a daughter-in-law, you want to become a wife, it's because there is something that you must want to do." This is the kind of [talk] that I don't want. It just is that [I want] a husband to be a little better toward his wife, a wife to be a little better toward her husband, to have better communication. These are not such big things that [we] want.

This kind of response, to be discussed below, emerged in many of the interviews and was in most instances unsolicited. In addition, concepts found in both Kim's (2001) theory of cross-cultural adaptation and Kramer's (2000) cultural fusion guided data analysis. For example, we examined participants' comments on such issues as contacts with co-ethnics, the sense of identity, perceived host-conformity pressure, and the development of personal and social identity. These were then noted and excerpts were copied and pasted into an Excel file, which allowed for comparisons to

be made across the transcripts. (In the Appendix we have provided an overview of the themes that were found in these data.)

Reliability was insured by working collaboratively and discussing findings and data analysis with the authors and students at the second author's university in Taiwan. A student at the first author's university (in the United States) fluent in Mandarin and Tai-gi and a native of Taiwan, and who was not originally involved in the project, assisted by reading through the Excel file and a number of the transcripts to check for the validity and reliability of our findings. Finally, excerpts chosen for presentation in this paper were translated into English by the first author. Those interested in seeing excerpts in the original may contact the authors.

Participants

Looking across the interviews we find the average age of foreign-born women is 29.6 years and of the spouse is 43.1 years. They have lived in Taiwan a little over 6 years and 4 months, were a little over 23 years old at the time of marriage, received 7.6 years of education in their former country, have 1.5 children, and the average age of the first born child was 5 years and 1 month. (When comparing women by country of origin, there were only slight differences. Women from Vietnam and Cambodia were on average 27 and 26 years old respectively at the time of the interview, and 22 and 21 years old at marriage. Women from China were slightly older, on average 36 years of age, and 29 years at marriage.) Compared with other studies (H. Z. Wang & Chang, 2002), the women we interviewed shared similar demographic characteristics: They are younger than their husbands, have moderate educational achievement, and gave birth to a child soon after marriage.

In addition to caring for children and handling other domestic tasks, most women worked full-time in such activities as factory work, farm work, shop keeping, or small businesses. Furthermore, nearly all of the women lived with one or more of their in-laws in an extended family. In the few cases where women did not co-reside with their in-laws, this was explained as something remarkable. For example, in one family the woman explained that she did not live with her mother- and father-in-law because they had passed away, and in the other two cases the women explained that in-laws lived nearby and co-resided with the husband's brother. Thus, the residency patterns of these participants conformed to the traditional Chinese family structure found in many parts of rural Taiwan both in the past (Wolf, 1972/1987) and present (Sandel 2004; Sandel, Cho, Miller, & Wang, 2006). With such living arrangements, household domestic chores such as cooking or child care were shared. In many families while women worked, the grandmother (or sometimes grandfather or husband) would care for the young child. Husbands were employed full-time in a range of occupations such as farming, construction, factory work, and so forth. They, like their spouses, did not have high educational achievement nor were high wage earners. However, with few exceptions, families were not facing economic hardship as indicated by homeownership and a pooling of economic resources.

Results

While the interview data we collected are rich and could be presented in many different ways, we have organized our results as in the following. First, we examine our data as they speak to Kim (2001) and Kramer's (2000) competing theories, beginning with the issue of adaptation. Kim (2001) claims learning is the natural response to adaptation pressures: enculturating or learning what is new, and deculturating or unlearning what is old. Kramer (2000) claims learning is not a zero-sum process, but is additive as one learns what is new but does not have to unlearn what is old. Second, we examine ethnic group strength, which Kim claims is initially helpful, but over the long term harmful. Kramer (2000) responds that ethnic group ties should not be considered helpful, but rather should be celebrated as they lead to and welcome diversity. Third, we look at the possible final outcome of acculturation: Kim's (2001) "intercultural personhood" or Kramer's (2000) "cultural fusion." Do these data show participants moving on a path up the metaphorical mountain where cultural differences are "overcome" and a new perspective is achieved? Or, do these data point toward the continuation of cultural differences because there is no fixed endpoint, but rather the constant and continual mixing and matching of cultures? Finally, we look at one emergent theme from our data: the management and perception of money, and how this context of intercultural communication speaks to theory development.

Learning to Adapt: Zero-Sum or Additive?

While learning is a multifaceted process which is difficult to measure in its entirety, a number of questions in our interview protocol spoke to this. For example, we asked participants if they learned how to cook according to a local, Taiwanese style, if they had learned how to worship or *Bai-bai* as their family does, or if they had learned to speak one or more of the local languages. The former two questions were responded to briefly. Cooking was not a major issue for most. They learned by watching others, or were taught directly by their husband, mother-in-law, or in one case the father-in-law. Likewise, most religious practices were not salient nor a major challenge. For women who came from Vietnam or Cambodia where Buddhist practices dominate, Taiwan's folk religious practices were not much different. Many said their mother-in-law taught them how to prepare sacrifices for worship days, usually on the first and 15th of each lunar month. They claimed differences involved the food items used in worship, and the greater frequency in worship days in Taiwan than their former country. Similarly for women from China, religious practices were not difficult to learn. Only a few women who were Christian found it problematic. However, they said their husband and family members were quite tolerant and respected their beliefs and decision to participate in a more limited way.

Learning to speak local language(s), however, was salient and generated much discussion. This came in response to questions: asked directly, "What language

or languages have you learned?"; and indirectly, "What were some of the major challenges you faced when you came to Taiwan?" This is not surprising, especially for women from Southeast Asia, as all said they knew little or no Mandarin when they arrived. However, by the time they were interviewed, which was on average 6 years (minimum of 3 years) since marriage to Taiwan (as noted above there are two verbs that index the act of marriage and both are directional), they could speak one or more local languages fluently. Women from Southeast Asia could take literacy classes in Mandarin offered at area elementary schools for free. (Women from China spoke Mandarin before arriving.) Literacy classes are offered throughout Taiwan and use a curriculum that was originally designed to teach Mandarin to local residents who speak only Tai-gi or Hakka—today mostly people who are older than 60 years old. Furthermore, to apply for Taiwanese citizenship the government requires applicants to pass a literacy test, and/or complete 100 hours of classroom instruction. Hence, there was both the motivation and opportunity for women to take these classes and learn Mandarin. The other language spoken widely in Taiwan, Tai-gi (Taiwanese), however, is not taught at school. Nevertheless, perhaps due to the extended family structure and the fact that most elderly people speak little or no Mandarin, many of these women learned to speak, or at the least could comprehend, Tai-gi. (In a few instances women spoke Tai-gi better than Mandarin.)

When simultaneously interviewing three Cambodian-born women, we found them articulating a process of language learning that supports Kim's theory that learning involves dual processes of enculturation (learning what is new) and deculturation (unlearning what is old or former). We visited the home of one woman who had been in Taiwan for 8 years and had three children. Living in the same neighborhood were two other Cambodian women, one who had been in Taiwan 7 years, and the other 6 years. Since they lived close to each other, had young children, worked at the same factory, and were in similar circumstances, they often visited each other. Furthermore, when answering questions they often gave the same or similar answers, agreeing with each other. When asked if they speak Cambodian with each other, one woman responded: "Sometimes we will. But sometimes we forget it [laughs]. Sometimes [we speak] Cambodian and sometimes Tai-gi." Then they were asked how they feel when making return trips to Cambodia:

Woman A: In the past when we lived in Cambodia we were used to it. Then we came to Taiwan, and after being in Taiwan for a long time are used to it. Now go back [to Cambodia] feel really strange. [laughs]

Woman B: So when talking, the sound is all different.

Woman A: It all sounds really strange. . . .

Woman B: One time went back, heard [Cambodian] and felt it strange, was all different. . . . and so sometimes when looking at something. We forget how to say it and don't know what thing it is.

Ostensibly the languages they have learned since coming to Taiwan—Tai-gi and Mandarin—have slowly come to replace the Cambodian they speak with each other, even when returning to Cambodia to visit family and friends.

Likewise, a Vietnamese woman has learned to speak both Mandarin and Tai-gi fluently in the 8 years she has lived in Taiwan. She said her children speak both Mandarin and Tai-gi, but not Vietnamese. When asked why, she responded: "Because I feel that I do really want to teach them to speak Vietnamese. [But] I'm afraid that they, our Tai-gi and Mandarin, if [they] learn Vietnamese they'll learn too much. Because I feel that they, after they have grown up I feel that their brains maybe cannot remember so many [languages]."

Aside from the above statements, none of the other women we spoke to said that for them the process of language learning involved both unlearning the old then learning the new. Rather, we observed that when interacting with co-ethnics, they frequently and fluently spoke the language of their original homeland, Vietnamese or Cambodian. While it may be the case, as reported by some women, that some degree of fluency was lost, language loss appeared to be far less than language gain. Seen from this perspective the claim that deculturation and enculturation are equivalent processes is called into question.

Perhaps what better explains these somewhat contradictory findings is social influence. When interviewing the four Vietnamese women mentioned above, we asked them if they taught their children to speak Vietnamese. One woman responded, "I taught him [son] to speak Vietnamese, [but] they [family members] do not want me to. . . . When he was about three or four years old, I taught him, but they were not happy. . . . So after that I didn't teach him." Likewise, a few other women said they did not teach their child to speak the mother's native language because the other family members were not happy. While this was not the case for all women, it was a widespread sentiment. Perhaps the degree of social influence sanctioning these women to speak their native languages affects their perception of language learning, and may lead them to downplay their native language abilities.

Ethnic Group Ties: Harmful or Beneficial?

The impact of ethnic group ties is a second point of comparison between Kim (2001) and Kramer's (2000) theories. Kim (2001) claims that while co-ethnics may be helpful when a person first enters a new culture, over time interaction is harmful. The adapting person should lessen his or her ties with co-ethnics in order to achieve higher levels of adaptation with the dominant host culture. Kramer (2000) makes no such claim and in his presentation of cultural fusion says that ethnic difference adds to the spice of life. There was some support for both positions. Some were like a Vietnamese woman who was asked if she had contact with other Vietnamese women in her village. She replied: "Since I've come here I don't often [go out] with we Vietnamese [women]. [If I] go out with them, because I don't like us [pause] If go out with them spend a lot [of money]. I feel that I don't like to go out and be like that." When she meets other Vietnamese women she will chat with them, but does

not want to get too involved. More, however, were like another Vietnamese woman in the same village who said she often meets other Vietnamese women at the factory where she works. On their time off they may go out together to buy food and vegetables at local markets. But she did not have much time to engage in "play" or leisure with other women as she was busy with work and child care.

The accounts told by a woman from China and another from Indonesia illustrate how ties with co-ethnics can be positive, or their absence be negative, even for long-term immigrants. The counter case of the lack of interaction with co-ethnics leading to feelings of bitterness and mal-adaptation was illustrated by the latter. This Indonesian woman has three children and lived in Taiwan for 15 years, the longest of any of the women we interviewed. She runs a small shop owned by her family, works long hours every day of the week, and speaks both Tai-gi and Indonesian fluently. However, she was very unhappy and cried several times during the interview. She said that while Indonesians come to her store to buy things, she does not have any other social interaction with them. They are not her friends. Judging by her language abilities, her long period of residence in Taiwan, her integration into Taiwanese society, she should be well adapted. However, she complained that her life is bitter: Her husband gambles too much, and her in-laws pressure her to spend all her time working in the local store. She said the only time she is happy is when she visits family in Indonesia, and wishes she could go back and live there permanently. While she had many ties with local Taiwanese people, these brought her no joy and the absence of ties with co-ethnics was linked to her mal-adaptation.

A woman from Mainland China expressed the other side of this issue: Long-term association with co-ethnics can lead to a higher degree of satisfaction. She did not express bitter feelings and said she was satisfied with her life in Taiwan. She attributed her satisfaction in part to her role vis-à-vis other Mainland Chinese women who have married Taiwanese men: "I am very hospitable, many [women] come to [my home]." She advises and helps women who have problems with their mother-in-law, saying there are many mothers-in-law who control their daughters-in-law very strictly, will not even let them open the refrigerator. Furthermore, in cases where the husband and wife get along well, the mother-in-law sees it as a threat, fearing that her daughter-in-law is taking her son from her. In sum, one woman's unhappiness was linked to her lack of interaction with co-ethnics, while another woman's happiness was attributed to her helpful and positive interactions assisting other co-ethnics.

Intercultural Personhood or Cultural Fusion?

We asked women a number of questions about identity including how they perceive themselves, how they perceive their children, and how others perceive them. Answers help us see whether Kim's (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003; Kim, 2001, 2006) "intercultural personhood" or Kramer's (2000, 2003a, 2003b) "cultural fusion" better explain the results. That is, if Kim's theory fits better, well-adapted women (those who claim they are happy and satisfied with their lives) should perceive themselves as having an identity associated with neither their former place of residence (Vietnam, Cambodia,

or China), nor their new (Taiwan). Likewise, women who are not well adapted and are unhappy with their lives in Taiwan should see themselves and others as defined in rigid, culturally bound ways. Furthermore, while not addressed by Kim, we believe how women perceive the identity of their children to be an important marker of acculturation, as children may embody these women's hopes and aspirations. On the other hand, if Kramer's theory fits better, we expect women to express a range of identities—sometimes mixed and sometimes separate—not correlated with a sense of satisfaction or adaptation, as fusion is an unpredictable process.

We tried to let participants choose their own terms of identity. Hence, the first question was a general one: "Who do you think counts as being a *Taiwan ren* [Taiwanese person]?" We wanted the participant to discuss identity in general. While it would have been preferable not to use the phrase *Taiwan ren* in this opening question, when it was tried participants found the question too vague and did not know how to respond. This was followed by a question probing self-perceived identity: "What kind of person do you think you are?" When asked in this manner, the participant was not forced to choose a term of reference. If the participant had a child, we asked her: "What kind of person do you think your child is?" Next we asked: "How do other people see you?" And finally, if the participant had not already done so, we asked her to reflect on different terms of reference, probing the affective dimension of identity.

Some patterns emerged. Nearly all the women said their child was Taiwanese. One woman said, "Of course my child is Taiwanese [*Taiwan ren*]." Another said, "I've married to Taiwan and so their children are Taiwanese." A third said, "My son, he himself has a [Taiwan] identification card, that is here. From the time he was born, he had an identification card here." These women see their child as being Taiwanese because the child was born in Taiwan, has a Taiwanese identification card (children are citizens from birth; women from Southeast Asia must live in Taiwan for 3 years before they can apply for a local identification card, and women from China 8 years), and because the child belongs to the husband's family: "their children." Only one woman said something different. She said her children are half and half because their mother is Cambodian and father is Taiwanese: Her view was exceptional.

When talking about other people's perceptions, nearly all women said local Taiwanese see them as foreign. A number said that while they do not differ in appearance (skin color, size, clothing) from local women and initially are unnoticed, but once they speak, people notice their accent and ask, "Have you married to here?" A number also expressed negative feelings associated with being treated as foreign. "It seems that they see us as being foreign [*Waiguo ren*], like that. They don't like [us]." Or as was stated more explicitly by this woman from China: "They [Taiwanese] all say that we are from the mainland [*Dalu*], that is foreign [*Waiji*]. . . . But we, we are all Taiwanese [*Taiwan ren*]. But for a lot of people their thinking is that we are foreign. . . . That is there is a small feeling that they are excluding us." Finally, one woman from Vietnam most clearly articulated her reasons why she does not like to be perceived as foreign.

> When [I] hear it [I] feel uncomfortable. [They] keep saying we are foreign brides [*Waiji xinniang*]. That we [are just here] to make money to send back to Vietnam. They say things like that. But it's not like that. Yeah, [we] earn money, [but] have to raise children. And have to eat. If [you] want to help your mom [in Vietnam] a little, that's alright. Right? Everyone is like that.

How earnings by foreign-born women are spent is a topic of discussion reported in the media. The negative impression is that these women send most of their earnings back to their families in Vietnam or elsewhere, implying that they are more interested in earning money, which is sent abroad, than raising a family. However, this woman counters that she works in order to support her children in Taiwan. Only a small portion of her earnings are sent to her mother in Vietnam. Her filial acts are no different from others in Taiwan.

A more complicated picture emerges when we look at how women perceive their own identity. While nearly half identified with their land of birth, about a quarter claimed a mixed identity, and another quarter a Taiwanese identity. For those who claimed the identity of their land of birth, it was uttered most often by women from China. For example, one woman said "I am Chinese [*Zhongguo ren*]." She then explained that this identity is something that she sees as a debt to be paid to one's parents, a kind of responsibility that is understood by all:

> *Our* own mother and father gave birth to *us* and raised *us* for more than twenty years. And then [I] married out. And so then *we* must be filial to our husband's parents. But I feel that my mother and father worked so hard to raise me, and I've never given them anything in return, I've never cared for them, especially since *we've* [emphases added] married so far away.

Note this woman's use of the plural first person pronoun. The plural pronoun frames her personal story not as unique, but as part of a broader narrative of a path to marriage that could be followed by any good and filial daughter. Another woman from China said she is Chinese, using the term *Hua ren*. She then gave two reasons. One is because she does not yet have a Taiwanese identification card that comes with Taiwanese citizenship. The second is because others say that since she was born in the mainland, she is a mainlander (*Dalu ren*). There were some women from Southeast Asia who claimed an identity with the land of birth. One Vietnamese woman said, "I feel that I am Vietnamese, always am Vietnamese." A Cambodian woman said, "Now I do not yet count as being Taiwanese." The former woman strongly asserted a Vietnamese identity and did not want to change. The latter expressed an openness to change in the future. Finally, there, was one woman from Indonesia, who had been married 15 years, who was asked by the local contact person: "Now you have a Taiwan identity card, do you feel that you are Taiwanese [*Taiwan ren*]?" She responded, "Taiwan? Indonesian. No, [I] don't feel like that. I still feel that I am Indonesian." She was dissatisfied with her husband and in-laws and felt that her marriage to Taiwan was a bad decision. While other women were dissatisfied with some people or experiences in Taiwan, this Indonesian woman was dissatisfied with the whole experience, a position which put her at the extreme among those we interviewed.

Those who claimed a Taiwanese identity were from either Vietnam or Cambodia. For example, one Cambodian woman said, "[I am] Taiwanese [*Taiwan ren*], because Taiwan is better. I like Taiwan." She and her two Cambodian friends who spend much time together seemed well adjusted and in many ways expressed satisfaction with their lives in Taiwan. There were also a few Vietnamese women who live in a rural town in Yunlin County with a high concentration of Vietnamese women, who said they are Taiwanese. One woman rejected the belief uttered by some other women in this community when asked if she is "half and half." She said, "Now [I am] Taiwanese, should count as Taiwanese." A few others simply responded, "I am Taiwanese" without further elaboration.

The third position women took was in between. This is most interesting and relevant to the theoretical issues this paper is examining. If Kim's theory is correct, these are the women who may be at or near the top of the climb to "intercultural personhood." They will be the most adapted and not bound by the barriers of culture in their perception of the world. However, if Kramer's theory is correct, culture and history will not be erased, nor will these women see themselves at or near the end of a process of adaptation. Those who are most happy with their lives will find ways to celebrate difference. Those who focus on the perceptions of others will be dissatisfied, perhaps even to the point of harboring feelings of self-hatred.

In sum, these results support Kramer's position over Kim's. Women talked about identity in terms of concrete and immediate issues embedded in the present horizon of experience, not some transcendent a-cultural position. For example, one Vietnamese woman said, "Now I count as half Vietnamese and half Taiwanese. [But] in the future when I have an identity card I will be Taiwanese." For her, identity was connected with a legal document. Another woman explained her mixed identity in this manner, "Because when people see me, they don't [see me] as being Vietnamese. [But] when we speak, people know that we are Vietnamese." She hopes that in the future she will be counted as Taiwanese. A Cambodian woman echoed some of these same thoughts. She is not Taiwanese, "because I don't yet know enough about Taiwan." Next she pointed to how others perceive her. On the one hand, "They [Taiwanese] say that I speak [Mandarin] very clearly, more like Taiwanese people." On the other, "Because my skin is darker, [I am] not like Taiwanese." However, she hopes to someday be counted as Taiwanese.

Emergent Theme: Reactions to a Contested Identity

As alluded to above, our analysis of the transcripts gave rise to a number of emergent themes, some of which were not issues developed from our analysis of Kim and Kramer's theories. The most prominent was the issue of money. Perhaps this is unsurprising as 20 of the 28 women we interviewed entered into marriage through a "broker," who for a fee introduces interested parties, negotiates the "bride price" with the family, and arranges legal documents, for example, marriage license and visa, to constitute a cross-border marriage (see M. Lu, 2008, for a discussion of the different types and activities of marriage brokers—both professional and informal—which

operate in Taiwan). As M. Lu explains, "brokered" marriages rapidly grew in popularity in the mid 1990s and most charged a fee of NTD 350,000–450,000 (US $10,000–$13,500). But over time the price dropped to an average of NTD 200,000 (US $6,000). (During the period of data collection the Taiwan government passed a law outlawing professional marriage brokering and all advertising for such services. However, even after the law was passed we still saw roadside signs for brokers in rural towns, and one advertisement that would arrange marriages with Vietnamese, Indonesian, or Mainland Chinese women for NTD 190,000.) As discussed in a number of studies (e.g., Hsia, 2007; M. Lu, 2008; H. Z. Wang & Chang, 2002) this "commodification" of marriage has given rise to a number of negative stereotypes about the women who enter into these marriages, namely that they are engaged in "harlotry" or that their marriages are not "real" but entered into solely for the purpose of securing legal employment in Taiwan's relatively prosperous economy. However, as claimed by H.-Z. Wang (2007) many women do find ways to resist these negative stereotypes. Our data concur.

Let us consider again what one Cambodian-born woman said in response to an invitation to share what was on her mind. She began by presenting a negative stereotype, "You have come just because you want our money," a message ostensibly uttered by people in her community, or perhaps expressed through the media (see Hsia, 2007), but this is a message she resists. Instead, what she wants, "a husband be a little better toward his wife, a wife to be a little better toward her husband, [and] to have better communication," are framed as modest and reasonable desires. Likewise, a Vietnamese woman, when asked how she feels when people refer to her as a "foreign bride" (*waiji xinniang*), replied:

> When I hear it I'm uncomfortable. [People] keep saying that we are *waiji xinniang*. We keep making money and sending it back to Vietnam. They say these things. But that's not the way it is. ... The money that we earn, is for taking care of children. But you need to eat. Want to help your mother [in Vietnam] a little bit is no big deal. Right? ... Everyone is like that.

To be identified as a "foreign bride" implies an identity as someone who is other; this is linked to how money is managed, namely sending earnings to family in her country of origin. Her reply is that such a perception is misinformed, and that while she may send some money to her mother in Vietnam, most of her money is used for taking care of her children. "Everyone is like that."

Discussion

We now consider these data in light of Kim (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003; Kim, 2001) and Kramer's (2000, 2003a, 2003b) theories. In line with Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptation, we see that some foreign-born women, whose native language(s) is not Mandarin or Tai-gi, claim they have forgotten some of their native language as they learn the new languages of Taiwan. Some say that when they make a trip to their native land they do not feel as comfortable as they feel when in Taiwan. These

indicate that as they learn to adapt to the new culture, some aspects of the old become less familiar, just as described in Kim's dual processes of enculturation and deculturation. Furthermore, some apparently well-adapted women claim they prefer to have limited contact with co-ethnics, as they find such ties problematic, a position which again supports Kim's theory.

Seen from another angle, however, the issues of learning and relationships with co-ethnics are complex and may also be seen as supporting Kramer's (2000, 2003a, 2003b) theory of cultural fusion. Regarding learning, our observation of speaking practices indicates the equation is not balanced. These women gained far greater fluency in Mandarin and Tai-gi than they lost in their native languages. This demonstrates that learning is additive as claimed by Kramer (2000). It also may be that these women's perception of native language loss may be influenced by the social pressure they are under to not speak a "foreign" language. Hence, it may be difficult to disentangle socially influenced perception from everyday practice in these data. Regarding ethnic group strength, apart from the few women cited above who avoided interaction with co-ethnics, the majority, based upon both what we observed and what was spoken in interviews, interaction with co-ethnics, even over the long term, was more helpful than harmful. This was illustrated by looking at the dissatisfied Indonesian woman and satisfied Chinese woman. The former was strongly integrated into the dominant host culture, yet had few contacts with co-ethnics and felt socially isolated. The latter frequently hosted Mainland Chinese women and found satisfaction in helping them better understand how to adjust to life in Taiwan, such as by helping them know how to better relate with their mother-in-law.

A more important point, however, emerges when we consider the trajectory of acculturation. While Kim (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003; Kim, 2001, 2006) claims adaptation, if successful, will lead to a state of "intercultural personhood" when a person "does not emphasize numerous subcultural groups within a society" (Kim, 2001, p. 196), none of the women we interviewed held this perspective. Rather their self-perception was rooted in concrete everyday experiences. They did not appear to move on a path up the mountain of intercultural transformation. Instead, they saw themselves as maintaining the identity and cultural affiliation of their homeland, or adopting that of their new land, or some combination of both. Furthermore, women who expressed satisfaction with their lives in Taiwan could hold any of these perspectives. Likewise, dissatisfaction could be associated with each. These point to the unpredictability inherent in the concept of cultural fusion (Kramer 2000, 2003a, 2003b), whereby adaptation does not lead to a single predictable outcome, but unpredictably to many.

A final point is Kramer's (2003a) charge that the danger inherent in Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptation is that by elevating the host culture it may teach the immigrant self-hatred. This happens when immigrants see themselves from the outside-in rather than inside-out. In contrast, Kim claims that higher levels of "adaptation" are achieved only if the "stranger" internalizes and accepts the host culture's values, beliefs, and norms. "To the extent that there are discrepancies between the demands of the host environment and the strangers' internal capacity to

meet those demands . . . the strangers are compelled to learn and make changes in their customary habits" (2001, p. 51). In other words, Kim's theory puts the responsibility for change and adaptation on the "stranger" or individual who has crossed a cultural boundary. Data from this study, however, indicate that many women, including those who expressed satisfaction with their lives in Taiwan, resisted some of the beliefs of the host culture. This came through when we looked at the emergent theme of the link between the management of money and the sense of personhood. The women quoted above resisted the perception that since their marriage was facilitated by a financial transaction, their position as wife, daughter-in-law, mother, and woman in Taiwanese society is suspect. Instead, they framed their use and management of money as being reasonable and in accord with what all people do. For these women, happiness does not mean moving to a transformative state beyond culture, or adopting the belief that they cannot be "good women," but rather to negotiate and change the host culture's view of them, that they are a part of Taiwanese culture and have the same values, beliefs, and aspirations as everyone else.

We now consider how findings from this study speak to the task of theory building. When comparing theories of cross-cultural adaptation and cultural fusion the analysis supports Geertz's (1973/2000) argument that it is wrong to take the approach of a "stratified" view of humanity as rooted in a predictable and biological "universal man," or in the case of Kim's theory, universal "stranger." Instead, to understand the adaptation process of women from China and Southeast Asia who marry into Taiwanese families requires one to go to Taiwan and "thickly describe" the culture of that context. However, this does not take us far enough. Cultures evolve and change, as Geertz would agree, and perhaps they are doing so at a faster rate than ever before. Hence, to understand an evolving culture requires more than a description made at one point in time. Cultural fusion helps us see that as succinctly presented in the following:

> Receptivity is a boundary condition. It is neither "in my head" nor "out there." It is a relational phenomenon. According to the hermeneutics of cultural fusion, "adaptability" is not a unilinear, single dimensional sort of variable. Hence, it is unpredictable. Life is a continual experiment. (Kramer, 2000, pp. 220–221)

The "successful" adaptation of the women we have met comes from both their willingness to adapt to Taiwan's culture, and the willingness of their husbands, extended family members, and members of society at large to adapt to them. Indeed, we see evidence of this in laws that have been passed in Taiwan in recent years designed to protect women and give greater rights to them and their children. In the past women were not protected against domestic violence, and if they divorced, custody of the children automatically went to the husband. A series of laws passed in recent years have changed these practices, such as the Sexual Assault Prevention Act and Domestic Violence Prevention Acts of 1997 and 1998, the revised Nationality Act of 2000 that grants citizenship to a child whose mother is a Taiwan national, the Civil Code change of 2002 that grants a wife the right to retain separate ownership of

property, and the Immigration Act of 2007 which grants a foreign spouse the right of abode until citizenship is obtained, if she has been a victim of domestic violence and has divorced her husband (see Chung, 2008; H.-Z. Wang, 2007). These indicate that the beliefs and practices of Taiwan's culture are not fixed, but rather are changing and being changed.

The implications of this study for future research are twofold: 1) They point to the need for studies of intercultural communication in contexts and among peoples less well known and under-studied, and 2) they aim us in new directions for theory building. Regarding the former, most studies of intercultural communication consider the plight of international students or business sojourners. When compared with the women of this study, students and business people may possess greater levels of economic and symbolic capital, and exercise greater choice in their lives. In contrast, many of the women who have married into Taiwanese homes do not hold high degrees or enjoy the wages of well-paid jobs, and face much higher sanction if they attempt to leave their situation. While they are similar to migratory, low-skilled laborers, they differ to the extent that the decision to go down this path, at least initially, is intended to be permanent and volitional. If we are to better understand the process of fusion and adaptation, we need to broaden the scope of our empirical data collection. We should also look at the perceptions of men in transnational marriages, who have moved to their wife's native land in order to better understand what impact, if any, gender has upon this process. Regarding theory building, we believe that while Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptation may explain some behaviors, it is insufficient to explain and account for many others. Kramer's theory of cultural fusion is flexible enough to account for more, which is what a good theory should do. A weakness, however, is that it is perhaps too flexible. If outcomes are unpredictable and uncertain, how can one know when fusion has not taken place? We need to more concretely map out what is the middle ground between oppressive assimilation and withdrawal or rejection of the new culture. What is the optimal degree and type of social, education, institution, interpersonal, and familial support for transnational marriage partners? These are the questions for future work.

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Appendix

Table 1 Postulates Presented in Kim's Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Kramer's Theory of Cultural Fusion.

	Cross-Cultural Adaptation	Cultural Fusion
Focus	Individual	Group, individual, or combination
Scope	Universal	Situational
Process	Psychological: stress-adaptation-growth dynamic motivates change and adaptation	Fusion: combination of cultural elements
Relation to host culture	Unidirectional adaptation with host	Multidirectional and unpredictable
Relationship with co-ethnics	Short-term benefit, long-term harm	Value to newcomer(s) and existent culture is fluid and mutually constituted
Learning	Dual processes of enculturation and deculturation, or zero-sum gain	Additive and integrative

Table 1 (*Continued*)

	Cross-Cultural Adaptation	Cultural Fusion
Success marked by	Intercultural personhood—ability to create an "interethnic" identity that transcends boundaries	Cultural fusion to create new cultural forms, differing cultural accents, balance between host and immigrant groups
Failure marked by	Maintaining an "ethnic identity" which leads to low self-esteem and negative self-image	Uniformity, self-hatred
Responsibility for change	Individual who crosses boundary; individuals may vary in degree of "predispositional conditions" for changing and adapting to host	No one, as change is multidirectional and unpredictable
Environmental factors	Greater host receptivity and host conformity pressure facilitate individual's greater intercultural adaptation to host culture; ethnic group strength hinders individual's adaptation to host culture	Mutually interacting, co-evolutionary interaction and exchange between "recently arrived" and "existing" cultures and individuals; interaction does not lead to a final end state
Communication	Skills that adapt individual to host: language, knowledge, identity with host	Negotiation between host and immigrant groups

Table 2 Common Themes from Interview Data and Range of Responses.

Topic	Example(s) of Satisfaction with Taiwan or Increased Identity with Taiwan's Culture; Lessened Ties with Co-Nationals	Example(s) of Dissatisfaction with Taiwan or Sense of Difference; Help or Ties with Co-Nationals Strengthened
Social support: Taiwan	I very rarely have problems. But when there is something I can't [do], I ask my husband. I'll tell him if there is something I'm unclear about and he'll tell me	A lot of [Mainland Chinese women] come to my home. I'm really hospitable. ... Whenever there is Chinese New Year or a festival they'll come to my home. ... The biggest problem is that they feel a Taiwanese mother-in-law is very fierce and gives them pressure
Social support: outside Taiwan	I call home, but not very often	I often call [home to China] because I lived there so long and have many friends and family. ... If there is typhoon or storm [here], they'll call me. They're worried because Taiwan has lots of [natural] disasters.

Table 2 (*Continued*)

Topic	Example(s) of Satisfaction with Taiwan or Increased Identity with Taiwan's Culture; Lessened Ties with Co-Nationals	Example(s) of Dissatisfaction with Taiwan or Sense of Difference; Help or Ties with Co-Nationals Strengthened
Relationships	I get along well with my mother-in-law, because she [*teng*] treats me well [*teng* 疼 is a verb to love or to like from superior to subordinate].	Another Vietnamese woman [not speaker] had problems with her husband, would often get into fights, and they divorced. Speaker claims she gets on well with her husband
Finances	People here say that we who have married to Taiwan do not take care of our husband or children, that we earn money and send it back [to Cambodia]. I get very angry. The money that I earn I use it for the baby.	I brought one [woman] from Vietnam to marry here. I told her that here you must work. If you have a child you must work in order to have money to care for your child. ... Don't take money from your husband, it's not convenient.
Health issues	All women expressed satisfaction with Taiwan's national health system	Many commented on differences between food eaten during and after pregnancy. In Taiwan women will eat more meat, e.g., pig's feet, chicken soup. In Southeast Asia women eat more vegetables.
Self-identity	I want a Taiwanese identity card [citizenship] because I am married to here. When talking about her children: I am married to Taiwan and the children are Taiwanese. I say that I am not a foreigner, I am Taiwanese. Everyone says I am a foreigner. I say I am not ... I am Taiwanese.	I feel that I am Vietnamese. Will always be Vietnamese. I was born in Mainland China [*Da lu* 大陸], and of course I am Chinese. Wherever you go you must say that you are Mainland Chinese.
Social-identity	When we [women] don't talk [in foreign language to each other], they say we look Taiwanese. But if we talk, they say you are a foreigner.	Other people see me as Vietnamese [woman is from Cambodia]. When I go to the market they always say to me, "Aren't all Cambodians dark skinned?" I say not all. Half. Half are a little dark. [This woman's skin is not noticeably dark—viewed negatively in Taiwan.] They see us as being a foreigner. They don't like [us].

Table 2 (*Continued*)

Topic	Example(s) of Satisfaction with Taiwan or Increased Identity with Taiwan's Culture; Lessened Ties with Co-Nationals	Example(s) of Dissatisfaction with Taiwan or Sense of Difference; Help or Ties with Co-Nationals Strengthened
Language learning	But then I came here [to Taiwan], and my mother-in-law can't speak Mandarin. But the other family members can speak Mandarin. [She] taught me to cook, how to cook, and she spoke Tai-gi [台語]. And so I asked her what she said. They [other family members] told me in Mandarin. And so I slowly started to understand. ...But I feel it's easier to learn Tai-gi. Because here everyone speaks Tai-gi. I've learned more Tai-gi. When I go out to work only then do I speak Mandarin.	I can't [speak Tai-gi]. Only a little bit. But I don't dare speak it. [Because] when I speak it my accent is not good and people laugh at me. So I don't dare speak it.
Adjustment issues	When I first came here I wasn't very used to it. I'd sometimes get sick, get colds. And then I'd go work in the farm fields and would get bit by insects, and would itch, my skin is very sensitive. Weather! It's much colder than in Cambodia. In the winter it's colder here than in Cambodia. But when it is hot it is very hot [here].	When I first came I had no friends. But then my husband's friends, the wives of his friends. When I first came there were no friends, wasn't familiar with this place. But then they came over and took me out, and took me out to buy things. [Many of the women she refers to are also foreign-born women from Cambodia.]
Religion	Worship in Cambodia is like in Taiwan ... Use incense to worship, worship ancestors. But the [ancestor tablets] we worship [in Cambodia] aren't as big.	My father-in-law will worship [in traditional Taiwanese way]. But I don't. Sometimes I'll cook some meat to prepare it for offerings. But I don't worship. ...I don't believe in it. [Interviewee is Catholic.] People tell me to worship but I'm not willing. ... But I will help them prepare things for worship.