

YEAN-JU LEE* *University of Hawaii*

DONG-HOON SEOL *Chonbuk National University*

Process of Cross-border Marriage and Marital Satisfaction: Cases of Korean Men and Foreign Wives

The advancement of information and transportation technologies in the context of economic and cultural globalization facilitates international marriages. However, it is ironic that image and fantasies play a significant role in the actual process of these marriages. Using data from a national survey conducted in 2006 (Survey for the Conjugal Life of the International Marriage Families) this study examines the experiences of Korean men and foreign wives. The findings confirm the negative impacts on marital satisfaction of the spousal image of hypergamy (i.e., imaginings of a high-earning husband and a submissive wife) and abbreviated marriage processes (i.e., broker-mediated marriage and incorrect information about a future spouse), but the detailed patterns differ by gender and by the ethnic origin of the wife. Korean Chinese (and to a lesser extent Han Chinese) wives are more negatively affected by the marriage process and spousal imaginings than are Southeast Asians and 'other' wives. While Southeast Asian wives are more likely to have received incorrect information about their husbands, they show significantly more flexible attitudes toward the marriage and spouses. Unification Church members are excluded from the analysis because their marital lives are distinctive enough to warrant separate research. As previous qualitative findings suggested, some Korean Chinese wives

seem to perceive that returnees to the home country deserve an improvement in economic status as opposed to the disappointing reality. Imagining a submissive wife hurts the marital satisfaction of husbands regardless of the ethnic origin of the wife.

International marriages have increased substantially in the past decade within Asia. Korea, Taiwan, Japan and Singapore receive many foreign wives. A large proportion of international marriages among Asians are so-called transnational marriages (unions between members of the same ethnic origins) typically diaspora grooms take local brides (Charsley & Shaw, 2006; Thai, 2005). However, an increasing number of international marriages in Asia are between spouses of different ethnic groups with different languages and cultural backgrounds (Nakamatsu, 2003; Suzuki 2005; Wang & Chang, 2002). Either intra-ethnic or inter-ethnic, international marriages are between grooms from higher-income societies and brides from lower-incomes societies, in which cases the brides typically migrate to the countries where the grooms reside.

While the advancement of information and transportation technologies in the context of economic and cultural globalization facilitates international marriages, it is an irony that fantasies and images play significant roles in the actual processes of such marriages. With the insurmountable

*Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Hawaii, USA (yjlee@hawaii.edu)

Professor, Department of Sociology, Chonbuk National University, Korea

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geographic distances and cultural barriers, many international suitors rely on commercial and noncommercial marriage brokers while opportunities for personal contacts are limited. The role of marriage brokers is often focused on making the marriage happen rather than the compatibility between the two mates or between the two families, as was the case for traditional matchmakers in Korea (Kim, 2006; Seol *et al.*, 2005; Wang & Chang, 2002).

Literature portrays how fantasies and images interact in international marriages, but rarely explores the consequences for marital relationships (Constable, 2005; Romano, 2001; Suzuki, 2005; Teo, 2003; Thai, 2005). Focusing on couples of Korean men and foreign wives, this study examines how the characteristics of marriage processes and spousal images relate to the quality of marital relationships as measured by marital satisfaction. This study focused on the differences by the ethnicity and nationality of foreign wives, as those origins represent distinct cultural and socio-economic backgrounds as well as varying motives and processes of marriage (Kim, 2008; Lee, Seol & Cho, 2006; Seol *et al.*, 2005). The following section reviews the literature on common patterns of images in international marriages and on marital satisfaction. The social backgrounds are later introduced on the different ethnic origins of foreign wives in Korea. Then, the research questions are stated. After the descriptions of data and methods, discussions of the findings and conclusions follow.

Myths of Economic Upward Mobility and the Reality of Marriage Process

As the primary reason for international labor migration is economic (including employment opportunities, higher wages, or diversification of income sources) women of low-income countries decide to marry abroad primarily for economic upward mobility (Choi, 2005; Wang & Chang, 2002). The wages in the labor markets generally reflect the national economic standings (even though the wages vary by sectors in segmented labor markets), whereas the economic situations of marriage migrants depend on the individual families into which they married. The men marrying brides from lower-income countries occupy relatively low

positions in the domestic marriage markets (Ableman & Kim, 2005; Freeman, 2005; Thai, 2005; Wang & Chang, 2002). These men have low incomes or poor health status, bad habits related to alcohol consumption or violence, or previously failed relationships. A national survey conducted in Korea in 2005 shows that more than half of the households of international couples have incomes below the poverty level (Seol *et al.*, 2005). The issue is that potential spouses have limited access to the information about the characteristics of the other party during the process of marriage.

Whether the matchmakers are the acquaintances of either spouse or commercial marriage brokers working for profit, it is not their job to create stable marital outcomes for the two spouses who have widely different upbringings as well as different personal hopes and expectations. Some brokers even distort the personal information of clients to facilitate marriage. Only a minority of international pairs meet the spouse independently through personal contacts, but even in those contacts it is not easy for them to assess possible marriage outcomes because of cultural and language barriers. The abbreviated process of international marriages characterized by the shortage of information about the future spouses creates room for a poor quality of marital relationships.

Spousal Images of Hypergamy: Submissive Wife and Better-Off Husband

The myth of economic upward mobility by the wife is in parallel with the myth of power imbalance on the side of the husband. Men in broker-mediated marriages feel they are the better-offs because they are the ones who pay for the most of expenses, including brokerage fees, travel, presents to the family of the bride, and marriage expenses, and who apply for the spousal visa (Choi, 2005; Wang & Chang, 2002). Men feel superior because women are from poorer countries and there are always a large number of applicant women among whom they can choose from. Many of these men think that international wives will be submissive (Kim, 2006; Lee & Seol, 2007).

Women in international marriages report that

they got married because they loved the spouse, but another frequent reason for foreign wives marrying the Korean husband is economics. Some foreign wives report that the most important role of the husband is earning a high income, while a majority says being a considerate companion or being a family man who participates in household work is the most important (Lee & Seol, 2007). Thus, both men and women of international marriages have the myth of hypergamy, i.e., marriage between a man of greater socio-economic resources and a woman of lower resources. This study examines whether such gendered images or expectations of international spouses, i.e., high-earning husband and submissive wife, are harmful to the quality of marital relationships as measured by marital satisfaction.

The Determinants of Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is considered to play a central function for the wellbeing of couples and children. In addition, society benefits when marriages remain strong and meets the personal needs of the members (Bradbury, Fincham & Beach, 2000). Marital satisfaction is particularly important in international marriages as marital relationships provide foreign spouses with the primary support to build broad social networks. Marital satisfaction and satisfaction with neighbors are positively correlated (Lee & Seol, 2008).

The literature on marital satisfaction discusses two groups of determinants, interpersonal processes and the socio-economic and cultural contexts. The interpersonal processes (such as the cognition, affect, and physiology of spouses) are the immediate determinants of marital satisfaction outcomes, but they can be observed only in laboratory settings and are beyond the scope of this study. This study explores only the contexts in which interpersonal processes take place. The focus is on the marriage process and spousal images held in the process, as measured by channels of meeting the spouse, incorrect information about the future spouse, and perceived ideals of spouses.

Personal characteristics of spouses also provide important contexts for marital relationships. Many international marriages involve the remarriage of either one or both spouses, and the experience of a

prior marriage may affect marital satisfaction. Husband and other household incomes are important for marital satisfaction as they determine the standard of living. Controlling for income, education may represent social and cultural resources affecting marital quality. The health status of the couple should have important implications for marital satisfaction as it may affect the emotional and economic wellbeing of other family members. Other important contexts discussed in the literature include children and life stressors (Bradbury, Fincham & Beach, 2000). Children have paradoxical influences on marriage; children may increase marital stability but decrease the quality of marital relations. The immigration of the wife must be an important life stressor, which is common to all couples examined in this study, but the intensity of stress may differ by the background of the wife such as Korean language proficiency. The literature in the US shows that marital satisfaction generally decreases with marital duration, with the sharpest decline over the first 10 years of marriage. The findings are mixed after the first decade and some studies find that marital satisfaction eventually increases again, while others show that it keeps gradually declining (Bradbury, Fincham & Beach, 2000).

Ethnic Origins of Foreign Wives in Korea

Foreign spouses in Korea consist of diverse groups in terms of nationality, Korean ethnicity, Korean language proficiency, and other cultural or social backgrounds. A majority of foreign wives in Korea are ethnic Koreans from China, but Southeast Asians (especially Vietnamese) are increasing rapidly. The ethnic "Han" Chinese from China speak communicative or fluent Korean, suggesting that they may be from localities with concentrations of Korean inhabitants. The rest are from various countries in different regions that include, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Russia, South Asia, North America, and Europe. Many of the Japanese wives are Unification Church members that are excluded from this analysis. Previous studies demonstrate that the processes of marriage as well as the levels and manners of integration into the Korean society differ considerably by these ethnic origins (Kim, 2008; Kim, Kim &

Cha, 2008; Lee & Seol, 2008; Lee, Seol & Cho, 2006), and this study hypothesized that the ways the marriage processes are related to marital satisfaction may also differ.

Research Questions

(1) Are spousal images of hypergamy harmful to the quality of marital relationships as measured by marital satisfaction? Do wives emphasis on the earning role of husbands and the image of a husband of a submissive wife decrease marital satisfaction? (2) Do the characteristics of marriage process affect marital satisfaction? Specifically, do broker-mediation in meeting the spouse and incorrect information about the future spouse decrease marital satisfaction? In addition, (3) are the above effects different by gender and by the ethnic origin of foreign wives?

DATA AND METHODS

Data

Data are from a national survey conducted in 2006, *Survey for the Conjugal Life of the International Marriage Families*. For the survey, the sampling frame of the foreign spouse population came from the database of foreign spouses and naturalized citizens in the Ministry of Justice. The sample quota for each subpopulation was calculated to produce a representative sample based on the distribution of the population by gender, origin of nationality, and residence areas in the sampling frame. Within each subpopulation, a systematic sampling method was used to select the sample. The survey was based on mixed methods of a quota and systematic sampling. The families currently separated or divorced were not traced and excluded from the survey (Seol, Lee & Cho, 2006).

The survey consists of two questionnaires, one for foreign spouses and the other for Korean spouses. Among 1,177 foreign spouses interviewed, 1,063 were foreign wives. Of these pairs of a foreign wife and a Korean husband, this study uses 821 couples for analysis, excluding 145 couples of the Unification Church members, 19 couples in which husband did not participate in the survey, and 78 couples in which

either spouse did not answer the level of marital satisfaction. Unification Church members are excluded because their marital lives are very much governed by the religious doctrine, making them distinctive enough to require separate research.

Dependent Variable: Marital satisfaction

One global question measures marital satisfaction in this study, "Are you generally satisfied with your marital relationship?" The response consists of a 5-point scale: very unsatisfied, somewhat unsatisfied, so-so, somewhat satisfied, and very satisfied. Based on the results from preliminary analyses, the categories are grouped into two: the first four groups combined into one versus very satisfied, which are relabeled as "not so satisfied" and "satisfied" and coded as 0 and 1, respectively.

The questionnaire also asked six questions on satisfaction with specific aspects of marital life, such as cultural activity, communication, sex life, spousal housework contribution, spouse returning home late, and spousal drinking habits. Preliminary analyses indicated that composite measures incorporating either all or part of these questions have much weaker relationships with the explanatory variables, suggesting lower validities compared to a single-item global measure. The global measure represents a subjective general wellbeing in marriage, which would be an outcome of the evaluation by respondents of the real life circumstances in reference to expectations.

Analysis

It is expected that marital satisfactions of the two spouses be correlated. For the multivariate analysis, the study uses a bivariate probit model, which takes marital satisfactions of the two spouses as two correlated dependent variables and estimates the direct effects of the explanatory variables on the marital satisfaction of each spouse while controlling for the indirect effects through spousal marital satisfaction (Greene, 2000).

Variables of Marriage Process and Spousal Images

Two explanatory variables of the marriage process used in the multivariate analysis are how the spouses

met (i.e., channels of meeting the spouse) and whether the wife was given any incorrect information about the future husband. Four channels of meeting the spouse are: meeting through a marriage broker, through relatives or friends, "on our own", or other. Most marriage brokers were commercial ones working for profit but about one in ten belonged to religious organizations. "On our own" refers to meeting the spouse at the workplace or on other occasions, not being introduced to each other by a mediator. The other channels also include those who fail to answer the question. As few husbands report receiving false information about the spouse, the study included in the multivariate analysis reports on if the wife received any incorrect information about her future husband.

Two variables of spousal images are used in the multivariate analysis. The first indicator is a measure of the perceptions of the husband and why he chose the ethnicity of his wife. Respondents were to select two most relevant categories out of seven. This study coded 1 if either choice is because they perceived women of that origin are submissive to the husband and parents-in-law and 0, otherwise. The other indicator measures the perception by the wife of the most important role of husbands. The choice is either earning good money, being a good companion, or sharing housework. This paper uses the term 'spousal expectations' interchangeably with 'spousal images' as both indicators above refer to expectations about the spouse or spousal roles but those expectations were formed without fully understanding the cultural and personal backgrounds of the spouses. Such expectations may be referred as images. The descriptive statistics of these and a few additional variables related to the marriage process and spousal images are presented in the findings section.

Other Explanatory Variables and Sample Characteristics

Except the variables of spousal images and marriage process, other explanatory variables are self explanatory, and the distributions in the sample are presented in Table 1. The table presents the statistics for each of the four groups of couples by the ethnic origin of the wife, in addition to the statistics of the overall sample. The sample consists of 452 Korean

Chinese (called '*chosonjok*'), 214 Southeast Asian, 100 Han Chinese, and 55 'other' wives. This distribution should roughly reflect the total population of foreign wives in Korea except for Unification Church members.

The numbers in Table 1 confirm the distinctiveness of the four groups in the cultural, social, and economic backgrounds, but the figures also reveal that some groups are more different (or similar) than the others. Korean Chinese wives are most likely to be fluent in Korean (44%), most likely to have received a high-school education or less (85%), most likely to have been married before (35%), least likely to have given birth to a child in the current marriage (41%), and least likely to live in rural areas (13%) among the four groups of foreign wives. The husbands of this group are among the least educated, only slightly more educated than the husbands of Southeast Asians. Han Chinese wives show some similarities with the Korean Chinese: about one fifth speak Korean fluently, only next to Korean Chinese. However, with about 30 percent receiving college education, Han Chinese wives are second most educated next to "other" wives. The husbands of this group are also second most educated among the four groups, next to the husbands of "other" wives.

Southeast Asian wives are least likely to speak Korean fluently (2%), most likely to arrive in the last 3 years (60%), least likely to have been married before (4%), most likely to have given birth to a child in this marriage (57%), and most likely to live in rural areas (35%) among the four groups. Educational attainment by this group is among the lowest with a majority having received a middle school or lower education (48%). At the same time, the percentage with college education is higher than Korean Chinese. The educational attainment of the husbands is also among the lowest.

"Other" wives are relatively poor in Korean, have lived in Korea the longest, are substantially more likely to have received a college education (73%) than any other group, second most likely to have given birth to a child in the current marriage, and most likely to live in urban areas. Husbands were also most likely to have received college education (46%), although not as likely as the wife.

TABLE 1. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE COUPLES BY THE ETHNIC ORIGIN OF THE WIFE:
(MEANS FOR THE VARIABLES MARKED WITH 'A' AND PERCENTAGES FOR THE OTHERS)

	Korean	Non-Korean	Southeast	Other	Total	
	Chinese	(Han) Chinese	Asians			
Korean language proficiency						
(Poor or none)	16.4	40.0	65.4	54.6	34.6	**
Communicative	40.0	38.0	32.2	38.2	37.6	
Fluent	43.6	22.0	2.3	7.3	27.8	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Residency in Korea						
1-3 years	30.8	35.0	58.4	21.8	37.9	**
4-6 years	38.3	39.0	29.9	43.6	36.5	
(7+ years)	31.0	26.0	11.7	34.6	25.6	
Husband education						
(Middle school or lower)	29.0	17.0	24.8	5.5	24.9	**
High school	57.5	52.0	65.9	49.1	58.5	
College+	13.5	31.0	9.4	45.5	16.7	
Husband disabled						
Yes	12.2	13.0	11.2	0.0	11.2	NS
Wife education						
(Middle school or lower)	35.0	31.0	47.7	5.5	35.8	**
High school	50.2	40.0	28.5	21.8	41.4	
College+	14.8	29.0	23.8	72.7	22.8	
Husband previously married						
Yes	30.5	25.0	17.3	20.0	25.7	**
Wife previously married						
Yes	34.7	26.0	4.2	12.7	24.2	**
Number of children born in this marriage						
(None)	58.9	58.0	43.5	41.8	53.6	**
'1	23.2	22.0	40.2	32.7	28.1	
2 or more	17.9	20.0	16.4	25.5	18.3	
Residence areas						
Urban	47.8	48.0	33.2	56.4	44.6	**
Town	38.9	34.0	32.2	21.8	35.4	
(Rural)	13.3	18.0	34.6	21.8	20.0	
Husband income ^{ab}	3.8	4.0	3.7	4.8	3.9	**
Other income ^{ab}	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.4	NS
Wife age ^a	34.8	33.6	27.7	32.6	32.6	**
Husband age ^a	43.2	41.7	40.8	38.8	42.1	**
Number of cases	452	100	214	55	821	

note: NS not significant ** p < .01 from Chi-square and ANOVA tests for the group differences.

b) Incomes are measured by the ordinal scale ranging 0 through 11.

FINDINGS

Marriage Processes and Spousal Images: Descriptive Statistics

The four groups of couples by the ethnic origin of

the wife went through a quite distinctive process of marriage and have different perceptions about ideal spouses see Table 2. The top panel of Table 2 presents three variables related to marriage process, how they met (i.e., channels of meeting the spouse),

TABLE 2. MARRIAGE PROCESS AND SPOUSAL IMAGES AS REPORTED BY EACH SPOUSE

	Korean Chinese	non-Korean (Han) Chinese	Southeast Asian	Other	Total	
Marriage Process						
Wife: We met through the following channel						
Marriage broker	10.4	8.0	43.0	3.6	18.2	**
Relatives or friends	67.7	48.0	20.1	36.4	50.8	
On our own	16.8	37.0	10.8	36.4	19.0	
Other	5.1	7.0	26.2	23.6	12.1	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Husband paid money to matchmaker						
No	79.9	86.0	38.3	92.7	70.7	**
Yes	20.1	14.0	61.7	7.3	29.4	
Wife: received incorrect information about my husband before marriage						
No	90.0	89.0	76.2	92.7	86.5	**
Yes	10.0	11.0	23.8	7.3	13.5	
Spousal Images						
Husband: I chose the ethnicity of my wife mainly because						
I believed the women to be submissive	61.7	46.0	75.2	32.7	61.4	**
For other reasons	38.3	54.0	24.8	67.3	38.6	
Wife: Most important role of a husband						
Earning good money	23.0	15.0	13.1	27.3	19.7	**
Good companion	69.0	72.0	69.2	69.1	69.4	
Sharing housework	4.0	9.0	12.6	0.0	6.6	
Other	4.0	4.0	5.1	3.6	4.3	
Husband: Most important role of a husband						
Earning good money	15.9	18.0	12.6	21.8	15.7	NS
Good companion	75.7	73.0	78.0	74.6	75.9	
Sharing housework	4.7	5.0	3.7	1.8	4.3	
Other	3.8	4.0	5.6	1.8	4.1	
Marital Satisfaction						
Wife's marital satisfaction						
Very satisfied	23.5	34.0	24.3	30.9	25.5	NS
Husband's marital satisfaction						
Very satisfied	35.2	44.0	19.2	38.2	32.3	**
Number of cases	452	100	214	55	821	

note: NS not significant ** $p < .01$ from Chi-square tests for the group differences

whether the husband paid money to a marriage mediator and whether the wife was given any incorrect information about a future husband.

Approximately 68% of Korean Chinese wives and 48% of Han Chinese wives met the Korean husbands through relatives or friends, whereas only 20% of Southeast Asian wives met husbands the same way. However, 43 % of Southeast Asian wives met the husbands through a marriage broker, while the

figures are 10% or less for the other three groups. The Han Chinese and "other" wives are substantially more likely to meet their husbands through personal contacts than are Korean Chinese or Southeast Asian wives. About one quarter of Southeast Asian and "other" wives met through other channels or did not specify how they met their husbands.

Consistent with the statistics of broker-mediated marriages, husbands of Southeast Asian women are

more likely to have paid money to a mediator than are any other group of husbands. For all four groups, the percentages of husbands who paid money are higher than the percentages of marriages mediated by brokers, suggesting that some relatives and friends may also play a role of a broker, receiving money for matchmaking. Very few husbands report receiving false information about their future wives (results not shown), but about 14% of wives report so. Consistent with the statistics of broker-mediated marriages, Southeast Asian wives are more likely to have received false information about their husband than the other groups (24% versus 7 to 11%).

Three indicators of spousal images are presented in the middle panel (see Table 2). Again, the four groups of couples by the ethnic origin of the wife show distinctive patterns of perceptions. The husbands of Southeast Asian women are most likely to answer they chose the ethnicity of their wives because the women were believed to be submissive; the percentage was the next highest among husbands of Korean Chinese, followed by the husbands of Han Chinese and "other" wives follow (75, 62, 46, and 33 %, respectively). This is in the reverse order of the percentages meeting each other independently. The findings suggest that direct personal contacts help men avoid the image of the submissive wife.

For all four groups of wives, the majority considers companionship is the most important role for husbands. "Other" wives and Korean Chinese wives are more likely than the other two groups to answer that earning good money is the most important role of the husband. The expectation of "other" wives may be met as husbands earn substantially higher earnings than the other three groups (see Table 1), but such expectation among Korean Chinese wives may not be satisfied as husbands earn about the same as the other two groups. Among the four groups, Southeast Asian wives are most likely to answer that egalitarian participation in housework (household chores and child rearing) is the important role of a husband. The perceptions of husbands on their roles do not differ significantly among the four groups; all emphasize companionship.

For the reference, Table 2 also presents descriptive

statistics of marital satisfaction, the percentages of respondents who are satisfied with marital relationships. The numbers do not vary significantly among the four groups of wives. As Table 3 will show in the next section, fluent command of Korean language boosts the marital satisfaction of Korean Chinese wives, but some of them show particularly low marital satisfaction especially if they have high expectations for the income of the husband or received erroneous information about the husband before the marriage. On the husband side, husbands of Southeast Asian wives stand out as significantly less likely to be satisfied with marital relationships than the other groups. The next section examines the factors increasing or decreasing marital satisfaction.

Effects of Marriage Process and Spousal Images on Marital Satisfaction

This section discusses the main research questions of this study. Marital satisfaction is a dichotomous variable, either satisfied or not. A bivariate probit analysis is performed with marital satisfaction of the wife and the marital satisfaction of the husband as the two correlated dependent variables. The findings are presented in Columns 1 and 2 for wives and husbands, in Table 3. The marital satisfaction of the spouses was significantly correlated, after controlling for a long list of explanatory variables ($\rho = .44$).

Wife's Ethnic Origin The coefficients of the ethnic origin of the wife shown in the first panels of both the wife and husband models do not represent the overall group differences in marital satisfaction, but the differences only for the subgroups representing the omitted categories in the interaction terms. The coefficients in the model of the wife represent ethnic group differences only for those who emphasize the companion of the role of the husband who did not receive any false information about the husband. The coefficients in the husband model represent the group differences for those who met the spouse through marriage brokers or through other ways. Among such respondents, Han Chinese (both among wives and husbands) were more likely to be satisfied than the other groups. Being the

TABLE 3. EFFECTS OF MARRIAGE PROCESS AND SPOUSAL EXPECTATIONS ON THE MARITAL SATISFACTION OF THE WIFE AND HUSBAND: BIVARIATE PROBIT ANALYSIS

	Wife		Husband	
	b	z	b	z
Ethnic origin of the wife (Korean Chinese)				
Han Chinese	0.42*	2.24	0.70^	1.83
Southeast Asian	0.01	0.06	-0.24	-1.12
Other	0.10	0.41	-0.32	-1.04
Wife's Korean proficiency (Poor or none)				
Communicative	0.10	0.78	0.20	1.63
Fluent	0.85**	5.33	0.70**	4.79
Marriage Process				
Meeting spouse through (Brokers or other)				
Relatives, friends, or on our own	---		0.09	0.51
Rfo*Han Chinese	---		-0.44	-1.06
Rfo*SA, other	---		0.52*	2.03
Receiving incorrect information about husband (No)				
Yes	-0.87**	-2.59	---	
Yes*Han Chinese	-0.30	-0.44	---	
Yes*Southeast Asian	0.75^	1.86	---	
Spousal Images				
Chose wife's ethnicity believing submissive (No)				
Yes	---		-0.20*	-2.01
Wife's perception of major husband role (Companion)				
Earning well	-0.56**	-2.77	---	
Earning well*Han Chinese	-0.40	-0.70	---	
Earning well*SA, other	0.75*	2.38	---	
Housework sharing	0.12	0.39	---	
Housework*Han Chinese	0.22	0.37	---	
Housework*SA	0.86*	2.07	---	
Don't know	0.36	1.51	---	
Other Marital Contexts				
Duration of the residency by the wife in Korea (7 or more years)				
0-3 years	0.46**	2.91	0.08	0.54
4-6 years	0.28^	1.89	0.05	0.36
Husband income	0.10**	3.00	0.11**	3.51
Other household income	-0.12^	-1.73	0.01	0.25
Husband education (Middle school or less)				
High school	0.03	0.21	0.10	0.80
College	0.43*	2.36	0.04	0.26
Husband poor health, yes	-0.36^	-1.88	-0.08	-0.51
Wife education (Middle school or less)				
High school	-0.29*	-2.34	0.20^	1.76
College	-0.04	-0.24	0.30*	2.03
Children born in this marriage (None)				
1 child	-0.33**	-2.57	-0.12	-1.08
2 or more children	-0.13	-0.83	-0.15	-1.09
Residence areas (Rural)				
Urban	-0.10	-0.73	0.16	1.16
Town	-0.38**	-2.58	0.11	0.81
Constant	-1.27	-4.67	-1.46	-4.85
rho			0.44**	
Chi sq (df)			203(50)**	
n			821	

note: ^ p < .10 * p < .05 ** p < .01

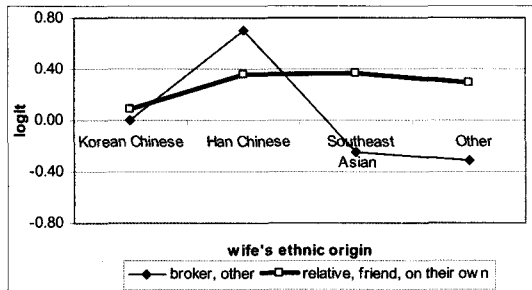


FIGURE 1. LOGIT OF HUSBAND'S MARITAL SATISFACTION BY CHANNEL OF MEETING THE SPOUSE

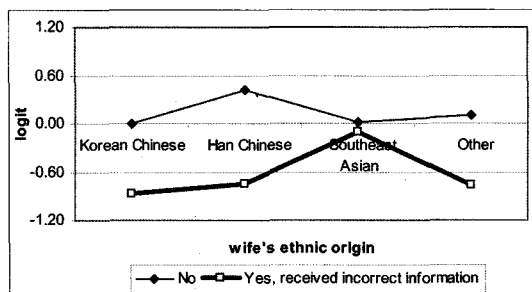


FIGURE 2. LOGIT OF WIFE'S MARITAL SATISFACTION BY WHETHER RECEIVING INCORRECT INFORMATION ABOUT HUSBAND

reference categories, the results cannot be explained by the model, warranting future research.

Marriage Process In the husband column, the main coefficient for meeting the spouse through relatives or friends or independently (notated as RFO) is 0.09, and the interaction coefficients of RFO with Han Chinese wives and with Southeast Asian or "other" wives are -.44 and .52, where the latter is significant. In Figure 1, the logit coefficients are illustrated together with the baseline coefficients by the ethnic of the origin wife in the first panel. The results indicate that among the husbands of Korean Chinese (i.e., the reference category) and Han Chinese wives, the channeling of mate selection does not affect marital satisfaction. Among the husbands of Southeast Asian and "other" wives, meeting through relatives or friends or independently increases marital satisfaction as compared to meeting through brokers or other ways.

The effects of the wife having received any false information about husbands on their marital satisfaction also differ by ethnic origin (Column 1 Table 3 and Figure 2). The significant negative

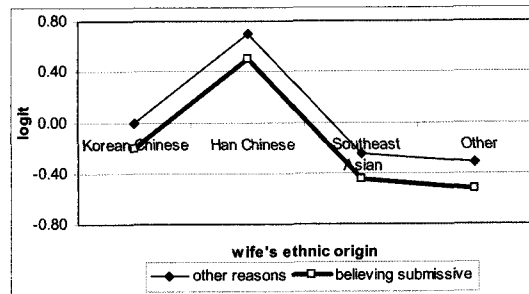


FIGURE 3. LOGIT OF HUSBAND'S MARITAL SATISFACTION BY REASON FOR CHOOSING THE ETHNICITY OF THE WIFE

coefficient for the main effect and non-significant interaction coefficient for being Han Chinese demonstrates that having received false information about husbands lowers the chance of marital satisfaction among Korean Chinese and "other" wives (i.e., reference category) and among Han Chinese wives. The interaction coefficient for being Southeast Asian is positive and significant at $p = .10$ level, offsetting the negative main effect. This means that receiving false information does not hurt marital satisfaction among Southeast Asian wives. In Table 2, Southeast Asian wives were more likely than other groups to receive false information about their husbands. Given the hurried and abbreviated processes of broker-mediated marriages as described in the literature, the results appear to suggest that false information does not particularly hurt the marital satisfaction of Southeast Asian wives controlling for various socio-economic conditions of the couples.

Spousal Images The husband model includes the variable of whether or not the husband chose the ethnicity of the wife because it is believed that women of the origin were submissive (Column 2). The ethnic origin of the wife had no interaction effect and across all ethnic groups; husbands who say yes to the question are less likely to be satisfied with their marriages. These logit coefficients are illustrated in Figure 3.

The wife model includes interaction terms between dummy variables of the perception by the wife of the most important role of the husband and the ethnic origin of the wife (Column 1). The logit coefficient results are illustrated in Figure 4. Among

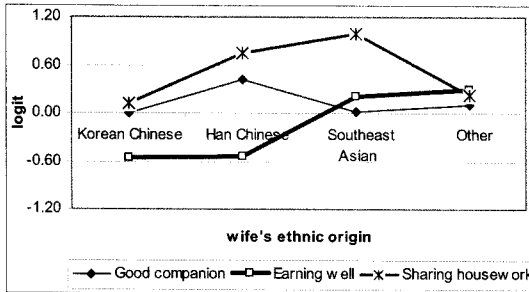


FIGURE 4. LOGIT OF WIFE'S MARITAL SATISFACTION BY IDEAL HUSBAND'S ROLE

the main effects, emphasis on the earning role shows a strong negative effect. The interaction coefficient between emphasis on earning role and being Han Chinese was not significant, while the interaction coefficient with the wife being Southeast Asian or “other” ethnicity is significantly positive, offsetting the negative main effect. Among Korean Chinese (i.e., reference category) and Han Chinese, wives who emphasize the earning role of the husband were less likely to be satisfied with their marriages than are wives who emphasized the companionship of the husband. Among Southeast Asian and “other” wives, no difference in marital satisfaction is found between those who emphasize earning role and those who emphasize companionship. Korean and Han Chinese who emphasize the earning role of the husband may find bigger gaps between the expectations about the role of the husband and reality. Previous qualitative findings suggest that some Korean Chinese wives may perceive economic upward mobility to be a deserving reward as returnees to the home country and this may turn out to be disappointing later (Choi, 2005; Kang, 1999). A smaller percentage of Han Chinese wives also have similarly strong expectations about the earning role of the husband.

The main effect of emphasis on housework sharing is not significant, while the interaction coefficient with Southeast Asian wives is positively significant. That is, only among Southeast Asian wives, those who emphasize the housework sharing by the husband were more likely to be satisfied with the marital life than are women who emphasize the companion role of the husband. This may be explained by the cultural background of egalitarian gender relations in Southeast Asia (Satake, 2004).

The spousal images of hypergamy, i.e., the emphasis of the wife on the earning role of the husband and the belief of the husband about the submissiveness of the wife, decrease the likelihood of marital satisfaction. Chinese wives (either ethnic Korean or not) are particularly responsive to the expectations of the earning role by the husband.

Other Determinants of Marital Satisfaction

The model in Table 3 controls for various other contexts of marriage for the wife, i.e., duration of residence in Korea, number of children, income and education of husband, disability status of husband, education, residence areas, and Korean proficiency. An analysis of these variables of marital contexts was performed in an earlier study, but without the variables of the marriage process and spousal expectations in the model (refer to Lee & Seol, 2008). The earlier results are similar to the findings in Table 3, but the discussion will highlight supplementary interpretations.

Duration of Wife's Residency in Korea The longer the wife has lived in Korea, the less likely to be satisfied with marital life (Column 1 Table 3) but the Korean residency of the wife has no association with the marital satisfaction of the husband (Column 2). A longer residence in Korea should imply a better understanding of the social context of Korea, which could boost marital quality. The negative effect may reflect the process of the realizing by the wife of the discrepancy between the fantasy of Korean dreams and the reality of the social settings. It may also reflect the effect of marital duration. The literature indicates that marital satisfaction declines as marital duration increases, and the residency of the wife in Korea is correlated with marital duration.

Socio-economic Status As expected, the income of the husband has a strong positive association with marital satisfaction. The emphasis of the wife on the earning role of the husband had a different effect on marital satisfaction by the ethnic origin of the wife. The actual income of the husband shows no such variation by the ethnic origin of the wife. Other household income, most likely representing the

earnings of the wife, has a weak negative association with the marital satisfaction of the wife. This may reflect difficulties in family life related to the employment of the wife, although a dichotomous variable of whether or not the wife participates in the labor force does not affect marital satisfaction (result not shown). About a quarter of the sample wives participate in the labor force and a majority of them work in the informal sectors, either in agriculture or part time (results not shown).

A high education of a spouse is beneficial for the other party, but not for herself or himself (Table 3). The education of wives has an irregular effect on marital satisfaction among wives, where women with high school education are less satisfied than the wives with lower or higher education than high school. The education of husbands has no effect on marital satisfaction among husbands. Controlling for income and various other characteristics of the couples, higher education may mean greater access to human and social capital, such as ability to solve problems in daily life, ability to comprehend the needs of the family, and network of friends and relatives who are helpful in times of difficulty. The finding indicates that such resources are important for the marital satisfaction of the spouse.

Children Born to This Marriage Having one child is negatively associated with the marital satisfaction of the wife, but having two or more children has no such effect, as compared to having no child. The literature discusses paradoxical effects of children on marriage, decreasing marital satisfaction but increasing marital stability. The findings are similarly complex. The first child may be more disturbing of marital relationships than the second or higher order children. In a reverse causality, among those who have the first child, only happier couples may proceed to have second or third children.

Residence Areas Wives living in small towns are less likely to be satisfied with marital relationships than residents in rural areas or big cities. Foreign wives in small towns may have neither supportive neighbors available to rural residents nor the social and cultural amenities available to big city residents

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

With enormous cultural and geographic distances between the future spouses, fantasies and images commonly come into play in international marriages. This study asks whether gendered images of hypergamy (such as expectations of submissive wife and economically better-off husband) are harmful to the quality of marital relationships measured by marital satisfaction. Related, this study also asks whether the abbreviated process of marriage, including broker-mediated spouse selection and receiving incorrect information about the spouse from the mediators, affect marital satisfaction later. The third research question is whether these effects differ by gender and by the ethnic origin of the wife. This research controls for various other contexts of marriage that are known to determine marital satisfaction in domestic marriages.

The findings from a national survey conducted in Korea in 2006 generally confirm the negative impact on marital satisfaction of the gendered images of hypergamy and abbreviated marriage processes, but the detailed patterns differ by the ethnic origin of the wife. Most notably, on marital satisfaction of wives, the emphasis by the wife on the earning role of the husband has a strong negative effect only among wives from China (both ethnic Korean and non-Korean) but there is no such effect among Southeast Asian and "other" wives. The findings indicate an important difference among wives of different ethnic origins in terms of the intensities of expectations. At least a segment of wives from China, for example, those who emphasize the earning role of husbands, appear to have come to Korea with firm expectations about economic upward mobility through their husbands.

Having received misinformation about the husband lowers marital satisfaction only among wives from China, suggesting resentment against such wrongful brokerage operations. This result is consistent with the above interpretation that some wives from China came with strong expectations of upward mobility. Despite the similarities between Korean Chinese and Han Chinese wives, the baseline level of marital satisfaction is higher among Han

Chinese than among Korean Chinese, which remains to be explored in future research.

Southeast Asian wives and “other” wives are similar to each other in that they are not affected by the expectations of the earning role of husbands or misinformation about husbands, demonstrating significantly more flexible attitudes toward the marriage and spouses compared to Korean Chinese or Han Chinese wives. Instead, Southeast Asian wives that emphasize the egalitarian participation of husbands in housework are more satisfied with marital relationships than are wives who emphasize the companionship of husbands, which may reflect the cultural background of bilateral and gender-egalitarian family systems in the region.

The image of a submissive wife hurts the marital satisfaction of husbands. However, unlike the experience of wives, the effect is consistent among all husbands regardless of the ethnic origin of the wife. Marriage processes also affect the marital satisfaction of the husband. Very few husbands reported receiving incorrect information about their wives, but the channel of meeting the spouse matters for men. Among husbands of Southeast Asian or “other” wives, meeting the wife through relatives or friends or independently results in a higher marital satisfaction compared to meeting through a broker or other ways. For the two groups of husbands, broker-mediated marriage results in lower marital satisfaction, independently of the expectation of a submissive wife by the husband. It is suspected that in marriages with Chinese wives, some friend or relative mediators may be part of the brokerage chains, which results in no difference in the quality of marital relationships by the method of meeting a spouse.

Several other contexts matter to marital satisfaction, and the patterns are generally consistent with the literature on domestic couples. For example, the income of husbands increases, while a child decreases, marital satisfaction among wives. The high education of the spouse (especially college education) increases marital satisfaction. In addition, marital satisfaction is lower among wives who stayed longer in Korea than among wives of shorter residency in Korea. This finding may be explained

either by marital duration, which decreases marital satisfaction, or by the image of marriage, which may turn into disappointment as the duration of residence increases.

A secondary contribution of this study is to directly compare and contrast the wives of different ethnic origins. Most research on the quality of life among international marriage couples deals with each ethnic group separately as the socio-cultural backgrounds and processes of marriage differ considerably. The direct comparisons produced generally consistent findings with the existing separate qualitative findings. For example, some ethnic Korean Chinese wives express bitter disappointment with their marital lives in Korea when their expectations are not achieved, whereas Southeast Asian wives tend to be integrated into Korean society as far as their Korean language skills allow.

The main contribution of this study is the findings that spousal images of hypergamy, such as a high-earning husband and a submissive wife, and false information about future spouses given during the abbreviated marriage process can be harmful to the marital satisfaction of international couples. The practical implication is that getting full information about potential spouses from reliable sources and having realistic expectations about the spouse and marital life are prerequisites to a successful marriage. Paradoxically, this is more true, the more intensive the expectation about a better-off life, as shown by Korean Chinese wives.

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