A Bridge over Troubled Waters: Power, Exploitation, and Gender in International Online

Matchmaking.

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the representation of Asian online brides by studying the images and profiles that are advertised on Asianonlinebrides.com. To do so, I combined the history and growth of the Human Trafficking industry, the idea of the Asian "exotic OTHER," the power and structured/constrained agency, and social construction of gender theories. In particular, I utilized a mixed methods approach for data collection. The content and visual analysis in this study provided the two sides of the analytic coin: the written and the visual. I am particularly interested in the narrative comments offered by the prospective brides, e.g., what they state to be their preferences in their dream man/husband, and the personality traits, and characteristics that they write about themselves. The following were examined: the gender displays, picture frames, feminine touch, and the ritualization of subordination. For example, body language, clothing, skin, hair color, and texture, bone structure, posture, etc. I argue that this data alerts us to the whole host of ideas, assumptions, social, cultural, and gender constructions. The power relations that exceeds the text and inform us of these online brides. The findings have indicated that these women are vulnerable and caught within oppressive social structures. They have nevertheless utilized those structures to their advantage. By doing so, the brides have acted as assertive agents in that they have looked out for the interests of both themselves and their families. Moreover, a significant body of data was provided first hand through the written and visual narratives of the online brides. These brides have offered valuable insight into the field of Asian online brides. Their stories have presented a unique perspective to the online brides' process that can only be captured through the narratives provided in this research.

i

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Honor to Us All – From Disney Mulan

This is what you give me to work with.
Well, honey, I've seen worse.
We're going to turn this sow's ear into a silk purse
We'll have you washed and dried. Primped and polished.
Till you glow with pride.
Trust me recipe for instant bride.
You'll bring honor to us all.
Wait and see. When we're through.
Boys will gladly go to war for you.
With good fortune. And a great hairdo.
You'll bring honor to us all
A girl can bring her family great honor in one way.
By striking a good match and this could be the day.
Men want girls with good taste.
Calm, obedient, who work fast-paced, with good breeding, and a tiny waist.
You'll bring honor to us all.
We all must serve our Emperor. Who guards us from the Huns.
A man by bearing arms. A girl by bearing sons.
When we're through, you can't fail.
Like a lotus blossom, soft and pale.
How could any fellow say "no sale"
You'll bring honor to us all.
There, you're ready. Not yet. An apple for serenity.
A pendant for balance. Beads of jade for beauty.
You must proudly show it.
Now add a cricket just for luck and even you can't blow it
Ancestors; Hear my plea; Help me not to make a fool of me;
And to not uproot my family tree. Keep my father standing tall.
Scarier than the undertaker; We are meeting our matchmaker;
Destiny; Guard our girls. And our future;
As it fast unfurls; Please look kindly on;
These cultured pearls; Each a perfect porcelain doll.
Please bring honor to us. Please bring honor to us. Please bring honor to us all

Songwriters: Matthew Wilder / David Joel Zippel

In 1998, Walt Disney released an animation film named Mulan (Walt Disney Records; Bancroft & Cook, 1998). Mulan is a young girl who grew up in the Northern Wei period of China (386-557). She was taught the traditional rules that she is expected to obey. However, Mulan is the opposite of a 'proper' Asian woman who is quiet and demure, graceful and polite, delicate, and refined. She is brave, forthright, intelligent, and rebellious. The song above portrayed the concern of Mulan's matchmaker whether Mulan will be able to fulfill her traditional role as a bride. The song illustrated how much artifice is involved in being the 'perfect bride.' The matchmaker dressed Mulan in a particular outfit, put on her make-up in a specific way, and taught her how to walk, talk, and pose for a potential husband. This transformation would turn Mulan into the 'Lotus Blossom' who is calm, petite, obedient, soft, and pure. Thus no men would say no to such property (Bancroft & Cook, 1998).

Matchmaking is an ancient practice that is widespread in many societies (Monger, 2004; Jackson, 2002; Scholes, 1999). It allows potential suitors to meet, get to know each other, and if possible, choose partners. In the U.S. and Asia, it was traditionally a family-centered practice with intermediaries who knew both families and were respected by the local community (Monger, 2004). Historically, the purposes for this unification were the securing of financial status for a family, cleansing a bloodline of a certain trait, illness, or genetic defect, or ensuring the financial and political stability of an empire or country (Jackson, 2002; Scholes, 1999; Monger 2004). This older informal type of matchmaking, however, has been replaced by a more commercialized form.

As areas in Asian countries, as well as the United States, began to populate themselves, the business of matchmaker grew with the technology of the time and

eventually presented itself in a catalog and magazine. The catalogs listed a selection of women, their intent, and their positive attributes relating to matrimonial desirability (Scholes, 1999; Monger 2004). Interested men could then contact the service in the catalog and magazine with their choices of potential women, and an initial meeting was arranged. Globalization marked the beginning of a world scale matchmaking industry: a practice that differed significantly both in form and content. Since then, the industry has been growing phenomenally, facilitated by technological improvements. According to Bauer and McKercher (2003), financial success and improved technology have contributed to a wide range of introduction/matching establishments to choose from in many countries.

Communication between potential suitors and brides increased as postal systems became more sophisticated. However, with the arrival of the internet, the business of mail-order brides changed dramatically. The internet makes it possible to move the mail order brides' catalogs and magazine matchmaking businesses on the worldwide internet. The accessibility for both men and women utilizing an online bride business or related services has increased, as there currently are over 3,810,000 websites when entering the phrase "mail order bride" on an Internet search engine (Search conducted on Google Jan. 25, 2015). These businesses are profitable because advertisements can potentially reach a much larger audience than traditional print, television and other media formats. This has influenced both non-commercial and commercial matchmakers to choose this medium. The Internet not only has widely replaced magazines, newspaper ads, and other traditional matchmaking tools but also has made this kind of social activity more global (Belleau, 2003; Constable, 2003; Schaeffer-Grabiel, 2004).

Today, the Internet probably is the main medium used for matchmaking, at least in the computerized part of the world (Bauer & McKercher, 2003). According to International Matchmaking Organizations: A Report to Congress, (1999) that there are at least 200 international matchmaking organizations operated in the United States, and there are approximately 4,000 to 6,000 women who immigrate to the United States through these organizations yearly (International Matchmaking Organizations: A Report To Congress, 1999). Of those organizations, 55 are Asian online brides (p. 3). The report predicted that the number of these organizations would grow exponentially. One of these organizations is the Asianbridesonline.com website. This website consists of a homepage with a series of links located on a prominent navigation bar to the left. Each link denotes a theme, such as 'Member's Login' 'Women's Profiles,' or 'Asian Romance Tours' and clicking on the link takes the user to that page. The website also guarantees that there will be 200+ new Asian women added every Wednesday, and they are 100% trusted dating site. Female-dominated images appeared on the top banner, bottom banner, and right side of the website. There is a red heart shape in the background of a female touching her hair, lowering and canting her head to the side, next to the name of the website. The website provides listings of photographs and self-descriptions. To access additional contact information, these websites sell a monthly subscription. They also have other supplemental services: phone translation, express mail, gift services, romance tours, and fiancée visas (Asianbridesonline.com, 2016).

My dissertation focuses on the representation of Asian online brides through the images and profiles that are advertised on Asianbridesonline.com website. To do so, I draw on literature about the history and growth of the Human Trafficking industry, the

idea of the Asian "exotic OTHER," power and structured/constrained agency and social construction of gender theories. There is the continuum for sex trafficking, prostitution, romance tourism, and online brides contain both men, women, and children. Some experts claim that mail-order bride agencies are not only related to trafficking in women for forced sex work, but they may constitute a form of trafficking in women. The mail-order bride trade is closely associated with sex tourism, Internet pornography, and prostitution. For example, mail-order bride websites often provide links to Internet porn, sex tourism, and escort service sites. These industries fuel the demand for trafficked women (Belleau, 2003). However, this dissertation only focuses on analyzing data from the online brides' profiles and photographs. This project attempts to understand how and what these images created and reinforced in new media, and the simultaneous blending of women's agency with structural constraints that lead them into this market. It also examines how women's profiles communicate messages to their potential suitors. As such, this research asks the following questions to get at the specific and perspectives of Asian women who become online brides.

1. What are the images presented in the online advertisements via the profile descriptions?
2. How do the photos construct these women as desirable mates, as docile and exotic Asian women?

This dissertation consists of seven chapters. First, it provides an introduction to the study. Chapter **two** provides a context for sex trafficking and online brides. It reviews the expansion of global economics and its impact on human trafficking. Next, I describe the history of human trafficking and the influence of the war on trafficking. This chapter also discusses the topic of globalization and social and gender inequalities.

5

This includes the analysis of sex and slave labor trading and the economics of the trafficking business model. Finally, this chapter concludes with a section about the historical roots of mail-order brides.

The lens through which the scholars views Asian online brides, and of greater import, the way these women see themselves bears review as people are created not only by their personal history but by the forces culture and society place upon them. Chapter **three** reviews the social construction of women and their images as well as the social construction of gender. This involves a discussion of Fanon's influence in research and evaluation of social issue and his post-colonial influences. Then, this chapter examines the notion that Asian women are considered docile, erotic, and "other." It further reviews the objectification of Asians and Confucianism. The chapter also discusses how the media generally creates and reinforces images impacting Asian women in an effort to provide a backdrop for the actual photographs of the women offered in this study. Next, I focus on the power and exploitation of women by examining the role of culture in the social construction of online brides. Lastly, chapter **three** considers how culture, societal, systematic and structural subordination impact Asian women and online brides. Because culture influences every aspect of a society, when looking at or evaluating Asian culture and tradition, it is relevant to start with the Confucian philosophy when analyzing Asian women online brides. Asian culture and Confucianism are woven together into a single fabric that is interrelated at the core of the ideological and behavioral configuration. It is part of most Asian's cultural norms and values (Bauer & Bell, 1999, p. 212-213). So even though cultures are different, they still may share some common areas necessary for reviewing the online brides.

The **fourth** chapter outlines the methodology used in analyzing a website that offers services similar to historical matchmaking. I utilize a mixed methods approach in an examination of profiles and images of Asian women online brides at the Asianbridesonline.com website. There are two components to this analysis: Content Analysis and Visual Analysis. These provide the framework for data collection procedures for content and visual analysis, including a description of the two analysis components, the methods used to conduct the research, and limitations. It identifies the chief characteristics of different types of media data that are involved in this industry. It also contains research questions derived from the review of interdisciplinary literature.

The **fifth** chapter reports the findings of the study and outlines the themes and patterns that emerged in the women' narratives and relate these themes and patterns to my research questions. It details the self-descriptions included in the profiles; the self-descriptions of hobbies that they enjoy; the physical characteristics that these brides provided in the profiles; and the preferred husband descriptions. This chapter also delves into the recurrent themes of Disney/Fairy Tales, the Good Life and Ideal husband, and Romanticism.

Chapter **six** starts with a discussion on what is the gender displays and how important it is in providing messages through these online brides' images. Using Goffman's work in *Gender Advertisement*, this chapter reports the findings of images that fall under "The Feminine Touch," and "The Ritualization of Subordination" categories including the description of each category. In analyzing the pictures, I develop different and/or new categories that better explain the visible and invisible in each of the images. In response to the visual analysis of these pictures in terms of the clothing, posture, pose,

facial expression, skin color, hair texture, and camera angle, I revisit the argument of whether these brides have women agency or structured/constrained agency. Finally, chapter **seven** ends with the conclusion and lays out the limitations and future research possibilities.

Many studies have been done about advertising and images of women's bodies. However, these studies only examine the effects of advertising and not the messages that are communicated to potential suitors/husbands in these advertisements. Therefore, a qualitative research approach was the appropriate method to gather and document the information presented by these online brides. It was a great tool to find out the answers to the research questions in this dissertation. The content and visual analysis in this study provided the two sides of the analytic coin: the written and the visual.

This research is important. **First**, it is a content analysis of the brides' profiles that paves the way to understand these online brides' thinking – their presentation, needs, wants, and expectations in their written words. **Second**, since these online brides appear to be relatively normal and in socially acceptable poses, however, when we look more carefully at them, we begin to see how problematic they are and only then, do we begin the process of thinking independently about these photos. Most readers/viewers are quickly glancing and are not noticing what impact these photos may have on them. **Third**, this research is a contribution to the body of literature concerning social, cultural, and gender construction of Asian women, the power and exploitation of women, the Asian mail-order/online brides, and the constrained agency of these Asian online brides. Not much research has been done about the profiles and examines these pictures as narratives in the Asian online brides' practice.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter first seeks to place online brides and sex trafficking in perspective, then it will review the expansion of global economics and its impact on human trafficking. Next, it will describe the history of human trafficking and the influence of the war on trafficking. This is followed by a globalization, social and gender inequalities section. This includes the analysis of sex and slave labor trading and the economics of the trafficking business model. Finally, this chapter concludes with a section about the historical roots of mail-order brides.

The continuum for sex trafficking, prostitution, romance tourism and online brides involves men, women, and children. At its worst, this continuum is dangerous and unjust because the victims did not consent to be kidnapped and/or trafficked to another location where they are sold and exposed to all types of harm and diseases.

Experts claim that mail-order bride agencies are used to attract women and then use these women as sex workers (Callaghan, 1998; Constable, 2003; Hughes, 2000, 2001, 2004; & Villapando, 1989). The mail-order bride trade is closely associated with sex tourism, Internet pornography, and prostitution. Many of the same procedures used to lure and recruit online brides are used to enslave sex workers. For example, brides are promised better homes, more luxuries and a better life with a loving spouse. Sometimes, brides are sold into slavery by their families who are poor. Sometimes, online brides are sold into slavery by the person who represents himself as a future husband. Instead of becoming brides they start a life as sex slaves. Other sex slaves do not start out as

candidates for marriage but respond to ads that offer a better life and job. Once a bride or any other woman is hooked by the false promises, the path for brides and sex slaves follow a common path. Mail-order bride websites often provide links to Internet porn, sex tourism, and escort service sites. These industries fuel the demand for trafficked women (Belleau, 2003). Countries over-represented in the bridal trade are the same countries that are the most popular destinations for sex tourism.

In order to facilitate correspondence between potential brides and consumer-husbands, some marriage agencies provide Internet access at their office, charging a fee to their clients for the service. This Internet access increases the likelihood of women corresponding with or meeting traffickers (Hughes, 2001 p. 4). When a marriage broker is connected with trafficking, the business may be a 'front' for a trafficking operation. Criminal enterprises use these businesses to launder money in both this country and in foreign countries. The U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime believes traffickers send contraband with young women who may become sex slaves rather than brides. Agents lure women with promises of a better life, but once a woman leaves her country, she may be entirely under the control of traffickers (Raymond & Hughes, 2001, p. 24).

One issue that is often debated compares the positive and negative impact of marriage agencies on women. Critics say that this industry exploits women and places them into dangerous situations. When women lose their identity, they can be forced to traffic drugs or weapons. They can be used for organs transplant. It has been suggested that China has a group of hospitals where organs are readily available.

Proponents argue that women participate in the industry of their own accord and that by doing so they obtain some degree of liberation and self-autonomy (Constable,

2003; Chun, 1996; Robinson, 1996). While scholars from both camps remain strong in their beliefs and perspectives, conducting a more thorough and comprehensive survey of potential and actual marriage experiences is warranted.

Trafficking in persons is a human rights issue that has gained significantly more recognition and prominence in the past decade. Increasingly, it is being covered in the media, recognized as an issue by the general public, and is a real concern of governments and civil society actors throughout the world. In spite of the increased prominence of the issue, there is limited concrete and verifiable information about the issues.

The crime of trafficking in persons has been under-reported, under-recorded and under legislated (Aronowitz, 2009; Bales 2004; Boonpala & Kane, 2002; Derks, 2000). There has been a remarkable growth in the reporting and discussion of trafficking over the past decade by academics and organizations such as: International Organization for Migration (IOM), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Labor Organization (ILO), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), European Commission (EC), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and some governments. However, much still needs to be done. The scarcity of data, the neglect in reporting, the lack of resources, the laxity of international and national legislation, and economic trade-offs between public enforcement and private sector laissez-faire attitudes have all contributed to the growth of a thriving business (Aronowitz, 2009; Farr, 2005; Kara, 2010; Cameron & Newman, 2008; Bales & Soodalter, 2010). Human trafficking is now a high-profit low-risk venture

for the traffickers. The outcome of profits in human trafficking has resulted in the expansion so that it is now done in global markets. The nexus of globalization and human trafficking is the focus of the next section.

The Expansion of Global Economics and Human Trafficking

Globalization has always been part of an economic reality that has impacted slave trading and the trafficking of women between countries. In part, globalization results in the distribution of goods, values, establishes monetary standards or a barter currency, transfers consumer electronics, technology, and other products throughout the globe (Bales 2005). Regrettably, one of the results in a global economy is that humans are trafficked as goods. Traffickers place a value on people and then sell them in an international market. The means of trading and the distribution networks that have been established for legitimate trade are also available for human trafficking. Just as barter is used if no common currency exists, barter can be used to transfer human sex slaves where sex slaves are traded and exchanged for other commodities (consumer goods, cell phones, computers, precious metals, etc.). Human trafficking is one of the results of the globalization process and involves the functional integration of economic activities. To illustrate this phenomenon, Donna Hughes (2000) offers an example of a woman recruited in the Ukraine, who is subsequently trafficked to other countries as a sex-slave. The woman generates money that is in turn recycled back into the Ukraine's economy.

Online brides are commodities just like other global commodities. They are similar to other women who are also commodities in the international markets. This section describes the combined impacts of globalization, industrialization on culture,

12

economic institutions and sex-based discrimination. Initially, industrialization may have been beneficial. However, it has resulted in cultural changes and economic changes that limited opportunities and consolidated populations in larger cities. The consolidated populations led to the open abuse of women as sex slaves or online brides and sex trafficking agencies thrived.

Globalization is not a new phenomenon and economic globalization is not a new process. However, an integrated world economy provides an environment where human trafficking thrives. Trafficking is a lucrative and rewarding business for traffickers and their organizations. In previous centuries, countries with the strongest economies imposed their hegemony through trade and production activities in the newly discovered and/or colonized territories (Inglis, 2001, p. 61 & 89). In the past, the historical trans-Atlantic slave trade epitomized economic globalization. Just as it was, then, globalization continues to pose several distinct challenges to women and to human rights. Industrialization brought drastic changes to the lives of many people and resulted in the formation of a new class of wage-earning industrial workers (Naples & Desai, 2002, p.11). These changes affected cultural traditions and gender relations, sometimes to the detriment of women and children (Williams, 1996).

As Rosen notes in *Making Sweatshops: The Globalization of the U.S. Apparel Industry* (2002), industrialized countries have shifted their production facilities to less developed places throughout the Asian-Pacific Rim (p. 51). With the ability to pick and choose their markets, corporations have prevented women from gaining the technical experience that would enable them to earn higher wages. These practices have reinforced the notion that women's work is less valuable than men's work (p. 51-52). In the 60s,

U.S. Senator Hemphill visited a Japanese owned textile facility in Japan. He was surprised that Japanese corporations hired more women and paid them better than U.S corporations (p. 52). Even so, there was still a gender wage gap in Korea, Japan and other Asian countries (p. 52).

Moreover, as Hamada notes (1974), the transition of production to low-wage areas promoted the establishment of "duty-free zones" in Taiwan, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines (p. 225). Accordingly, these "duty-free zones" allow foreign corporations to invest with various benefits such as: "no duties on imported equipment and materials...goods are [also] exempted [from duties]; commodity taxes on production in the zone are exempted; [and] goods from other parts of the country [that are outside of the] duty-free zone are considered as exports, so that they can be bought free of domestic tax[es]" (p. 225-226). These foreign factories, where investments have been made in duty-free zones have no problem in the recruitment of unskilled village women workers (Ong, 1995, p. 153). These corporations prefer young single women from rural communities in order to keep the cost down (p. 151-152). A personnel manager from one of these factories noted that if they hire a "highly educated person [then that person will be] very hard to control" (p. 154). As a result, his company hired rural women who were subjected to increased wage exploitation (p. 155). Factory work is not a secure means of employment for these women because it is a low skilled job; they can be replaced at any time (p. 215-221). Globalization has been accompanied by the creation of new institutions which lead to the destruction of subsistence economies. This result in new forms of industrialization that eliminate the basis for alternative strategies, increases

dependency on factory work, and increase dependency on international financial institutions for loans and aid (Stiglitz, 2003, p. 3-22).

Globalization is driven and governed by three main institutions: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Stiglitz, 2003, p. 10). Both the IMF and the World Bank were created after the Second World War. These institutions were created to grant low-cost loans so that Europe could be rebuilt after the destructive effects of the World War II. One of the justifications for the creation of these institutions was the hope that they would "save the world from future economic depressions" (p. 11).

The IMF takes the lead to ensure global economic stability (p. 12). However, Stiglitz (2003) argued that today the IMF has veered from their original mission of putting pressure on countries that are not doing their share for global economy stability. The ways that the IMF assists are by increasing their expenditures, lowering the interest on loans that they make, and by reducing taxes to stimulate the economies where they grant loans (p. 12). Stiglitz (2003) provides examples of how the IMF has been hypocritical and has broken promises to developing countries they assisted while promoting globalization.

An example of a hypocritical behavior is when the United States has pushed poor countries to open trade barriers but has kept its own barriers intact (p. 6). The IMF is a key player in the success of developing countries and/or their demise. It appears that the IMF policies play a very significant part in the growth of the least developed countries. Stiglitz (2003) shows how the IMF implemented its policies and how these policies end up specifically contributing to the global economic instability in the world (p. 15).

15

The IMF failed to stabilize many situations and one of the effects has been the collapse of financial markets in Asia. The main factor in this crisis was the rapid financial and market liberalization that was imposed on Asia. Evidently, the IMF thought that this was the way that would allow Asian countries to develop (p. 10 & 15). The IMF believed that their policies would help reduce or diminish poverty within Asia (p. 10 & 15). The result of all of the IMF dealings was that many countries were placed in positions where their people owed money. In order to pay back their debts, they resorted to questionable moral dealings, some of which included human trafficking (p. 18). Stiglitz (2003) empirically shows how the selective idealistic policies by the IMF backfired. The eventual IMF policies resulted in an increase in poverty and in trafficking (p. 20-22).

With the "duty-free zones," countries that were originally producing goods for internal consumption now are being integrated into industrial complexes that produce goods for the world market (Naples & Desai, 2002, p. 17-19). This affected the livelihood of a large portion of their labor force and benefited the transnational corporations. These corporations were able to maintain low investment rates based, in part, upon relaxed tariff laws, the inability of workers to unionize, and the resulting low wages of a predominantly female workforce (p. 10-11). Kara (2010) argued that this led to the massive migration of people within a country from agrarian jobs to cities where there were manufacturing jobs. He suggested that this migration took place because the manufacturing jobs initially paid higher wages, and the population moved for supposedly economic stability (p. 29). However, many of the people who migrated from agricultural jobs to the city became vulnerable and were exposed to exploitation by traffickers (p. 29).

He further argued that "the negative effects of economic globalization...fueled the ascent of sex trafficking" (p.29). Slave traders and traffickers benefitted from these low wages and unemployment situations because they were able to coerce and recruit desperate individuals (p. 30).

A History of Human Trafficking

The first international document that tried to control trafficking in women was the International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, which was adopted in 1904 (History of Human Trafficking, 2006). Yet, it was not until November 2000 that the international community adopted an agreed definition of human trafficking. The Protocol against Trafficking in Persons aims at preventing and combating trafficking and strengthening international cooperation against trafficking. The U.N. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children Article 3(a) states:

> "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (UN Protocol, 2000).

If such laws are not already in place, countries that ratify the Protocol are obliged to enact domestic laws making those activities criminal offenses. The Protocol also requires countries to take steps to protect and support victims of trafficking, who should be entitled to confidentiality and protection against offenders. The protocol should include

17

general protection as well as specific forms of protection when a person is providing evidence or assistance to the police or is appearing as a witness in the prosecution of traffickers. Social benefits, such as housing, medical care, and legal or other counseling are optional requirements.

In reality, receiving countries or sites where men's demand for women and girls in prostitution exceeds the supply in the local area, women, and girls are recruited and imported. In addition to the importation of prostitutes, countries also use trafficking to supply wives for men when there are fewer women than men in a country (Lim, 1998). For instance, in both China and India many women aborted female fetuses since a male child is preferable. Moreover, China, because of policies favoring males has allowed women babies to be adopted. The result is that men outnumber women. Sex industries use up women, physically and emotionally, necessitating a fresh supply of women. Mail order brides are treated as commodities and are trafficked as a scarce resource that is profitable.

The U.N. Protocol and the efforts of states and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have yet to deter human trafficking. Currently, the global human trafficking industry is estimated to make US$32 billion dollars a year (ILO, 2005). To keep the sex industry in business, women are trafficked to, from and through every region in the world. The value of this global trade in women as commodities for sex industries is estimated to be between seven and twelve billion dollars annually (ILO, 2005).

Origin countries or regions are characterized by poverty, unemployment, war, and political and economic instability. These conditions facilitate the activity of traffickers who target regions where recruiting victims is easy. Since many societies view daughters

as economic burdens, very poor and sometimes desperate parents sell their daughters to traffickers (Kara, 2010, p. 8). In origin countries, such as Vietnam, the rise of consumerism has led families to accept loans for material goods from traffickers in exchange for the use of their daughters (Unicef, 2000; Derks, 2000; Kane, 2002). In many parts of Asia, daughters are culturally bound to repay their families for their upbringing, and a daughter in the sex industry is sometimes the main financial support for families in impoverished areas. Women and girls become vulnerable to traffickers as a result of family pressure, poverty, family violence, and community conflicts. Traffickers procure women and girls when their families say, "Go," or when women say to themselves, "Anyplace is better than here." Life for women in many Asian countries is very difficult because of cultural norms. Women are frequently treated as second-class citizens.

During Times of War, women are more likely to be treated as objects and property

Women trafficking increases during times of war because traffickers take advantage of the chaotic situations to recruit their vulnerable victims (Aronowitz, 2009, p. 137-138). This situation is best exemplified by the cases of the Bosnia and Herzegovina wars where there were collapses of the government's institutions, economic market, and law enforcement (Aronowitz, 2009, p. 138). Aronowitz (2009) argued that there are correlations between the number of military servicemen and/or peacekeeper and the increase in human trafficking. For example, the number of women who were trafficked increased when American soldiers were present in Vietnam during the Vietnam War. During the time that Americans were stationed in Japan and also when members of

the American military were stationed in South Korea, the number of women trafficked there increased. Each of the above examples resulted in "'one of the largest sources of demand for sexual services...some of which...[was] provided by trafficked women'" (p. 138). Further, Farr (2005) also determined that there was a connection between the military's presence during wartime and the increases in human trafficking (p. 194-195). Citing research conducted by professor Oshiro of Okinawa International University, Farr (2005) argued that after Japan surrendered Okinawa, the U.S military established prostitution zones where women could earn money to support themselves (p. 195). She also described how the prostitution economy in the Philippines was thriving during World War II. Farr stated that pictures of Filipina prostitutes with STD were hung in the military bases (p. 196). Young girls were allowed to stay on the base with their boyfriend, however, if the boyfriend contracted STD, he could choose to report any girls and these girls would be blacklist and they usually lost their jobs (p. 197).

Farr (2005) also discussed the concept and the use of "comfort women." During World War II, there were approximately 200,000 Asian women who were forced to be sex slaves to the Japanese armies. These women were kidnapped from their homes and trafficked across East Asia. The Japanese government shipped them around as if they were military supplies (p. 198-199). Recently, some of these "comfort women" testified and "demand[ed] recognition and reparation from the Japanese government" (p. 199). One of the "comfort women" remembered that she was abducted from the Philippines at the age of 13 and was raped daily by four to five Japanese soldiers (p. 199-200). Japan admitted their guilt and apologized in 1993. Two years later, Japan created a fund to compensate these women. However, the Japanese government failed in its attempt to

raise enough money for the fund. Today, the Japanese government still refuses to pay any reparations to these women (p. 200).

Currently, there are U.N. peacekeepers around the world and there are documented cases of sex trafficking in many of the areas where they are based (Cambodia, Nepal, West Africa, East Timor, Bosnia, Pakistan, Morocco and many other countries) (Aronowitz, 2009, p. 139-140). Moreover, there are reports of the sales of children for domestic services in the Caribbean and in Africa. Bales (2004), reported that such activity is culturally acceptable in dealings with high numbers of children in those societies (p. 21).

Globalization, Social and Gender Inequalities

Global integration of production has not decreased the inequalities between men and women in the workplace. Quite the opposite has happened; more women are visibly employed at lower paying jobs (Naples & Desai, 2002, p. 16-17). This transformation from a rural to urban setting has had its effect on women's lives and local economies (p. 17). Many families have had their young daughters recruited for new job opportunities. Recruiters provided advance loans and/or wages to the family in exchange for young women in the family to go away with them for work (Bales, 2004, p. 9). Instead of working on their farms with little or no supervision from their parents, once they enter factory life, these young women discover that time is measured in profits, savings and waste (Ong, 1995, p. 167-168). Corporations believe that it is necessary to have male supervisors to supervise the work of these rural women (p. 164-165). Many women found the rigidly structured style of their supervisors to be repressive and alienating as

well as dangerous (p. 165). Some feared their supervisors and did not dare to complain

because they did not want to lose their jobs. When the factories moved to other countries,

women who worked in these jobs became unemployed and were left without any

resources even though they have been working there for years (Rosen, 2002, p. 54).

Family dynamics were also disturbed. In particular, when all the daughters in a family

were recruited, nobody was available to help in the home. Also, many of these daughters

who worked in factories were not able to repay the advance loan and did not have

sufficient money to send back to their families (Bales & Soodalter, 2010, p. 131-132).

While industrialization negatively affected agriculture societies, this was not the

sole cause for the rise in human trafficking. The continuing subordination of women in

many societies exacerbates economic, educational and work disparities. The Global

Report on Human Trafficking in Persons (2012), defined 'Outbound' as "trafficking, with

large numbers of victims trafficked to other regions, whereas others reported about

mainly intraregional trafficking" (p. 50). Thus, 'Outbound' trafficking stemming from

war, internal strife or famine, poverty, unemployment, and economic instability also adds

to the migration patterns of many families (Bales, 2004, p. 12-14; Farr, 2005, p. 189-

202). The growing demand for women for the sex industry, as cheap labor, and as

domestic workers are other factors that have driven the continued trafficking of

individuals (Aronowitz, 2009, p. 25-26). With tax-free profits[1], combined with the

marketability of cheap labor, domestic workers, and sex services, provided financial

incentives to traffickers, but limited employment and educational opportunities, for

women (UNODC, 2012, p. 19). Additionally, traffickers exploit the variety of restrictive

cultural norms to force many people to engage in emotionally and physically degrading forms of labor (Kara, 2010, p. 202-203).

The impacts of globalization and increasing urbanization have resulted in the spread of modernization with greater access to transportation, resources and the media. These changes have resulted in the disappearance of traditional income sources for many individuals and rural employment is now very limited (p. 24). This often drives the poor or unskilled people to migrate in order to survive (Aronowitz, 2009, p. 26). Women seek better economic opportunities overseas as sweatshop laborers, husbands, wives, maids, hostesses, and sex workers (p. 147). Sometimes, the migration is within a country but at times it is between countries. The results of both types of migration usually result in increases changes in both slavery and trafficking. Many migrants ended up as victims of criminals, or illegal trafficking organizations (Kara, 2010, p. 24-25).

Sex and Slave Labor Trading is Very Profitable

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2005), the global sex and forced labor industry are estimated to make US$32 billion dollars a year (p. 55). This study also showed that more than US$ 15 billion in profits came from industrialized countries. This profit is derived from several of the countries involved with trafficking. Trafficking profits from the following countries were: Cambodia reported an annual profit of $511 million; Israel's profit was $450; Japan's was $400, and 3.3 billion was produced by Thai sex workers in Japan (Farr, 2005, p. 23). Most of the annual profits belong to traffickers, pimps, owners, and organized mafia (p. 23). Trafficking cost starts up is lower than for other criminal activities.

According to Donna Hughes (2000), this business can be highly attractive for criminal actors because the start-up costs are small with low overhead, unlike drugs or arms trading (p. 1 & 4). As Bales (2004) harshly puts it, people are a good disposal tool as they can be easily replaced and discarded (p. 4-5). Exploited victims often feel discouraged and do not denounce their traffickers.

Each year an estimated four million men, women, and children are trafficked across international borders worldwide into forced marriages, prostitution, the sex industry and slave labor (Farr, 2005, p. 3). Trafficking in persons is now considered the third largest source of illegal profits for transnational organized crime groups, behind only narcotics and firearm trafficking (p. 20). Annually, it generates billions of dollars in profits (Trafficking in Persons Report, 2011). In some of the Southeast Asian countries, the sex industry accounts for as much as 14 percent of a country's gross domestic product (Trafficking in Persons Report, 2011). The rapid growth of the sex tourist industry in East Asia demands a steady supply of young women and girls, especially virgins, from the surrounding countries. Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines are known to the world as the most popular sex tourist destination countries (Bauer & McKercher, 2003, p. 85).

Poverty is exacerbated among women due to their lack of access to resources such as land and capital and also because women's participation in the domestic labor force is often left to be regulated by informal sectors (Kara, 2010, p. 31). Such trends are evidence of underlying patterns of poverty, marginalization, and disempowerment in these Asian countries. The number of women living in poverty and the number of female-headed households living below the poverty line in the region has increased over

24

the last decade. This has affected the well-being and human security of children and has often led to situations that encourage trafficking (p. 32). Poverty is one of the 'root causes' of trafficking; it is linked with other vulnerabilities and resilience factors.

Driven by poverty, the demand for employment and secure livelihood options is an important contributor to trafficking vulnerability. As Cameron and Newman (2008) point out, that structural changes in many sectors in Asia are leading to the displacement and unemployment of thousands (p. 2-3). For instance, in many Asian countries industrialized sector, the proportion of casual workers has increased (p. 3). Such results lead to an increasing number of women and men migrating, often in distress, in order to seek alternative livelihood options. Conditions where workers have no stability, and where wages are low because there is a lack of training or marketable skills, created a perfect opportunity for traffickers. They could take advantage of the mass migration to increase their profit by trafficking people to demanding countries (p. 22-23). Traffickers can also take advantage of the destination countries immigration policies to "render migrants vulnerable to exploitation both during the process of migration and after they arrive in the destination country" (Dina, 2008, p. 71). Some countries do not have laws to protect migrant workers and/or that recognize human trafficking. This provides the perfect scenario for labor brokers, recruiters, traffickers, and employers to have power over victims. Migrants usually do not know the language of the destination country and must rely on their recruiter/trafficker/owners (p. 71). Moreover, migrants do not know the laws and policies that are required in order to seek help or protection in their new country (p. 71). These vulnerable individuals become even more vulnerable to being trafficked and exploited (Bales, Trodd, & Williamson, 2009, p. 83-86).

As a result, "illegal migrant smuggling and trafficking operations yield an estimated $10 billion per year and serve approximately half of all undocumented migrants worldwide" (Dina, 2008, p. 69). For example, a Baptist minister traveled to Zambia, where he encountered a group of young boys singing in a choir (Bales & Soodalter, 2010, p. 125-127). He promised to bring them to the U.S. so that they could have good educations. He said they could perform in church-related events to raise money to build schools and provide for others in their village. When they arrived in the U.S. the boys were forced to sing more than five concerts a day and when they were not singing, they were locked in a trailer. The minister kept all the money except for paying each boy's family $20 a month (p. 126). If any boy complained or refused to sing, he did not get any food. Similar to these boys, other exploited victims frequently face the risk of deportation and other legal consequences when contacting authorities in receiving countries (p. 126). The boys were rescued in 2000, and the anti-trafficking law did not pass until later that year. Therefore, no charges were brought against the minister and his people (p. 127). Even if traffickers were arrested, penalties were relatively low compared to other illicit activities at that time.

Economics and the Structure of the Trafficking Business

Criminals and organized crime groups have always been the organizers and moneymakers in the sex industry. The criminal networks that traffic women are fully transnational enterprises. As Chin and Finckenauer stated in their report on *Asian Transnational Organized Crime and its Impact on the United States: Developing a Transnational Crime Research Agenda* (2004), some networks are composed of a few

loosely connected individuals, while others networks are composed of highly organized crime syndicates, such as the Mafia, the Yakuza, Triads, Jaotou, Jaophro, and "Russian" crime groups (p. 31).

Traffickers can be men or women. The employment of women traffickers has proven to be beneficial in many ways for the trafficking industry. Women traffickers have a more prominent role in trafficking than in any other crime because governments frequently exhibit leniency toward female criminals (Surtees, 2005). The chance of women traffickers receiving lighter sentences than men is higher. Governments will release women from serving prison time when they are pregnant or mothers of young children. For those reasons, women are chosen to play a significant role in the trafficking process (UNICRI, 2004).

Researchers have difficulty in finding and approaching traffickers; therefore, primary information is usually not available (UNODC, 2006, p. 54). Most of what is known about traffickers come through trafficked women and are therefore limited (Kangaspunta, 2008; Cameron, 2008, p. 80). Many victims of trafficking are forced to work in prostitution or sex entertainment (Kara, 2010, p. 186). However, trafficking also takes place for the exploitation of labor, such as domestic servitude, sweatshop factories, or migrant agricultural work. Traffickers use force, fraud, and coercion to compel women, men, and children to engage in these activities. Victims of trafficking are often subjected to debt bondage, usually in the context of paying off transportation fees into the destination countries (Aronowitz, 2009, p. 58). Traffickers often threaten victims with injury or death or threaten the safety of the victim's family back home (TIP, 2012, p. 15).

Traffickers commonly take away the victims' travel documents and isolate them to make escape more difficult.

Traffickers are rarely strangers and/or abductors who forcefully take women and children though this is more likely to happen to small children than older children and adults (Farr, 2005, p. 65 & 73). Rather, they are often family members, both immediate and distant relatives (p. 65). Two studies that conducted primary research in India both found that around one-third of women's traffickers were from the victim's family (Sen, 2003, p. 144; Rozario, 1988, p. 120). Family members are involved in several ways. They are sometimes involved in the original selling, such as parents selling their daughters (sometimes knowing, but sometimes not), or husbands selling their wives (many of these "husbands" marry their wives for the purpose of trafficking them) (Sen, 2003, p. 92, 144, & 148). At other times, family members are involved in the actual movement of the trafficked, for example, taking a cousin or niece "on an outing" or to a distant city for labor work, and ultimately selling their cousin/relative to another trafficker or to a brothel (Rozario, 1988, p. 90; Sen, 2003).

Rozario's survey demonstrated that women who were victims of trafficking identified 33% of traffickers as family members, 19% as professional traffickers; 6% as friends or acquaintances; and 10% as strangers or benefactors (the rest did not know or did not answer) (Rozario, 1988). Fascinatingly, traffickers are just as likely to be female as male, and they are reportedly between 18 and 40 years old; men tend to be younger, and women tend to be older (Rozario, 1988). Sen (2003) found that 90% of female traffickers in India were former sex worker themselves (p. 92). Non-family traffickers sometimes establish loose ties with the source villages and cities, such as engaging in

labor or petty trading. This method allowed them to approach vulnerable-seeming women and girls directly. Alternatively, some traffickers dealt directly with the victims' family (Rozario, 1988). Since girls were considered less valuable, they were not protected by their families in the same way as younger males. Some of the traffickers came to the villages and showed off their apparent success based upon working in the big city. When young, insecure girls were promised jobs and steady income, many succumbed to the lure and false hopes of success. Many of the trafficked believed that there was more opportunity in larger cities (Rozario, 1988).

Traffickers generally operate in networks; for example, a brother might move a sister to a town, where she is sold to a former sex worker posing as a friend or employer. Once in bondage, young girls can be sold to brothels in larger cities. Mumbai, India, because it is a financial center, usually has more successful individuals who want to have illicit sex (Rozario, 1988, p. 39). According to Sen's interviews, 70% of trafficked girls and women are in the sex work industry within two weeks of being trafficked (p. 103). Women and children are subject to rape and other violence both between en route and upon arrival at the brothel (Human Rights Watch/Asia 1995, & Rozario, 1988).

In the past, many matchmakers and traffickers worked under the guise of being marriage brokers but in effect were looking for women to traffic. Trafficking is a very old profession. At this time, it can be much more profitable than it has been in the past. The internet allows worldwide trafficking and with that expansion and increase in women trafficked, it becomes much more difficult to track the abuses of women. With new technologies old historical roots have been replaced and traffickers get women from dating sites that promise marriage and happiness. In reality, today's traffickers work as

marriage brokers. At one time, mail order brides were offered to men who could not find women in a home far away from home. Today, traffickers use many of the same techniques that marriage brokers used in the past. However, it has many new features because of technology. The number of women and the type of women numbers in the thousands. Men who want to contact these women now pay fees to send them gifts or email; with video available, people can communicate and connections can be made more quickly; alternatively scams are much faster and disappointments have increased for both men and for women.

Historical Roots of Mail-Order-Bride Practice

Matchmaking is an ancient profession that is widespread in many societies, especially in Asia since early times. It allows individuals to meet, get to know each other, and choose partners. In Asia, it used to be a family-centered practice with intermediaries who knew both families and were respected by the local community. This old informal type of matchmaking via family and friends has been replaced by more commercialized forms of matchmaking. Globalization marked the beginning of a world scale matchmaking industry. Since then, the industry has been growing remarkably, expedited by technological improvements. Financial success and improved technology resulted in a wide range of introduction and matching establishments to choose from in many countries (Bauer & McKercher, 2003).

Mail-order brides have been a part of American history since colonial times (Jackson, 2002, p. 482). At different historical moments, pre-arranged marriages by third parties fulfilled true human needs. Throughout the nineteenth century, "picture brides"

were key components of the American westward expansion (U.S Senate Hearing, 2004, p. 17). As men made the arduous journey West to seek their fortunes, they oftentimes found themselves in isolated areas without any possibility of a mate. The mail-order bride industry alleviated this "human need" by providing an efficient means through which these pioneers could procure a spouse. In addition, among immigrant communities in the U.S., the desire to maintain cultural values, and the prohibitions of anti-miscegenation laws often required immigrant men to seek wives from their home country through the assistance of a marriage broker (Jackson, 2002, p. 482-486). Throughout history, the overwhelming majority of those initiating a search for a spouse through international marriage brokers have been men - a pattern that continues today (Scholes, 1999).

Around the world, the business of arranging marriages (marriage brokers) has been conducted mainly by women. However, some African cultures often link a man to the duties of a matchmaker (Constable 2003). The first wave of Asian immigrant men who migrated to the U.S. was composed of mostly laborers. After years of hard work, they left the ranks of common laborers and became small farmers and businessmen. Between 1910 and 1930, many of these men traveled back to their countries to meet and pick their brides; others sent for their wives who were still behind (Ichioka, 1980). Both avenues proved to be financially and politically taxing, as the trip was expensive and time-consuming (Ichioka, 1980). Since many of the men were in deferment status; they had to return to the U.S. within thirty days. This restriction created a dilemma for many Asian men who would have to find a spouse and then return within the 30 days (Ichioka, 1980). Therefore, a better alternative was to resort to a picture-bride practice. Using the

31

picture-bride system (catalogs), bachelors were given the prospects and opportunity to marry. Most important, the practice enabled these men to save money. With these incentives, the picture-bride system was appealing and popular. Over half of the women who came to North America between the 1910s and 1920s were picture brides from Japan, Korea, and China (Ichioka, 1980).

The modem adaptation of the "mail-order bride" industry is substantially different from its historical origins. As opposed to the physically isolated men of the West and those seeking mates from their own cultural background in the nineteenth century, the 1970s witnessed a resurgence in the desirability of mail-order brides among men who lived in metropolitan areas and were "economically and professionally successful (Scholes, 1999, p. 2-3). The interest in mail-order brides may be due to the rejection of traditional values urged by feminists (See customer testimonial on Asian-Women-Online, 2011). As a result of the evolving role of women in American society and the changing values of American marriage (Kelly, 2001, p.175-177), a class of American men emerged who began seeking partners from abroad who shared similar "traditional" views of family and gender roles or just the desire to marry within their ethnic's group (Asian-Women-Online, 2011).

Today, the mail-order bride industry is thriving. For example, a Google search for "mail-order brides" showed 1,102,000 websites results. This includes RussianBrides.com, Chinesewifes.com, Globalladies.com, Loveme.com, FantasyBrides.com, AsianBridesonline.com (Search conducted June 25, 2016). A search for "Asian mail-order brides" revealed 511,000 website results. Current technology (new media) makes it possible to operate matchmaking businesses on the Internet. The low

maintenance cost of the internet and websites make the industry lucrative (U.S Senate Hearing, 2004, p. 17-18). Advertisements on the web can reach a much larger potential audience than any other form of advertising. Therefore, it has influenced both non-commercial and commercial matchmakers to choose this format. The Internet not only has replaced magazines, newspaper ads, and other traditional matchmaking tools but also has made this kind of social activity more international. The Internet is the main mechanism used for matchmaking, at least in the computerized part of the world (Bauer & McKercher, 2003; Kojima, 2001; Pehar, 2003). The commercial globalization of matchmaking allows individuals who are looking for sex and marriage to buy them in a special market, just like any other commodity. The Internet has proved an excellent tool for this contact market. One of the new thriving businesses is called Romance Tourism. "Travel and the various components of the tourism industry play a [significant] role…[in] sexual and romantic encounters between tourist and their partners. Tourism can play…[a]role in providing the setting, the mood, and the context for the encounter, or a more direct role in providing a venue and possible partners" (Bauer & McKercher, 2003, p. 10).

A closer look at the mail-order bride (MOB) practices of these introduction agencies reveals multi-dimensional and interrelated inequities that place the bride in a position of dependence in relation to her new husband. The true result of the MOB practice is a flourishing and lucrative industry involving the trafficking of women from the Third World to husbands in the First World.

Trafficking in persons and matchmakers/marriage brokers has existed for centuries. As civilized societies, we recognize that there are no simple solutions. In

mapping the influences of societal construction, culture, and systematic and structural

exploitation of women in human trafficking and online brides, the next chapter provides a

deeper understanding of the issue. Insights into these factors can be used as a starting

point in trying to understand the problems at hand and hope that further research will

shed more light on this problem.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have already been conducted concerning advertising and images of women's bodies (Bower, 2001; Goffman, 1979; Jhally, 1990; Kilbourne, 2000; and Shields, 2003). While many of these studies examine the effects of advertising, there is very little information about the messages that are being communicated to consumers in these advertisements. Advertising issues that need further review include: romance tourism; online brides; and the representation of Asian online brides on different websites. This chapter will focus on (1) the social construction of women and their images; (2) how the media generally creates and reinforces images; (3) the power and exploitation of women; and (4) the culture, societal, systematic and structural subordination of women, especially Asian women. This project represents an attempt to understand how and what these images symbolize. The idea that a woman is never happy with her body and yet willing to take provocative or nude pictures to look for a husband has become so accepted that it is rare for one to take the time to understand why that is the case and what motivates women. To expand our understanding of online mail order brides and the number of marriages that result from this method of matchmaking, it is necessary to review relevant literature that will explain the online bride industry for Asian women, the idea of the Asian "exotic OTHER," the growth of the Human Trafficking industry, and the power and structured agency. Our understanding of the social construction perspective is grounded historically in the constructing social problems literature. This literature is limited and fails to address how Asian online brides

are evaluated using current studies and criteria. However, the same or similar procedures that were used in evaluating other social constructions can be used on new social constructs including those applicable to Asian online brides.

The Social Construction of women and their images

Reality is socially constructed and knowledge is historically and culturally relative and is created through social interactions and is defined by language (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 1). Social structure is "the sum total of these typifications and of the recurrent patterns of interaction established by means of them. As such, social structure is an essential element of the reality of everyday life" (p. 33). In examining the social construction of online brides and human trafficking, we need to understand how individuals organize and view the world. An individual's view is specific to the historical time period and culture within which the individual is living. How an individual conceptualizes and categorizes behavior, as criminal or victimization, varies by culture, by era and, most importantly, is a social product of that culture and era (Payne, 1997, p. 1-25).

In *Constructing Social Problems,* Spector and Kitsuse (1977, p. 75) define "social problems" as "the activities of individuals or groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions". How human traffickers and their victims are conceptualized is socially constructed and defined through a social process. The social construction of the perception of the trafficker and their victims is an ongoing social process that takes place through social interactions. These social interactions often take the form of claim-making activities. In analyzing whether human trafficking is a

36

social problem or not, some academics suggest that it does not depend upon whether an objective condition exists, but rather whether or not claims-making activities are taking place and with what effect. This definition of social problems suggests focusing on "ascertain[ing] how participants in an activity define that activity" (p. 79).

Advocates fighting to combat human trafficking, for example, have been trying to convince the public that ills associated with human traffickings, such as child slavery and domestic violence, are public matters. Once having succeeded in this task, they could then press the government to prohibit human trafficking as a means to alleviate the social problem. When advocates/claim makers get a government to respond to their activities, it is the most important criterion that is available to measure the effects and success of the claim-making activities. Examples of claims-making activities are "demanding services, ...filing lawsuits, calling press conferences,...passing resolutions, publishing exposes,... [and] supporting or opposing some governmental practice or policy" (p. 79). This is what needs to be documented and analyzed (p. 79). The following describes one of the many models used to evaluate social problems.

A Four Stage Model to Review and Analyze Social Problems

Spector and Kitsuse (1977) developed a four-stage model to review social problems (p. 142). In their "theory model," the fate of a social problem continues even after there has been some official or governmental response (p. 142). The authors argue that social problems can be renewed and re-defined through an evaluation of the public response that can lead to alternative results and reactions to established procedures.

In the first stage of their model: victims or their advocates attempt to "transform private troubles into public issues" (p. 143). Using this step, victims of human trafficking and their advocates can relay the victims' stories to cause awareness as well as to gain publicity on the issue. The advocates want to use any publicity to inform the public and to form new coalitions with others organizations. The publicity along with stronger larger coalitions help to create a sphere for communications and claims of power to demand societal and/or government change.

This may lead to the second stage of the model where advocates will be recognized by some official organization, agency, or institution (p. 148). With such recognition, the complaining groups or advocates are viewed as legitimate spokespersons on the issue and may be invited to participate or testify in official proceedings (p. 148). If the public issues are institutionalized, it can lead to an official investigation, proposal(s) for reform, and the establishment of an agency to respond to those claims and demands (p. 150-51).

Next, in the third stage, advocates express their "dissatisfaction with the established procedures for dealing with the imputed conditions... [and] the failure to generate a condition of trust and confidence in the procedures" (p. 142). The outcome of this process may lead to renegotiating the procedures, changing the current practices, changing the personnel of the proceedings, and/or establishing a new, more specialized institution (p. 152-153). Within this step, complaining groups may minimize the bureaucratic procedures within such agencies and or institutions.

If the actions of the complaining groups in monitoring the effectiveness of the procedure created the mistrust in the claim-process procedures, this will lead to the fourth

stage (p. 153). Stage four happens when "groups base their activities on the contention that it is no longer possible to 'work within the system'" (p. 153). With the dissatisfaction of the agency's or institution's processing procedures of their claims and demands, the complaining groups have two options:

1. The creation of alternative institutions as a means of developing a social and political base for radically changing the existing procedures; or
2. disaffiliations and withdrawal from the institutional system to create alternative institutions as limited solutions for group members. (p. 153).

Spector and Kitsuse established the grounds for subsequent social constructionist perspectives. In the forty years since their original theory was developed, there have been many new researchers and subsequent theories published. The Spector and Kitsuse's model may result in mini-revolutions when groups build new institutions to resolve issues and solve problems. When one group becomes successful in transforming a social institution, other groups become brazen and try to destroy other institutions that they feel are not doing their job.

The Importance of Audience Participation in Changing Social Constructs

In *Thinking about Social Problems* (2003), Loseke offers a straightforward, logical, and broader explanation of what is a social problem. She stated that "[a] social problem is a condition evaluated as wrong, widespread, and changeable" (p.7). One of the new terminologies and/or idea that Loseke added to the conversation is "audience" (p. 27). She contends that audience is important because they are the ones who decide claims. For example, in making a claim that human trafficking is a social problem, one type of interested audience would be poor women and children who are the typical

39

targets. Another type of audience interested in this issue might be members of law enforcement charged with the responsibility of enforcing local laws. This group wants to ensure that they are doing their job in combating human trafficking in their community. Loseke believes that "convincing many people can yield a powerful claim...but this often is not necessary...[and] that audience does not necessarily mean the majority of the people [because some audiences] count more than others" (p. 28). By placing emphasis on the role of the claims-making audience, Loseke notices that the process of claims-making involves power, and challenges to this power and whether it can be utilized to make it toward social change. Just as Loseke introduced the audience to social construction, Best added the Iron Quadrangle model to explain social problems.

The Iron Quadrangle

Another important insight into the construction of social problem comes from Joel Best, who developed an "iron quadrangle" model designed to explain the construction of social problems (Best, 1999, p. 63). The four sectors in his model are the media, activists, government, and experts. Each sector, he argues, "has something to offer—and something to gain from—each of the others" (p. 68). Moreover, their combination "can produce powerful consensus regarding the importance of a new problem, its causes and needed [proposed] solutions" (p. 63). Some might say, the status and importance (or power) of competing groups are integral to the construction of social problems and their resolutions.

In looking at each society, using these different scales and rating them according to its level of tolerance on an issue, we would expect to see a wide range of belief

systems. We may presume that each society has a different belief system. In order to determine what factors played a part in the development of a construct, it is necessary to delve into how each society is socially constructed based on its culture and history. Once researchers are able to do that, we can hope to see how each addresses the societal views of, or about, human trafficking and online brides.

Using this analysis, we can try to understand how a society views what we perceive as social problems. Researchers may be able to suggest other claims that might resonate and that might change a societal view using some type of social cost/benefit analysis or alternatively a reward system that is socially or politically relevant to a specific society. It is very difficult to impose views upon a society without backlashes and repercussions. It is not an easy task to change how a society views aspects of its society using outside opinions and value systems. This is true even when an opinion may be based upon "our" sense of justice. By understanding the social construction of human trafficking, we can begin to suggest how a society can reshape how it views the issue of human trafficking. In turn, a society can collectively participate in combating it through this knowledge (Loseke, 2003, p. 167-179). Now, we will evaluate the element of gender and study it using factors of social construction.

Fanon's influence in research and evaluation of social issues

For decades, Franz Fanon's work has influenced scholars. His ideas on colonization and racism as well as his concepts of power and exploitation have been especially influential on scholars who engage in a critical study of issues pertaining to race and ethnicity. Fanon most likely would have used race, sex, ethnicity and other

41

social and cultural elements when studying the subject of Asian online brides. Fanon, as well as many of his contemporaries and those that followed, may very well have analyzed the continuum composed of prostitution, sex trafficking, romance tourism, and the Online Bride Industry for Asian women.

Fanon and his theories examined factors that were used to establish power and exploitation. The factors included colonization, racism, cultures, and interactions based on societal conditions and power structures. In one example, Fanon studied the implications of sex in a Muslim culture and determined that there were times when social factors controlled over colonial factors when establishing norms (Gordon, Sharpley, & White, 1996). Not only did Fanon develop his own framework but many of the procedures that he used were expanded upon by other scholars including Foucault, Hooks, Young, Mohanty, Constable, and others. Additionally, some scholars only took segments of Fanon's framework and/or expanded it using segments to develop their own frameworks where they could apply either their own framework to evaluate their own research interests.

Fanon post-colonial influences

In our post-colonial universe, it has been claimed that Frantz Fanon has become irrelevant, that his understandings of the colonizer/colonized dichotomy, mediated by race and racism, are no longer relevant. The slaves have all been freed and the "Other" has returned to where he came (Gordon, Sharpley, & White, 1996). It is my argument that one need not have a racially and geographically bifurcated society in order to see the continued relevance of Fanon's views. Fanon's theoretical understanding of the

consequences of domination and subordination was much broader than a mere racial dichotomy (Gordon, Sharpley, & White, 1996). Fanon was a revolutionary socialist and a committed internationalist who saw himself as part of a global anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, progressive, secular, socialist movement (Gordon, Sharpley, & White, 1996).

Fanon's critical work has established him as an outstanding theoretician of a wide range of issues, such as identity, nationalism, black consciousness, the role of violence in the struggle for decolonization, and language as an index of power. His body of work has been influential in fields like philosophy, politics, psychiatry, cultural studies, and gender studies, as well (Gordon, Sharpley, & White, 1996). For Fanon, the struggle for independence had to be a violent one as colonization itself was something violent. In order to be eradicated counter violence was demanded. Colonialism was clearly a system of exploitation that made the colonized feel inferior to the colonizers, as they exploited the "natives" by using them as slaves. Colonizers exploited the soil and the natural resources, as well as the colonized. The colonizers used force in order to make the "natives" behave properly and they treated them like animals or property (Gordon, Sharpley, & White, 1996). Consequently, for Fanon, such violence could only be demolished by a greater violence.

His work has been influential in resistance movements throughout the world. He has been indispensable in understanding the cultural and psychological dynamics of colonialism racism, as well as decolonization. In contrast to the dominant ways in which social inequality is understood, Fanon's work analyzes cultural life as inextricably linked to politics and to the histories of violence, power, and exploitation (Gordon, Sharpley, & White, 1996).

Fanon helped to usher in a modern radical tradition; one that juxtaposes action, i.e. violence, with rhetorical strategies for resisting white western practices and ideologies. Fanon's strategies can be applied not only between races but also within races. In particular, Fanon fits within the trajectory of radical, revolutionary responses to western conceptual models of blackness. In addition to his original categories that were based on power, culture, and race, Fanon's expanded framework can be used to evaluate the other and also apply the racial categories to Asian women. In essence, Fanon gave voice and expression to revolutionary impulses that were evident across the world. He was an inspiration for future revolutionaries. Significantly, then, this radical voice of revolutionary action can be traced across Fanon's writings. Additionally, he has set a framework for other scholars to follow.

Fanon would not approve of any online bride industry!

The criteria used to colonize or objectify Asian women are present in the online bride agencies and industry. The women who become mail-order brides are generally the composite opposite of their consumer-husbands. They are young women of color from countries experiencing economic distress and widespread subordination of women. These women typically have learned about "the West" solely through Western media, are open to adventure and looking to better their lives. These women start out at a disadvantage.

Marriage brokers dehumanize the women by displaying them in catalogs like pieces of china, referring to them as "stock" and offering them with money-back guarantees. However, it is critical to keep in mind that the women do not actually turn

into mindless pieces of china (Constable, 2003, p. 5). Fanon would argue that even though one must respect a woman's ability to make good decisions for herself, this cannot lead to using a woman's "consent" to defend this exploitative business. This is a perfect example of objectification that Fanon talked about when positing that "objectification is a prerequisite for colonialism and for current economic practices. Racism is a particular form of objectification in a number of ways. It serves exploitation, not justice…As more and more aspects of our lives are transformed into commodities, objectification spreads and genuinely human relationships become more and more rare" (Gordon, Sharpley, & White, 1996, p 48). A woman may rationally choose to become a mail-order bride because she believes it to be her best option. The fact that women are making this choice every day around the world should not lessen any attention given to the human rights problems involved. Rather, it should force the issues to the forefront and expose it to the international conscience.

The question of women and gender also recalls Fanon's ideas on the sociological position of women and the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing women's problems in developing countries. Women need more than just a few rights. They deserve more than minimal participation in power structures they didn't help create; they need to be part and partake of the structural changes. It appears that Fanon would agree from his writings that gender is part of social construction. This concept would fit in with his theories of colonization and the intent to change certain gender features in colonized societies.

45

Social Construction of Gender

The social construction of gender perspective suggests that gender is manufactured out of the fabric of culture and social structure and has little if any, a causal relationship to biology (Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Martin & Jurik, 2007). Gender displays are "culturally established sets of behaviors, appearances, mannerisms, and other cues that we have learned to associate with members of a particular gender" (Lucal, 1999, p. 784). These displays "cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures'" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126). The doing of gender involves its display as a seemingly inherent part of an individual. I draw on this notion in theorizing a number of femininities in the social production of women. Hence, gender is not a unitary process.

Gender is fractured by overlapping layers of inequality into multiple forms of masculinities and femininities that are both internally and externally relational and hierarchical. Collins (2000) discussed "controlling images" that denigrate and objectify women of color and justify their racial and gender subordination. She argued that controlling images are part of the process of "othering," whereby a dominant group defines into existence a subordinate group through the creation of categories and ideas that mark the group as inferior (Schwalbe et al., 2000, p. 422).

There are three forms of "othering": "(1) oppressive othering; (2) implicit othering by the creation of powerful virtual selves; and (3) defensive othering among subordinates. In each case, meanings are created that shape consciousness and behavior, such that inequality is directly or indirectly reproduced." (p. 422-423). Applying "othering" to Asian women has interesting results. Sometimes, we establish "other"

groups based on our social constructions. These may result in conflicting images of the same "other" groups.

Asian Women as Docile/Erotic Other

The stereotypical undifferentiated Asian woman has long been accepted as docile, demure, shy, and exotic. The public has created and facilitated these stereotypes through their own experiences and knowledge acquired through our environments (education, culture, society). However, general information acquired is frequently incorrect and our perspectives have been built on "mythologies, fantasies, fairy tales, and fears" (Prasso, 2005, xi). The media is responsible for some of the misrepresentations and myths that are held by the public. When discussing Asia, many writers use "The Orient" to include several different countries in Asia. This archaic term stirs up sentiments of racial discrimination because it was used while European countries were colonizing and occupying many Asian countries. However, using the term "The Orient" brings back a historical prospective where many Asian countries were covered with a veil of secrecy and adventure. Asian women were considered both exotic and docile and generalized characteristics were attributed to divergent groups. Fanon's research and resulting theories showed fallacies associated with generalizing. He described some instances where the "other" groups did not conform with the views of the majority (the hegemony group). He described some difficulties the French had when they suggested changes in culture, changes based upon a majority. For example, the account of the French failure to unveil Algerian woman (Gordon, Sharpley, & White, 1996, p.170-178).

In our post-colonial universe, it is often claimed that Frantz Fanon has become irrelevant, that his understandings of the colonizer/colonized dichotomy, mediated by race and racism, are no longer relevant. However, taking this view and position is very short sighted. Fanon's ideas and theories are still pertinent when one studies "other" groups. His body of work has been influential in fields like philosophy, politics, psychiatry, cultural studies, and gender studies, as well. Fanon's work analyzes cultural life as inextricably linked to politics and to the histories of violence, power, and exploitation (Gordon, Sharpley, & White, 1996).

Applying parts of Fanon's theories and those who added to his work gives a strong foundation for analyzing the positions of mail order brides. Because of the cultures in many Asian countries, Europeans considered Asian women's culture and customs as foreign and exotic. In an attempt to spread Eurocentric influence in Asian countries, conquering and colonizing these countries became a European priority. It allowed European countries to trade with these colonized countries and obtains goods that were not available in the rest of the world. Each Asian country contained something that was not available in Europe. Some contained silk, others drugs, still, others had cultures, music, and art that were not available anywhere else in the world. In order for conquering countries to mistreat the conquered, it was necessary to turn the other into objects.

The Objectification of Asia and Asians

Many Asian cultures followed rules that made women subservient to not only the men in their families but also to many women in their husband's household (rules

followed by Confucianism, Islam, and Hindu families relegated women to second-class citizens where their job was to serve and please men) (Chan, 1999; Omar, 2004; Marr, 1981; Ghymn, 2000). Colonialism relegated Asian women to a position where they were considered property. This placed Asian women in a position where they were considered docile and subservient. They were also considered sexual, exotic and desirable based upon their training to please men (Chan, 1999; Jolly, 1997; Manderson, 1997; Ghymn, 2000). These stereotypical perceptions of Asian women still exist because of the long-term colonization and occupation of many Asian countries. Indeed, some of the Asian fetishes we know today can be traced back to the desirability of Asian women as prizes of conquest. Another influence that resulted in perceptions of Asian women as docile and exotic comes from impressions of Asian women in cinema (Maderson, 1997; Chan, 1999;). Travel journals, plays, and novels praised the desirable qualities that their various writers, who were usually white men, perceived to exist in Asian women. Amongst these traits, the most prevalent were those which mentioned submissiveness and sexual abilities, especially in comparison to Western women. These stereotypes pressed on over the years and continue to exist.

In the past five centuries, the term "Oriental" signified the exotic difference of a distant, foreign land from the world (Prasso, 2005). Today, this definition of the Oriental can be found at times in the West. It is often evoked by exotic environments, artifacts, and other markers of far-away culture. Additionally, a person's race or physical appearance may be used for categorization. Therefore, the word Oriental is objectified in terms of culture and geography, but it is also objectified in terms of one's race and gender. This latter situation leads to intolerance and subjugation upon the lives of both

Asian and Asian-American women. The American media typically stereotypes Asians especially Asian women. In part, this is based on the paternalistic views of the Chinese philosopher Confucius.

The Media and Stereotyping Asian and Asian American Women using Confucianism

The United States' mainstream media has described Asian and Asian-American women as exotic, sexy, and subservient (Prasso, 2005, p. 10-28). Additionally, the image portrayed in the mainstream media can be broken down into two contrasting stereotypes: the devilish, immoral, seductive "Dragon Lady", and the docile, passive, obedient "Lotus Blossom" (Uchida, 1998, p.162). The contradictory characteristics both represent sexual traits that reflect the progression of white America's encounter with Asian women largely through Asian's immigration and U.S. military involvement in the East Asia. This is particularly true and is based upon and occupation of countries of Far East Asia in the twentieth century. There has been significant character development of Chinese and Japanese women as the "Oriental Woman," reflecting the historical forces of the last one hundred and fifty years. As mass media popularized it, the image of the "Oriental Woman" became engrained in American's memory and consequently impacts Asian American women's individual life experiences.

Many scholars believe the origin of the "Oriental Woman" began with Confucianism – a complex Chinese system of moral, social, political, and religious thought (Uchida, 1998, p. 163 & Prasso, 2005). Because culture influences every aspect of a society, when looking at or evaluating Asian culture and tradition, it is relevant to start with the Confucian philosophy when analyzing human trafficking and online brides.

50

Asian culture and Confucianism are woven together into a single fabric that is interrelated at the core of the ideological and behavioral configuration. It is part of most Asian's cultural norms and values (Bauer & Bell, 1999, p. 212-213). So even though cultures are different, they still may share some common areas necessary for the slave-trading of women. When looking at Confucianism from a Western perspective, this philosophy may misrepresent followers as being weak and docile. Therefore, many Westerners view Asian men as vulnerable and emasculated and their women as obedient, submissive, subservient, and exotic (Prasso, 2005).

For example, one essay from the fifteenth century describes what was expected from women during and after the Chinese invasion of Vietnam. The essay summarizes the influence and the corresponding teachings of a Confucius philosophy that were brought into Vietnam that may very well have undermined a woman's value and role in Vietnam family life. Certain aspects of Confucius's philosophy existed in many Asian countries (Confucianism was practiced in the following regions: China, Korea, Vietnam and the Chinese and Vietnamese diasporas). "Here is part of the poem advising women of their roles:

Be sure to listen to the old stories.
Observe how the virtuous daughters-in-law of the past behaved.
Follow the four virtues: appearance, work, correct speech and proper behavior.
Work means cooking rice and cakes--
How neatly the virtuous woman sews and mends!
Appearance means a pretty face and dignified demeanor--
Not careless and sloppy, everything in place.
Correct speech is to know how to use the polite phrases;
Proper behavior means to be loyal, filially pious respectful and trustworthy.
Since olden times daughters-in-law
Proper in appearance, work, speech, and behavior rose above their earthly existence.
A woman should be polite and proper,
Be sure to observe the Three Bonds.

Though you share the same mat, the same bed with him,
Treat your husband as you would treat your king or your father.
As a subject be loyal, as a daughter be filially pious,
As a wife strive to build a relationship based on respect.
Do not take pride in money,
Do not become conceited because you are smart or clever.
The way to be a good concubine or wife is to obey
Just as the way to be a man is to worship one's king as one's father."

This is an excerpt from a very well-known poem called "Song of Family Education" or in Vietnamese "Gia Huan Ca," a work attributed to Nguyen Trai, a high- ranking Mandarin in the fifteenth-century court of the Le Emperors (Schafer, 1997).

This poem was written long ago but currently is still popular and is used to teach women their traditional roles in life. They have a subservient role in their family. Although the government of Vietnam has a public policy supporting gender equality in almost all phases of life, the enforcement of laws frequently tends to favor traditional values over the new laws. One reason is that members of the law enforcement community, elected officials, and the judiciary have to live in the communities where they work and do not want to upset powerful government officials or wealthy private individuals.

In analyzing the essay, one should do it in segments and see the type of brainwashing that impacts women at all levels of society. First, the poem extols a historical perspective. It says: "listen to the old stories"; look at how "daughter-in-laws of the past behaved"; follow "the four virtues" many of them wanted women to cook, sew, be subservient; "use polite phrases" as in the past and be obedient to your husband; treat your husband "as you would treat your king or father"; "the way to be a good

concubine or wife is to obey." This philosophy places and placed men above women and allows men to have their way with many women who may be disposable.

The Confucian worldview centers on a harmonious universe with a hierarchical and patriarchal order: ruler over people, elder over younger, and man over woman. Women must uphold "the three submissions" (Nguyen, 2008, p. 11). First, it provided that when a woman is young and still living with her family, she was under the authority of her father. Second, when she is married, her husband has authority over her. If her husband dies, that authority transfers to her sons.

Vietnamese women should exhibit the four important characteristics (Wells, p. 8) in order to be regarded as an accomplished woman. A woman needs to know how to cook, sew, care for her husband, teach their children, and manage the household budget. Second, a woman must be able to take care of herself so that she does not disgrace her husband before others. She needs to be charming, cheerful, and submissive. Third, a woman can never lose her temper or speak ill of her husband. Last, but not least, a woman needs to understand her position in and outside of the family. Therefore, Confucius emphasized the need for women to be quiet, obedient, neat, chaste, and hard-working within the home, all of which furthered their seclusion and isolation (Yutang, 1935, p. 153).

In the U.S today, the "typically Oriental woman" is usually a woman of East Asian origin, and may have been taught the principles of Confucianism. She may have been indoctrinated and/or persuaded to accept a patriarchal, sexist ethics that mold the culture's views and practices toward women; however, the circumstances under which America came into contact with Asian women have had a more direct effect on the

creation of the Oriental Woman (Uchida, 1998, p.163; Chan, 1999; Ghymn, 2000). The origins behind dominating and defining Asian-American women can be found in the anti-Chinese period from 1870-1900's when a stereotype of Oriental Woman's image emerged initially as "seductive and sinister" (Okamura, 1976, p. 90; Ravi, 2000; Vo & Sciachitano, 2000). To have a better understanding of what this culture expects from women, we need to look at the historical interaction of the U.S. and Asia as well as the major elements during this time that fostered the stereotype (Uchida, 1998, p. 163 & Prasso, 2005).

A Historical Prospective & Evolution of Asians & Asian (American women)

In the mid-nineteenth century, the majority of the Chinese in the U.S. were immigrant men. White business owners only cared about profits from building railroads and were not willing to pay for their employees' wives and children to come to America. As a result, most of the Chinese women able to immigrate were smuggled in large numbers as prostitutes (Yung, 1999; Zare & Mendoza 2012). The Chinese men were dependent on the prostitutes to satisfy their sexual desires, and Chinese prostitution flourished in San Francisco's Chinatown (Uchida, 1998, p. 163). Their widespread prosperity and public slander fueled anti-Chinese sentiments, and Chinese women were generally accused of being sexually corrupt (Uchida, 1998, p. 163). Also because wives were not allowed, men had to live together to do their own domestic work, hence exacerbating stereotypes of men as feminine (Amott & Matthei, 1996).

The anti-Chinese/Asian sentiments were also reflected in media, such as in Hollywood films, which continued to perpetuate misconceptions regarding Asian women.

54

While the audiences understood that the movies were fantasy, the visuals of exotic, corrupt, deviant Chinese women reinforced misconstrued perceptions. In *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (1933) "the image of emasculated, asexual Asians co-existed with the image of Orientals as licentious beasts that threatened to undermine the economic and moral stability of the U.S. and the American family" (Kim & Chung, 2005, p. 74). The images and philosophy created and reinforced Asian stereotypes and myths. These myths have become entrenched in the West with the help of films, theater, fiction, and pop-culture (Prasso, 2005). "The image of the subservient, submissive, exotic Oriental is a pervasive one: tea serving geishas, the sex nymph, the weeping war victim, the heart of gold prostitute" (p. 8).

Before the 1930's, the U.S.'s image of Japanese women largely stemmed from the "picture bride" practice in which a Japanese man can get married and bring his wife to the U.S. (Uchida, 1998, p. 164). This practice was viewed as immoral compared to American Christian ideals and Japanese women were condemned and accused of "breeding like rats" (p. 164). Again, this contributed to the negative image of the Asian woman as having a dishonest, barbaric sexuality. However, the U.S.'s involvement in World War II led American soldiers to come into direct contact with Asian women, mostly Japanese. During this time, the Asian woman was cast into a desirable light compared to earlier in the century. After World War II, the U.S. Congress passed the War Bride Act, which allowed the country's servicemen to bring Japanese and European wives home (p. 166). Along with the war brides, the United States became saturated with impressions of Japanese women as excellent homemakers with "wifely virtues and male pleasing attributes." They were viewed as an Asian woman who existed to please the

white men (p. 166). Furthermore, the segregation of the Asian woman and the White Woman was still maintained. The "virtues" of the Asian woman did not transform her into a white or even a Western woman. "She is still an image of the Other that can be used to justify discriminative views and actions" (p. 166).

Today's views of Oriental American Women

Today, the image of the Oriental Woman still exists at all levels of discourse, from the level of mass media to the level of interpersonal exchanges in everyday life. The stereotypes of Asian women continue to be one of a woman who is exotic and submissive or treacherous and lustful. The stereotype persists and is reinforced, even though Asian women have lived in America for more than a century (Uchida, 1998, p. 167). The actress Anna May Wong once complained that in the sixty films in which she appeared beginning in 1919, she always had to play a slave, temptress, prostitute, or doomed lover whose lines were in "Chinglish" – a play written by David Henry Hwang. Chinglish is also a linguistic form of speech that results from the blending of the Chinese and the English languages. During the time that Wong acted, she was forbidden to kiss a Western man because it was illegal. She reflected back on her career where she "always had to die so that the woman with yellow hair could get the white man" (Prasso, 2005, p. 8-9). She did not have a choice in picking or choosing her roles.

How Media Generally Creates and Reinforces Images

Today, although Asians are no longer required to remain invisible and there have been changes in mainstream culture, gendered and racialized stereotypes still exist, and Asian women remain commoditized based on race and gender. Images of Asian-

American women play an essential role in today's consumer culture industries (Kim & Chung, 2005, p. 68). Additionally, many Caucasian males are trying to separate from the past of "racism, segregation, and Anglo-conformity," (p. 89), and therefore they are quick to consume the emerging global culture that has been bundled, promoted, marketed and advertised by multi-national global corporations.

For instance, Minjeong Kim and Angie Chung (2005) highlighted a multicultural Charles Schwab advertisement to serve as an example of maintaining the dominance of upper-class, Caucasian males over Asian females. They reused a theme that featured an Asian woman under the disguise of multiculturalism (p. 77). This ad portrays three people sitting and each is holding a book: a White woman reading a book named "Keep Ahead of Sharks," an Asian-American woman sitting in the middle holding, "How to Get Rich Overnight," and a Caucasian male sits to her right is reading and enjoying the book named "Boy, Am I Happy." The Asian-American woman is not paying attention to her own book. She is glaring at the Caucasian male, which seems to embody her dislike and resentment towards his happy financial success. This ad reminds viewers of the "yellow peril" threats of Chinese laborers in the U.S. history. It also depicts the perception that Asian women are greedy, money-mongers, devious, and immoral.

Similarly, a Virginia Slims ad "Find Your Voice" featured two ads with an Asian model who looks like "Madam Butterfly," a courtesan, and/or a Japanese "Geisha." Those ads reinforce the characteristics of the Oriental Woman as being exotic, enticing, submissive, quiet, sensual, and docile. These ads also depict the differences between a "Dragon Lady" and a "Lotus Blossom". It illustrates the possible ingenuity of a multicultural print advertisement profiting from a multi-racial consumer base. These

57

types of commercials use "greater inclusion" and while upholding the Caucasian male's superiority through consumption of the Asian woman image (Kim & Chung, 2005, p. 88).

Asian Women as Objects

After a century and a half of history in the U.S., Asian-American women are still sexually objectified, culturally misrepresented, and visually consumed in contemporary American culture. This indicates that there is some profound insight happening. Uchida (1998) claims that with the existence images and stereotypes of the Oriental Woman, there is an ongoing and intentionally practice that goes deeper than merely developing the image that is most fit under social conditions for "ingroup-outgroup differentiations" (p. 169). Ads, for example, are used for resolving conflicts in members of the "ingroup" (p. 170). Uchida argues that the "Oriental Woman…does not merely represent Asian women as an outgroup" (p. 170). The image is used to deny Asian women's "status as subjects" (p.170). When a dominant group has the power to characterize another inferior group through mass media and makes representations using race, culture, and socially constructed gender as tools of oppressions; it can continue to support these images. It allows a dominant group to maintain the oppression, exploitation, and overall domination of this objectified inferior group (Hooks, 1992, p. 2; Gordon, Sharpley, & White, 1996, p. 36, 40 & 48).

The practice of creating, recreating, and continuing to redevelop the "Oriental Woman" image is necessary because of the dominance position of Caucasian males in American society rely on the racialized and gendered representations of Asian-American

women as the "Other" (Uchida, 1998, p. 170). Kim and Chung argue that the "emerging global culture has been… [put on the market] by multi-national corporations in a manner that widens their range of cultural repertoires but resurrects traditional hierarchies of American Orientalism" (Kim & Chung, 2005, p. 67).

Hooks (1992) claims that "mass culture is the contemporary location that both publicly declares and perpetuates the idea that there is a pleasure to be found in the acknowledgment and enjoyment of racial difference" (p. 21). This is the idea that young adults will shopped for their sexual partner based on a particular race, such as Asian-Americans. The mail-order bride industry is thriving in part because of the preferences of some Caucasian men for Oriental Women. This practice exploits Asian women and perpetuates the sexist racism directed towards Asian American women by non-Asian men who view these women only in terms of stereotypes. Men who want an erotic, sexually available, submissive, obedient, and innocent woman can order and purchase brides from Asian/Third World countries (Uchida, 1998, p. 168-169). Advertisements for mail-order bride agencies exist in publications ranging "from Penthouse to Rolling Stone" (Belkin, 1986). The mail-order bride industry is a form of exploitation, especially of women who are valued for stereotypes of their "exotic-erotic" race and ethnicity (Belleau, 2003).

Women and women's bodies have been used as symbols of nations (McClintock, 1997). However, women are normally prohibited from the process of nation building. Yet, many states rely heavily on women and women's bodies to promote tourism. Truong (1990) reports of sexist advertisements for the Thai National Airline. It states that "[s]mooth as silk is a beautifully prepared meal served by a delicious hostess…Some say it's our beautiful wide-bodied DC-10 that causes so many heads to turn at airports

throughout the world…We think our beautiful slim-bodied hostesses have a lot to do with it" (p. 179). The use of women and their images to promoted tourism is not new. Several inter-race websites that try to promote tourism exploit women by using stereotypes to conflate syllogisms. They may use both language and images to encourage tourism. The use of tourism language on intermarriage websites is notable for its exploitation of similar implications that unify arguments. For example, they may use the following pairs in multimedia presentations: women/paradise, tropical beauty/exotic charm, sex/sun, etc. These websites may also use multimedia to achieve their goals.

These websites stand for the virtual male gaze, that Manderson (1997) called the "parables of imperialism and fantasies of the exotic." It is the space where dominant men's subjectivity is exercised while Asian women are reduced to exotic and submissive lovers or the sexual available and desirable Other. The otherization of Asian women is grounded on the basis of their gender, erotic beauty, sweet, passive, youth, and race. This otherization of Asian women on these websites as sexualized and racialized. Others reinforces the construction of the dominant male as the universal subject. For example, a picture of a woman dressed in a sexually provocative manner and is sexually aroused by the male gaze (or positive sexual male attention) that she receives. As a result, she feels "in control" of her sexual prowess, she feels that she "owns" her body in a sexually provocative dress; nonetheless, she is serving the visual needs of a man, her sexual agency is tied to the man's approval. Women become objective when they exhibit allure, sex or beauty. This takes the objective view away from the male gaze (Cavender & Jurik, 2007).

The main strategy employed by these websites in constructing Asian women as better for marriage than other women is stereotyping, and the process involves power relations at the representational level. Hall (1997) contends that power is not constrained to physical coercion but includes broad power to characterize someone in certain ways. Stereotyping is dangerous because it reduces people to submissive, innocent, sweet, obedient and erotic characteristics that described Asian women as permanent images. The practice of marginalization often occurs when there are inequalities of power, one aspect of which is ethnocentrism (Hall 1997, p.257-61). In addition, Berger (1972) points out that the representation of women in Western classical art and contemporary advertisements reflects the male gaze upon women and women's bodies. He further compares the similarities between European Renaissance oil paintings and contemporary advertisements in promoting private property, consumerism, and the objectification of women's bodies.

Like mainstream narrative films seen from the male protagonist's point of view, the appearance of women on "brides" websites satisfy male voyeurism and/or male fetishism in women and women's bodies (Cavender & Jurik, 2007, p. 280, 289, & 291). In these websites, men are the active viewer/potential consumers while women are presented as passive eroticized and sexualized objects available for viewing. Several websites essentially orient to the male gaze as a major marketing strategy. They focus on images of Asian women who look charming, feminine, usually smiling, and, in some cases, sexually inviting. On the first page of Asianonlinebrides.com, pictures of Asian women clad in two-piece swimsuits that emphasize the body and sexuality of Asian women to attract Western male viewers. This representation contradicts the later Meet

the Women of Asian woman section, which describes these women as sexually reserved and demure in their relationships (Asianonlinebrides.com, 2015). These mismatches between a man's imagination and reality results in men losing the control and domination. Sex tourism of this sort, in conjunction with military prostitution (that existed in Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines), has resulted in unrealistic expectations when men imagine that Asian Pacific women are docile playthings. The imagery that exists in advertising on the web and in brochures related to "romance tourism" creates unrealistic expectations that may be a result of experiences that men had while serving in the same areas in the military. The misrepresentations may also be the result of stereotyping related to eroticized expectations of Asian women. Based on the advertising on the web, western men frequently expect to control and exploit Asian women.

Power & Exploitation of women

This section examines the role of culture in the social construction of online brides and human trafficking, in relation to the systemic and structural subordination of women, mainly in the context of China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Korea, and Japan. These countries were chosen for this research because they share histories, cultures, conflicts, and have frequently been involved in wars and conflicts over centuries. Scholars have stressed the differences between Asian and Western cultures focusing on the comparison between 'East' and 'West' (Bauer & Bell, 1999; Charlesworth & Chinkin, 2000; & Ghymn, 2000). This answer diverges from the normal comparison by just focusing on the impact of human trafficking in these societies that share cultural roots. However, many of the factors used in evaluating Asian cultures may also be applicable to

62

western cultures where trafficking has been accepted based upon cultural differences. For example, trafficking of western women to other cultures may be based on the freedom of expression allowed in western cultures but suppressed in Asian cultures. Another example focuses on the trafficking in female babies to the United States from Asian countries like China and Russia. This trafficking is accepted because unlike Asian cultures that may not value female babies, western cultures accept these babies with open arms (Aronowitz, 2009, p. 98-99).

Culture, Societal, Systematic, and Structural Subordination

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1988) extensively analyzed the relationship of sexuality in relation to power and control. He argued that the regulation of sexuality in Europe was a political instrument for both the government and the church to exercise power and control over the people. On the other hand, in Asian societies, sex is less an object of communications and studies than in other cultures. The social significant of any sexuality-related topics is very different in Asia than that in most Western societies. For that reason, it is even more difficult to study or discuss any sex trafficking in Asia. Therefore, this section explains how and why human trafficking is not an essential issue but is definitely a social-cultural construct in Asia societies.

As Barrera and Corso (2002) noted

Culture is a pervasive and dynamic process that influences every aspect of how we perceive and interact with others. It includes the beliefs, languages, and behaviors valued in a community. All cultures structure the transmission of these values and social mores from one generation to another...Values, perceptions, and beliefs are transmitted from one generation to another, implicitly through modeling, as well as explicitly through verbal messages (p. 104).

Patriarchy is defined as a "social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2012). Matriarchy is defined as: "a woman who rules or dominates a family, group, or state" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2012).

Based on the above definitions, many East Asian countries are characterized as patriarchal societies (China, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Japan, Thailand, and both North and South Korea). These societies are labeled "family oriented" and are characterized by hierarchical human and social relationships. They shared a common set of values, duties, and obligations to those who are members of their family (Kara, 2010, p. 174-176). The women in these cultures have duties and obligations to their fathers, husbands, brothers and sons (Andaya, 2000, p. 216). This explains the pressures placed on women in these cultures to adhere to the norms placed upon them by their cultures and societies (Cameron & Newman, 2008, p. 41).

As mentioned in the U.S. Congressional Hearing of 2011, another problem with the patriarchal society is that the birth ratio between boys and girls in the population appears to have become skewed. Currently, there are thirty-seven million more men than women in China (p. 43). It has been suggested that based on the patriarchal system, many families make decisions to abort girl fetuses so that there can be a male heir to carry on the family name. In fact, abortion has been legal in Vietnam and China for many years (Wells, 2005, p. 8). Because cultures favor men over women, boy babies are favored over girl babies. When the number of babies is limited, many families abort female fetuses or alternatively desert female babies by placing them in places where they

will be discovered.   These babies may be adopted by couples who are childless in other countries.

One of the fundamental teachings of Confucius, found in his "Five Classics," is that an essential difference between men and women must be upheld to preserve the societal order (Guisso, 1981, p.48). Accordingly, males are assumed superior to females because males are thought to be able to reproduce and continue the bloodline. Females are considered inferior because they cannot reproduce and therefore women cannot continue their own family lineage, only the lineage of their husband (p. 48-49). Within this reasoning, males are heads of household and responsible for continuing the family traditions and rituals. Asian women became increasingly viewed in society as a mere commodity since they cost their parents money in the form of a dowry, and the female children ultimately move out to live with the husband's family (Guisso, 1981, p. 50-51). The following paragraphs contain historical prospectives that have led to cultural selections of babies based on sex.

Asian's Preference for Male Progeny and the Societal Impacts

Asian's strong preference for male progeny has existed for thousands of years and can be traced to the custom of ancestor worship (Yutang, 1935, p. 163). This practice sanctioned men to have concubines and courtesans if their wives could not give them sons (p. 163). These customs and practices were culturally based and systematically discriminated against women (p. 163). For example, in China "there are some 500 women per day...[who] commit[ed] suicide...in large part [due] to the terrible deprivations that are imposed on them through forced abortion" (U.S. Congressional

65

Hearing, 2011, p. 2). Furthermore, many Chinese families adhere to the one-child policy by abandoning their female babies in the hope that they can try again for male babies (p. 43). As a result, there are fewer women than men in this country which led to demands to import brides from other countries (Cameron & Newman, 2008, p. 41-42). The new demand for brides has led to an increase in human trafficking and sex slavery. The 2011 Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP) documented that women from Burma, Laos, Mongolia, Russia, North Korea, Vietnam, Romania, and Zimbabwe were trafficked into China (p. 121).

On the other hand, many scholars also argue that China, Vietnam, Japan, and Korea have a strong matriarchal heritage system (Yutang, 1935, p. 137; Andaya, 2000; Duong, 2001). Historically, this may be because, at one time, Vietnamese women played a much larger role in society than women in other countries based on the many wars and occupations of the country by foreigners (Andaya, 2001). As John Whitmore has noted, one impact of constant fighting was that men were busy in the army and women had to take responsibilities that were not in line with the patriarchal society, or with Confucianism (2001, p. 217-218). In addition, there were casualties of war that left many women in charge of their family's lives (Drummond & Rydstrom, 2004, p. 29).

While men were away, women were involved and functioned in jobs that were traditionally reserved for men (Drummond & Rydstrom, 2004, p. 97-98; Wells, 2005, p. 8). It is very difficult after functioning in a higher capacity to then have to retreat to a position of servitude. Women played significant roles when the French occupied Vietnam, and later also were involved in running farms, and working in manufacturing capacities (Le, 2004, p. 363). Now, with the attempts to transform Vietnam to an open or

66

more open economic system, many women are again taking part in the manufacturing of goods for export (Drummond & Rydstrom, 2004, p. 153-154). With each of the changes in status and new functions, women have become more independent and less dependent upon traditional roles in society.

In Asian societies, filial piety is among the most important Confucian values (Chan, 1999, p. 222). Children are taught absolute obedience to their parents and that the father has absolute power over the wife and children (p. 222). Under these traditions, children grew up with a sense of duties, for example, that they need to take care of their parents to repay a moral debt. Women believe they owe their parents the gift of life and that they are required to repay this debt as long as they live (Bale, 2004, p. 39). These women believe that they are expected to contribute to their families well-being. There are further documented instances where Thai girls were sold to cover the family's financial crisis (p. 40-50). Many families were enamored with new consumer goods, borrowed money to buy these goods and had nothing to pay with except their daughters. In many parts of Asia, daughters are culturally bound to repay their families for their upbringing. A daughter in the sex industry is sometimes the main financial support for families in impoverished areas (Farr, 2005, p. 26). Women and girls become vulnerable to traffickers as a result of family pressures, poverty, family violence, and community conflicts. For example, Farr (2005) discussed how the collapse of the Soviet Union led to its economic decline, including the decline in the status of women in terms of jobs and wages, and an increase in the number of women seeking work outside of their country (p. 10-12). Consequently, these women became vulnerable to traffickers (Farr, 2005, p. 12). In order to ensure that women are trafficked, the traffickers emphasize characteristics that

men desire. Many of the brides are significantly younger than the men who seek them out.

The Images of Mail-order Brides

The women who become mail-order brides are generally the composite opposite of their consumer-husbands. They are young women of color from countries experiencing economic distress and widespread subordination of women. These women typically have learned about "the West" solely through Western media, are open to adventure and looking to better their lives. These women start out at a disadvantage.

Marriage brokers dehumanize the women by displaying them in catalogs like pieces of china, referring to them as "stock" and offering them with money-back guarantees. However, it is critical to keep in mind that the women do not actually turn into mindless pieces of china (Constable, 2003, p. 5). Experts (Callaghan,1998; Villapando, 1989; Constable, 2003; Johnson, 2007; Luehrmann, 2004; & Robinson, 1996) would argue that even though one must respect a woman's ability to make good decisions for herself, this cannot lead to using a woman's "consent" to defend this exploitative business. This is a perfect example of objectification that Fanon talked about when he posited that

> "objectification is a prerequisite for colonialism and for current economic practices. Racism is a particular form of objectification in a number of ways. It serves exploitation, not justice…As more and more aspects of our lives are transformed into commodities, objectification spreads and genuinely human relationships become more and more rare" (Gordon, Sharpley, & White, 1996, p 48).

A woman may rationally choose to become a mail-order bride because she believes it to be her best option. The fact that women are making this choice every day around the world should not lessen any attention given to the human rights problems involved. Rather, it should force the issues to the forefront and expose them to the international conscience.

The mail-order bride industry is a form of exploitation, especially of women who are valued for stereotypes of their "exotic-erotic" race and ethnicity (Belleau, 2003). All these stereotypes are not only racialized and sexualized but also gendered. Obviously, the industry exploits the desire of men to have a certain type of woman. With the advent of the women's movement, women with a full range of options are more likely to decline to enter marriages with men who expect wives to subvert her personal and professional goals to serve his personal needs and care for his house and children. Mail-order bride businesses collude with men to blame American women for failed relationships and then profit from the collusion by selling a gender-role fantasy in which women are subservient (p. 606).

Difficult Situations for Mail-order Brides

Today's mail-order brides are involved in a very complex set of situations and contradictions (Villapando,1989, p. 318). The matches mainly involve women who are poor and if they meet a man are going to be economically dependent. Some arrangements will not offer these brides economic security. The men are likely to be much older, educated and worldly. They frequently come from more economically prosperous backgrounds. Thus, racial and economic factors define such marriages. These

marriages frequently have many cultural, racial, and economic complications. First, there is the inequity of the man and wife's partnership; the wife is economically challenged and totally reliant on the husband's support and finances. This is further complicated by the online marriage bride's immigrant status. These women are in foreign environments with no support systems. They may not speak the language and do not understand the culture or social structures. If her race is different from other women, it is likely that she will be isolated (p. 319). As a result of these inequalities, critics say, the mail-order bride is deprived of any means for self-autonomy and independence (p. 324). She begins her relationship in a subservient position and can only become more susceptible and vulnerable. She may be exposed to abuse and oppression. Even if they get along with their new spouse, based upon differences in age and other factors, brides can still be placed in powerless positions if anything happens to their spouse.

For Asian women, Simone de Beauvoir's articulation of patriarchy's ascribed positions for women would be particularly pertinent: "she is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the unessential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute, she is the other" (Beauvoir, 1968, p. 51). Asian women of various regions, cultures, and religions have been portrayed in their literature as being disregarded, since time immemorial, as vessels of men, as part of their husbands' property. They are considered a property of their families, as producers of heirs and descendants to varying degrees.

To summarize, this chapter looked to expand our understanding of online mail order brides and the number of marriages that result from this method of matchmaking and/or international marriage brokers, it is necessary to review relevant literature that will

explain the online bride industry for Asian women, the idea of the Asian "exotic OTHER," the growth of the Human Trafficking industry, and the power and structured agency. This chapter reviewed the importance of the social construction of women and their images in the hope to shed some lights on the situation of online brides. The chapter also looked at how the media generally creates and reinforces images; the power and exploitation of women; and the culture, the societal, systematic and structural subordination of women, especially Asian women. The above criteria must be considered when analyzing the women's motivations and reasoning behind their decision to become "online brides." It is important to stress the complexity of the mail-order brides/online brides' industry and the actors involved. It is not simply an issue of poor Asian brides seeking rich husbands in a Western country or American men seeking to prey on vulnerable Asian women. The agency of Asian women participating in these relationships must be acknowledged. They actively participate in correspondence with American men through online brides' websites and if they become engaged and decide to move to the U.S., they are faced with a drastic cultural transition. They come to America and must navigate a new country and interact with a new culture and different social regime. They come with expectations that were formed from their cultural understandings and are embedded in their personal histories. The next chapter will discuss the methodologies utilized for this research project.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

The main goal of this study is to contribute and gain additional insights about the matchmaking industry, specifically through the analysis of Asian online-brides websites. It is the content of Asian online-brides web sites that matters in the current study, so customers' opinion/testimony research will also be included. A content analysis an appropriate method to examine the research hypotheses through analyzing the representation of women through the profiles and images that they advertised on this website and how and what these images symbolize. To review, my research questions are related to analyzing Asian online bride's websites to determine what elements and characteristics are used for profiles? Are there matching elements that are used consistently in the women's profiles? How do the images presented in the online advertisements via the profile descriptions and photos construct these women? The current research utilized a mixed methods approach in an examination of profiles of Asian women online brides at the website Asian Online Brides. There are two components to this research: (1) Content Analysis and (2) Visual Analysis.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a systematic, objective, and quantitative method for studying communication messages and developing inferences concerning the relationship between messages and their environment (Krippendorff, 1980). Even though it has existed for centuries as a form of scientific inquiry, its growth and expansion have been primarily spurred by the rise of mass media (Krippendorff, 1980). The rise of the Internet, a global,

decentralized network of hyperlinked multimedia objects, promises to have similar effects, opening additional realms for content analytic research and necessitating the development of new empirical techniques.

Quantitative content analysis can be applied to measure words, symbols, themes, characters, and it is a deductive way to explore research questions and hypotheses via predetermined categories. It allows testing theories empirically and generates new research ideas in an unobtrusive way. Assigning numeric values to content allows numeric descriptions and statistic inference (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991).

According to Krippendorff (2004), "Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their content (p.21)". Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (2005) identify content analysis as "the systematic assignment of communication content to categories according to rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those categories using statistical methods" (p.3). To Berelson (1952), "Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p.18).

Based on Berelson's definition, content analysis has three central characteristics: (1) objective: content analysis should be conducted in an objective way, without being biased or value-laden. Therefore, the best way to conduct a content analysis study is to train different coders/ judges to implement the coding process. (2) systematic: content analysis should be done in a systematic or consistent way, which means if the coding instrument is repeatedly used by other researchers, it still will be able to generate similar results over time. (3) generalizable: the results of content analysis should be generalizable

to the population from which the sample is drawn. The sample of the study must be representative and of sufficient size.

The research questions that may be addressed through content analysis are almost limitless, Holsti (1969) provides a useful three-part typology. First, researchers may focus on message content and meaning, such as efforts to assess the advertising and marketing content of messages or to make comparisons of messages via new media medium. Second, researchers may examine the backgrounds, histories, and events of messages. For example, psychologists may analyze the writings and conversations of patients to evaluate their state of mind. Finally, researchers may examine message effects, such as the voluminous research on the behavioral consequences of viewing television violence.

Some researchers argue that categories should focus exclusively on the manifest components of communications (Berelson, 1952), others attempt to assess hidden characteristics of communications employing judgmental scales. Some standard categories of content communication include the following: (1) the characteristics of messages such as length, (2) the frequency of how often an idea or subject arises in the data such as recurrent themes, (3) assessments of what message components are emphasized, what that specific message communicate to researchers (4) the relationship between message components, and (5) the number of qualifications made and associations expressed toward an idea or subject (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 40). Next, the researcher codes the sample of messages according to the categorization scheme developed and checks inter-coder reliability. Finally, the researcher analyzes and interprets the data collected.

To discover how the images presented in the online advertisements via the profile descriptions and photos construct these women as desirable mates, the researcher identified and then analyzed online-brides websites that present Asian women who are in search of a husband. The initial Google search for "online brides" revealed 31,800,000 results and for "mail-order brides" there were 3,810,000 results. The researcher reviewed ten websites that appeared in both searched terminologies. These included Loveme.com, Rosebrides.com, Fantasybrides.com, Lifepartnermatchmaker.com, RussianBrides.com, Chinesewifes.com, Globalladies.com, AsianBridesonline.com, Asian-women-online.com, and 1st-international.com. These websites are comprehensive commercial matchmaking websites. I poured over the opening pages of the websites and I clicked on, viewed and analyzed any large or prominent advertisements (related to the women's profiles) on the opening page. Since this research focused on Asian brides, I narrowed the search to "Asian mail-order brides" or "Asian online brides" and from the google results I selected three websites to research. However, some websites disappeared or required one to register as a member; others have merged together with other websites. I did not register for any of these websites so that I examined publically available content only. I did this so that I would view content that was available to everyone, not just website members. I collected data from 100 Asian women profiles on www.asianonlinebrides.com to understand the demographics and motivations of the women who use this website. The website was chosen because of its affiliation with *"A Foreign Affair."* This is one of the largest and most popular sites and is connected to other smaller dating service and correspondence agencies (See Loveme.com). Asianonlinebrides.com facilitates relationships between Asian women and primarily U.S. men through their website. The

75

researcher did not have to join the website as a paying member in order to view the profiles. No women and/or men were contacted, and the information collected and recorded was public to all website users.

Sample

The sample was selected purposively because of the dynamic aspect of the website. That is, to find the sample, all profiles were organized by recency of last login time. However, the sample could not be chosen randomly because the website organization of the profiles constantly changed. Neuendorf (2002) posits that a good rationale for nonrandom sampling is when there "is difficulty in creating a reasonable sampling frame" (p. 88). In this case, the changing organization of the website made it impossible to organize the profiles by recency for more than a few minutes at a time. Thus, it was impossible to create the sampling frame needed for a random sample. Because this was a convenience sample, the results cannot be generalizable to other Web sites or even to other users on Asianonlinebrides.com. However, this content analysis was conducted as an exploratory study to be used for the textual study, so it does not need to be generalizable. Since the results are not generalizable, 100 profiles were deemed a large enough sample to elicit important information for textual analysis. All profiles were saved until 100 profiles were accumulated. The first 150 women profiles viewed were saved, but only 100 profiles were used in the actual study. The extra profiles had been saved as a precaution in case a profile was accidently deleted. To determine which profiles were used, profiles were organized numerically based on their user ID numbers. The first ten profiles were used as samples to create the coder training sheets. The following 100 profiles were used as the sample.

Design and Measurement

The researcher coded the sample (n=100) exclusively to ensure validity and reliability. One focus was on the demographics of these women. The demographic categories featured the women's age, educational level, geographical location (general location rather than a specific town), marital status, profession, race, and religion were coded based on the profile information the users included when joining the website. For example, if the woman's location was unspecified, her area code was used to determine the state.

Additionally, the researcher reviewed and coded the descriptions of the women personality traits, physical characteristics and interests/hobbies. For example, some women described themselves as: sweet, nice, caring, devoted, innocent, gentle, shy, exotic, family oriented, clean, able to cook, beautiful, pretty, lovely, cute, innocent, young, sexy, and natural, etc. In this context, traditional gender roles were also analyzed, especially in terms of the types of preferred personality and physical characteristics and the different ways profile users (women) attempted to portray themselves as appealing mates (Appendix A).

The profiles were coded using the user ID number because of the dynamic aspect of web pages. Profiles were coded only if the women requested certain partner characteristics. I found this content by coding profile texts that included at least one description of the user's preferred mate. These included personality traits and physical characteristics as well as descriptions of the preferred mate's role in the household and gender roles. In particular, I noted how the profile texts used certain phrases or words

77

(i.e. "I want" or "I need"), and I observed the content for certain phrases that relate to social class or status such as "economic stability," "wealthy," and "budget."

After I coded my data, the lists of categories were grouped under other, larger categories or themes. The purpose of grouping data is to reduce the number of categories by combining those that are similar or dividing dissimilar ones into larger themes or categories (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). However, creating categories entailed more than simply combining observations that are similar or related. Instead, as Elo and Kyngas (2007) argue, data should be classified as belonging to a particular group and this implies a comparison between these data and other observations that do not belong to the same category. The main reason for creating categories was to provide a way to describe the phenomenon at hand, to increase understanding, and most importantly to generate knowledge (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). In an inductive content analysis, the researcher comes to a decision, through interpretation, as to which things to put in the same category.

Visual Analysis.

Historically, researchers who have used visual methodologies have been anthropologists, engaged in ethnographic studies, or individuals working in media studies (Emmison and Smith 2000). With these two groups, the images may help to 'tell a story', while the motivation might be to 'sell a story' only with the latter. According to a conversation with Dr. Margolis (2011), President, International Visual Sociology Association, the participants at the First International Visual Method Conference, included healthcare providers, educationalists, academics, sociologists, art therapists, environmentalists, criminologists, and artists. Such broad representation demonstrates

that there are an awareness and recognition of visual methodologies as accepted approaches to gathering data.

The types of imagery used in data gathering methodologies are still images, such as book illustrations, maps, postcards, photographs, paintings, drawings, and cartoons. However, fine art, advertising, signage and moving images such as films and TV programs, are also used (Pink, 2007; Emmison & Smith, 2000; Rose, 2007). This means that the visual researcher has a range of new media to explore, and therefore has to consider how the research question fits with a given research paradigm and the method of gathering the data. Some visual research traditions, such as those described by Cousin (2009), may help in the considerations. How images are generated or used can fall into several categories, such as: archival data, visual ethnography, visual as prompt, visual elicitation, self-driven visual elicitation, picture elicitation (or external-driven visual elicitation), and video diaries (Cousin, 2009).

There are many examples of these different approaches. Goffman (1979), for example, has used published advertisement images to investigate the issues of gender and power. Margolis (2004) took the same approach but used historic archival photographs of American Indian boarding schools to explore the "reality" that was constructed in these pictures. Pink (2007) used visual ethnography to explore the lives of people in different cultures.

In utilizing visual analysis as a component of this research, there are two key notions of 'framing' that are pertinent to this project: the application of framing analysis to visual images and the compositional framing of photographic images. Goffman in his *Framing Analysis* (1974) emphasized the reflexive aspects of social life (p. 9), that is, the

79

ways in which we think about what we do and how it affects the performance of the activity itself. Goffman defined a frame as a way of organizing experiences: we use frames to identify what is taking place. For instance, the images of a potential bride may be a trick, a warning, a lesson, an invitation and so on. Frame analysis is the study of the 'organization of experiences' (p. 10). The most fundamental frameworks are 'primary frameworks' which reveal what is 'really' happening either in the natural or social world. The meaning of a primary framework can be challenged in various ways. It can also be 'keyed'. Keying occurs when its meaning is transformed into something patterned on but independent of the initial frame (p. 45). Selecting those aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in this research, I will convey my informed assessment on certain events, and issues, but at the same time to promote the discussion of these women's interests and values.

For example, a keying may convince us that what appears to be a beautiful seductive woman is in fact just the opposite. However, caution is needed because every keying can itself be re-keyed. In addition to keys, there are 'fabrications' (p. 103). These are frames that are designed to mislead others. Fabrications are 'benign' when they are for the benefit of the audience or 'exploitative' when they are for the benefit of the fabricator. If the matchmakers are honest, they would argue that the Photoshop of those images are for the benefit of their customers (men). In an attempt to prevent the keying, re-keying, and fabrications of frames, we often attempt to 'anchor' them so that audiences can accept them as real. Here, the combination of beautiful images of women, their personal information, and different opportunity to contact and communicate with them present a symbolic realism (Cavender & Jurik, 2007, p. 286 -287).

My choice for a framing analysis of the photographic images posted on these websites of Online Brides industries is informed by three reasons. First, visual framing is closely related to the position of the point-of-view. The photographer, by making certain compositional choices (camera angle, focus, and distance), shows what is important and therefore introduces bias. Second, photographic images tell a story about the social actions performed by the depicted participants in order to promote themselves. Third, until now no one has used the visual framing analysis of photographic images of online brides. The photographic images uploaded on these online brides website play a significant role because they give us the ability to combine all the intuition, fact, abstraction, objective information, and other sources of intelligence to define and record our visual evidence as scientific literature (Collie and Collier, 1986, p.170). These visual media and messages increasingly dominate communications in contemporary society. Not to study how these messages are produced, what they encode, and how they are consumed ignores an important phenomenon that contains a rich source of easily available information.

Sample

I employed purposive (relevance) sampling to select women's pictures. Purposive sampling "involves the researcher making a decision as to what units he or she deems appropriate to include in the sample" (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 88). Purposive sampling uses a non-probability sample because of the nature of the research object (Riffe, Lacy, and Fico 2005). The sample was selected purposively because of the dynamic aspect of the website. In this case, the coded sample (n=100) of online brides

photographs is the same as the 100 profiles used in the content analysis. Thus, all photographs were saved with their profiles and were organized numerically based on their user ID numbers.

Design and Measurement

I examined the gender displays, picture frames, and gender commercials, for example, body language, clothing, skin, hair color, texture, bone structure, posture, etc. Photograph details consist of the explicitness of the photographs (fully clothed, lingerie/underwear, topless, nude, or pornographic), whether the woman's face was visible, blurred, or covered/cropped, and whether the photographs were of professional or home quality. These pictures provided a critical factor used to influence men is based upon our own perceptions about looks.

In designing the coding sheet, I focus on the three themes outlined in Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* (1979): Relative size, Feminine touch, and Ritualization of subordination. The coding sheet includes other categories that emerge from the data, allowing for the description of any noteworthy aspects of an image which may not be directly addressed in other areas of the sheet.

Relative Size is a terminology used when the images that are "differences in size will correlate with differences in social weight" (Goffman, 1979, p. 28). This was most frequently demonstrated when men and women were pictured together and the man was pictured as taller or bigger than the woman and/or took up more space in the image. In this research, I conceptualize relative size as the amount of physical space a woman occupy in each image.

82

Feminine Touch occurs when individuals are pictured as "just barely touching" themselves or an object. This is opposed to "the utilitarian kind [of touch] that grasps, manipulates, or holds" an object (p. 29). As indicated by the category name, Goffman found that this phenomenon occurs most often for women. To measure feminine touch, I looked to see if women were touching themselves or other objects in a non-utilitarian manner—such as caressing, cradling or tracing.

Ritualization of Subordination – Lastly, is ritualization of subordination. This occurs when individuals are portrayed showing deference or dependence by "lowering [themselves] physically," canting of the head or body, or leaning against or holding another person or object for support (p. 40-56). Codes for ritualization of subordination are fairly extensive and focused on body positioning such as whether a woman is pictured lying in bed or whether a woman is displaying any head or body canting.

Limitations

Also, I chose not to register for any of the websites and chose Asianonlinebrides.com where I collected data, and so I was only able to obtain public information on main pages of the websites. Perhaps if I had registered on the sites, additional information may have been presented for the analysis of my research questions. Moreover, I have not been able to interact with subjects or get the first-hand experience from brides-to-be and those who have recently married. As a result, I do not know if brides, in fact, do experience pressure from the website agents to submit certain photographs of or whether they have to write their profile in a certain way. Also, it would be interesting to interview potential brides and/or brides from different social

classes to learn about their matchmaking experiences, and whether their potential husband meets their expectation and/or preference that brides displayed on their profiles. Because many individuals have a hard time recognizing and understanding mass media's portrayal of reality from actual reality (Kane et al., 2000), doing qualitative interviews could enhance our knowledge on how brides truly feel. Rather than only deciphering how the media tells brides how they should feel and act, additional qualitative interviews would allow a researcher to report using additional information. This research could be enhanced if later on, I pursue qualitative interviews.

Overall, content analysis was a sufficient methodological approach that addressed my research objectives and answered my research question. I examined specific themes within the online bride's industry, therefore a content analysis was an appropriate method to extract and analyze the data that I collected.

CHAPTER 5

CONTENT RESULTS & ANALYSIS

This chapter is designed to contextualize the Asian online-brides and examine how the women's profiles communicate messages to their potential mates. In this chapter, I explore the following research questions: What are the demographics of Asian online brides pursuing Western mates? How do women describe themselves in their profiles? What elements and characteristics are used for profiles? Are there matching elements that are used consistently in the women's profiles? How do the profile descriptions construct these women as desirable mates, as docile and exotic Asian women? The decision to use a mixed methods approach in this dissertation allows the content data to be analyzed in-depth. In this chapter, I will briefly review the methodology used and then provide comprehensive information about the results of the content analysis.

As described in Chapter 4, this chapter utilized content analysis to examine the profiles on www.asianonlinebrides.com to understand the demographics and motivations of the women who use this website. The website was chosen because of its affiliation with A Foreign Affair, one of the largest and most popular global sites that is connected to other smaller dating services and corresponding agencies (See Loveme.com). This chapter analyzed 100 online profiles of women brides. The sample was a purposive sample. As noted before, nonrandom sampling is appropriate in situations that do not allow for a sampling frame (Neuendorf, 2002). This was determined to be the only option for this study because the website consistently updated profiles. Thus, while

85

profiles were chosen based on their last recent login, because the website consistently updated this information it was impossible to organize the profiles by any length of time. The choice to only includes recent users was to better ensure that the profiles selected were those of active users.

The profiles were coded based on categories regarding demographics of the users, personal traits, physical characteristics, interest/hobbies, preferred personal traits and physical characteristics as well as descriptions of husband's role in the household and gender roles. These categories are detailed in Chapter 4 and Appendix A.

In this chapter, the content analysis of the brides' profiles is reviewed first. Second, the insinuations of the profiles' content and the brides' narratives (the story that the bride is forming via her profile) are noted for their unique results. The analysis for this part will use only the content found in the content analysis sample but will refer to the literature review to better understand these brides to the study. Third, this chapter will focus on the idea of romanticism. This topic was added after discovering that many profile texts idealized relationships and men. This trend is interesting and needs to be analyzed. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the results.

Results and Analysis

The content analysis examined the demographics of the sample as well as topics relevant to the narratives. The demographic categories indicated that the geographical location consisted of 80 percent Chinese brides and the majority of those were from large, populated cities (Table 1). The majority (62 percent) of brides had educational levels at a college degree, three percent had a graduate degree (Table 2) and most of the

brides did not report their religion (75 percent). The sample showed that 44 percent of

the brides did not report their job title and/or profession (Table 3). Sales is the most

common profession (11 percent), following by Office Lady (8 percent), and Self

Employment (5 percent). These job labels were taken directly from the online profiles.

More than half the sample (55 percent) fall into the 18-25 years of age range (Table 4).

Only one percent of brides declared that they had "very good" English skills while fifty-

two percent of brides claimed that their English skills were poor and/or left it blank on

their profile (Table 5). This is beneficial to the online bride website who have

corresponding translation services.

Table 1: Geographic Location of Sample

Country		Actual number of female	Percentage of female (N100)
China	*Total*	80	80%
Shenzhen		(n=10)	10%
Nanning		(n=4)	4%
Cixi		(n=1)	1%
Zhanjiang		(n=13)	13%
Zengchen		(n=1)	1%
Guangzhou		(n=11)	11%
Hangzhou		(n=2)	2%
Changsha		(n=10)	10%
Nanchang		(n=11)	11%
Fushun		(n=1)	1%
Shenyang		(n=2)	2%
Chopngqing		(n=1)	1%
Zhenzhou		(n=2)	2%
LuoYang		(n=1)	1%
Hengyang		(n=2)	2%
Chengdu		(n=2)	2%
Laohe		(n=1)	1%
Taoyuan		(n=1)	1%
Lufeng		(n=1)	1%
Hunan		(n=1)	1%
Yongzhou		(n=1)	1%

Jiangsu	(n=1)	1%
Philippine	*Total* **18**	**18%**
Cebu City	(n=16)	16%
Davao City	(n=2)	2%
Thailand	*Total* **2**	**2%**
Bangkok	(n=2)	2%

Table 2: Education Level of Sample:

Level of Education	Actual number of female	Percentage of female (N100)
High school	(n=17)	17%
College	(n=62)	62%
University	(n=18)	18%
Graduate School	(n=3)	3%

Table 3: Job Title/ Profession of Sample

List Job title:	Actual number of female	Percentage of female (N100)
Blank	(n=45)	44%
Teacher	(n=4)	4%
Clerk	(n=3)	3%
Sales	(n=11)	11%
Nurse	(n=2)	2%
Business Owner	(n=1)	1%
Model	(n=3)	3%
Accountant	(n=2)	2%
Self-Employment	(n=5)	5%
Office Lady	(n=8)	8%
Architect	(n=1)	1%
Designer	(n=2)	2%
Financial Management	(n=4)	4%
Tour Guide	(n=2)	2%
Real Estate/Insurance Agent	(n=2)	2%
Production Operation	(n=3)	3%
Translator	(n=2)	2%
Lawyer	(n=1)	1%

Table 4: Age of Sample

Age:	Actual number of female	Percentage of female (N100)
18-21	(n=21)	21%
22-25	(n=34)	34%
26-30	(n=19)	19%
31-35	(n=13)	13%
36-40	(n=7)	7%
41-45	(n=4)	4%
46-50	(n=1)	1%
51-55	(n=1)	1%

Table 5: English Skills of Sample

English Skills	Actual number of female	Percentage of female (N100)
Blank	(n=35)	35%
Fair	(n=24)	24%
Poor	(n=17)	17%
Good	(n=23)	23%
Very Good	(n=1)	1%

The brides selected their marital status from four categories: Single, Single with children, Divorced, and Divorced with children. The sample was predominantly single brides (88 percent). However, an additional 10 percent were divorced and divorced with children. This implies that these divorced and divorced with children brides had been married at least once (Table 6). One bride included in this statistic number had been divorced twice but was only counted once for the purpose of this analysis.

Table 6: Marital Status of Sample

Marital Status:	Actual number of female	Percentage of female (N100)
Single	(n=88)	88%
Single w/child	(n=1)	1%
Single w/3 children	(n=1)	1%
Divorce w/o child	(n=7)	7%
Divorce w/1 child	(n=2)	2%
Divorce w/2 children	(n=1)	1%

The result showed that the entire sample (100 percent) included at least one self-descriptive reference. Slightly less common, but still prevalent, were references to husband preferences (95 percent) where 5 percent left it blank. After rigorous review of the content, the traits were organized into those that were most prominent: personality, hobbies, or physical characteristics. In this study, personality is used to refer to any (self or husband) personality traits including sweet, kind, innocent, beautiful, family-oriented, responsible, and honest. Hobbies describe activities that the brides profess to enjoy. Often these descriptions were concerned with traveling, dancing, cooking and reading. The following sections examine the descriptions within the profiles to provide a better understanding of the text. Predominant messages identified within the profile texts will be analyzed along with interesting outliers.

Self-Descriptions

Self-descriptions included in profiles provided information about the brides' self-perceptions and how they hoped to appear to others. A typical self-description could read: I am young, kind, loving, caring, pure and family-oriented. For example, a Chinese online bride named Gui, thirty-two years old, described herself by stating, "I am a pure, beautiful…and a gentle woman with tender feelings such as silk" (Sample ID: 04). I found, loyal, kind and innocent/pure to be common personality traits that the sample professed to share. Other common personality traits were stereotypical ideals of Asian women, as discussed by scholars Prasso, Uchida, Kim and Chung, Maderson, Hughes, and Constable; the traits often espoused were traditional, good wife, family-oriented, and sexy/exotic. A few profiles included nice, hard worker, well-educated, and confident

personality traits in their self-descriptions (Table 7). These are interesting outliers, especially when men want to find a wife who will be his lover and partner in life. Therefore, these traits would be important in looking for a wife/partner. Instead, the website agency and/or these brides chose to perpetuate the assumed and homogenized that all Asian women from developing countries as docile, traditional, submissive, sweet, innocent, and domestic so as to make them ideal wives in a traditional sense. The agency and these potential brides promoted themselves by calculating for men the benefit of getting married to an Asian bride. It is not wrong to condemn the business of these online agencies and men as complicit chauvinists who exploit and oppress women. However, doing so would be an oversimplified narrative to a more complicated issue. I found that the complicity in the interaction between the market mechanism and involved men from the structure/agent dynamic perspective: how the former stimulates the latter's desire for foreign brides and how the latter responds to the market phenomenon is interesting.

Table 7: Self-Description of Samples

Description of self	Actual number of female	Percentage of female (N100)
Sweet	(n=8)	8%
Kind	(n=35)	35%
Nice	(n=1)	1%
Innocent/Pure	(n=31)	31%
Caring	(n=11)	11%
Young	(n=7)	7%
Cute	(n=2)	2%
Virgin	(n=5)	5%
Gentle	(n=14)	14%
Sexy/Exotic	(n=20)	20%
Loyal	(n=21)	21%
Natural	(n=10)	10%
Traditional	(n=30)	30%

Beautiful	(n=18)	18%
Good Wife	(n=31)	31%
Family-oriented	(n=38)	38%
Well-educated	(n=6)	6%
Confident	(n=9)	9%
Hard-worker	(n=6)	6%

Although using this kind of degrading language to promote online brides in the profile has given rise to reproach in society (Bauer and Bell, 1999; Hall, 1997; Belleau 2003), it did draw the picture of ideal marriage which many Western men dream of; namely, that to buy one wife is to get free labor. The treatment of a wife as a free worker at home is taken for granted not only by potential husbands but, unfortunately, also by many Asian online brides. In reviewing the profiles, almost every bride described themselves with one of the following terms: family-oriented, good wife, or traditional Asian woman (Table 7).

Personality was often present in the self-descriptions of this study's profile texts, which coincides with other online profile personality and lifestyle descriptions of people looking for long-term relationships (Morgan, Richards, & VanNess, 2010). Xinxin stated, "I enjoy riding my bike very much, feeling the fresh air on my face is wonderful" (Sample ID: 75). Another online bride named Hao said that she loves to cook and is a very good cook who can make many delicious dishes. Hao further claimed that all her friends like her cooking (Sample ID: 73). Profile texts consistently mentioned family-oriented, kind, good wife and innocent/pure as the top three personality traits, with good wife and innocent/pure tie at third place (Table 7). For example, Nalyn, twenty-two years old, stated, "I'm attached to the most valuable tradition of Filipinos and that is being a family-oriented one" (Sample ID: 1). While Aimei declared that "I have all the

qualities to be a good wife…I was born to make you the happiest man in the world"
(Sample ID: 16). Again, Aimei just demonstrated that Asian online brides are willing to
take care of their husband without any negotiation and considered it the wife's obligation
and/or duty as a good wife. These brides portraying the message that they are innocent
and simple that they have yet to be contaminated by our complicated society.

Self-personality traits within this study are closely associated with stereotypical
views of Asian women as traditional, docile, and as an exotic image. In her scholarly
work, Prasso (2005) demonstrates that stereotypes such as these do not represent all of
the Asian women. In her work (2005), she gave an example of the Bars of Bangkok.
Western men who wanted to feel a sense of dominance, power, and masculinity went to
those bars, and there were Asian women who wanted to have new experiences with
Western men, wanted to marry a Westerner so that she could have a better life, or worked
for the good money. According to Prasso, those Asians do not represent all of the Asian
women just like those men do not represent all of the Western men. Because there is
demand, the supply follows (p. 389).

Research has documented Asian fetishes and fantasies (Prasso, 2005; Uchida,
1998), and as such, this research examined whether these online brides purposefully
perpetuated the Asian Mystique and the view of Oriental women for their benefits. One
bride named Hong wrote, "I am a gentle, exotic, noble lady in the east China" (Sample
ID: 28). Another bride named Youcui stated "I am a perfect Oriental girl…I am a virgin"
(Sample ID 57). The word Oriental denotes false assumptions based on the colonial
mentality of the West. It represents Eurocentric prejudice against the East. As a
European invention, the Orient had been a romantic and exotic place and people.

93

According to Said (1979), these false and romanticized images of the far East Asia have served as an implicit justification for the West's colonial and imperial ambitions. Therefore, Orientalism is distorted knowledge completed by the history of the West's colonialism and political dominion over the far East Asia. It is the West's definitions of 'other' who are weak and irrational and hence need to be tamed by 'us' who are strong and rational and hence are able to control (Said, 1979). By framing herself as a "perfect Oriental girl", Youcui implies she is inferior, submissively sensuous, and passive in sex role. Moreover, by stating that she is a "virgin," she is letting her potential husband knows that she is innocent and pure. Youcui projects a specific image for her potential husband and thus becomes the object of his erotic fantasies and sexual longings. Filling a potential husband's mind with a powerful sexual fantasy and claiming his attention can produce positive and negative results (Kilbourne, 2010; Prasso 2005; Hall, 1997; Scholes, 1999). One of the negative results is sex trafficking. Many scholars have argued that many online bride agencies are connected with human trafficking; where many brides were lured to become sex slaves (Hughes, 2001; Raymond & Hughes, 2001; Bales, 2004; Farr, 2005; Aronowitz, 2009). On the other hand, it could be seen as positive because Youcui knows and understands that by creating this imagery she is empowering herself to be selected by her future husbands. This could provide her the multiple options of men that she could pick and choose. Thus, she is creating her own agency through the words of her profile.

Despite a majority of the profile texts containing stereotypical Asian Mystique personality traits, not all of them did. Some online brides included words such as hard worker, confident and well-educated in their personality self-descriptions. For instance,

Ruby described herself as a smart, independent, successful business owner who is well-educated (Sample ID: 80). Lily wrote that she is a successful and intelligent woman who wants to share her inner beauty to her potential husband (Sample ID: 30). Another bride named Xiaobing described herself as "well-educated, living with a well-educated family, and has a rich and fulfilling life" (Sample ID: 62). The words smart, intelligent, and well-educated are not stereotypically of Asian Mystique, so this statement represents a difference from the others. However, these statements can be viewed as less positive than one that includes the phrase "knows how to keep her man happy" or "I am ready to sacrifice my own life for my beloved man" (Sample ID: 65). The stereotypical statement assumes it is the bride's job is to please her husband. It also insinuates that heterosexual men unsatisfied with their relationships can blame it on their brides who have failed to keep them "happy."

Other online brides chose both the traditional Asian women stereotypical and non-traditional (modern) words in their self-descriptions. For example, a bride might write that she is an Asian woman who sees herself as smart and beautiful, who is independent and feminine; who is attractive and can have a relationship even while holding down a demanding job. Although these women appear progressive, they still are preoccupied with beauty and appealing to the male gaze. I also found that there is a discrepancy on one profile who reported her job title as an assistant but in her self-description section, she stated that is a "well-educated, hard-working…lawyer in Guangzhou" (Sample ID: 61). I wonder if the founded inaccuracy was actually common in online profiles or not.

Hobbies Self-Descriptions

Sharing hobbies and interests were an important part of online brides' self-descriptions. Online brides focused on their interests and pastimes. This category was included to better understand the women in this study. Many profiles emphasized the active side of their lifestyle. For instance, one online bride named Haiyan wrote that she likes to go swimming, bowling, and running with friends (Sample ID: 70). Another bride named Yuanyuan claimed that she has a nice figure because she works as a yoga instructor for a health club. She said she loves it because it helps relax both body and mind (Sample ID: 67). I found that older online brides tended to emphasize less of their sport and/or active lifestyle interests than younger brides. A typical example of this was when the section was left blank or with minimal words such as, "I'm okay."

Another common interest was traveling. The brides' interest in using an international online brides' website may be partially connected to an interest in traveling and culture. For example, forty-three percent of women mentioned traveling as their favorite hobby (Table 8) and that they are willing to be a travel guide for their potential husband when he traveled to their country to see them. The idea of a Western husband moving to a foreign bride's country is not something mentioned often by these online brides. Only one bride wrote that she is willing to relocate to the husband's country if their relationship evolved to that point (Sample ID: 100), while the rest of the brides did not mention if they want to stay in their country should her husband wants to move there permanently. One bride named Janthima said, "I would be very happy if he like Thailand and understand Thai['s] culture" (Sample ID: 86). Her statement merely hopes that her future husband will like her country and culture but does not indicate that he would live

96

there. If these women want to leave their country, they need to be mindful that some older men may prefer to move to a tropical country (from male testimonials) and thus their discussion of international travel as a hobby and/or wanting to live in the United States can create a challenge for migration for these online brides.

Table 8: Hobbies of Samples

Hobbies	Actual number of female	Percentage of female (N100)
Cooking	(n=38)	38%
Housekeeping	(n=2)	2%
Shopping	(n=6)	6%
Traveling	(n=43)	43%
Dancing	(n=24)	24%
Reading	(n=28)	28%

For thirty-eight percent of the potential brides, cooking was considered the second hobby in ranking for these online brides while only two percent reported housekeeping as their hobby. As discussed in Chapter 3, it is important to recognize these hobbies as they are embedded in the relationship between being a traditional Asian woman who is family-oriented and described Asian household structures. For example, Victoria wrote that "I have inherited the Chinese traditional virtues" (Sample ID: 9); while she does not list those virtues, the 'idea' of "Chinese traditional virtues" implies specific meanings of (appearance, work, correct speech, and proper behavior). It is important to look at these hobbies in the study because as part of Asian culture, Confucianism teaches how women should be and the traditional patriarchal relationships in our society (Nguyen, 2008; Wells, 2006). These traditional virtues related to both Confucianism and patriarchy were described in detail in Chapter 3.

Similar to hobbies related to the 'traditional Asian woman', descriptions of household structures appeared throughout texts and were sometimes very explicit. About thirty percent of the women described themselves as traditional, thirty-eight percent said they were family-oriented, and thirty-one percent wrote that they know how to be a good wife (Table 7). This implied that the men would be the head of a patriarchal household and the husband would fill the role of breadwinner while the brides would be the housewife. One online bride wrote that her goal in life is to be a good housewife and a mother (Sample ID: 64). Another said, "I am mature enough to please my man…and willing to do everything for him" (Sample ID: 41). More in-depth analysis of household structures will be described in chapter 7 of the men's testimonial section.

Overall, the brides' profile texts focused on either an active lifestyle or something relating to traveling or cooking. I did not expect twenty-eight percent of the brides to choose reading and dancing (24 percent) as hobbies.

Physical Characteristics Self-Descriptions

Another substantial part of the self-descriptions was physical characteristics. The brides' profile texts mentioned their own physical appearance, often emphasizing attractiveness or athleticism. One bride described herself as "tall slim and fit (enjoy running)" (Sample ID: 53). Other brides reported that they had black hair (100 percent) and the majority indicated that they had long hair (88 percent). This is important because hair length and color related to sexy, exotic, and traditional Asian woman. According to Patti Stanger, the host of The Millionaire Matchmaker TV show, men often are attracted to women with dark and long hair. Also, in Vietnamese culture, women were judged by

how long and thick their hair was before they receive a marriage proposal. According to older ladies who verbally passed down the tradition to the younger generation that long hair signifies the health of the lady and the thickness of the hair implied the ability to have many children.

Surprisingly, all eighteen brides from the Philippine reported their physical measurements, especially bust, waist, and hip while all Chinese and Thailand brides did not provide these measurements. By including an exact bust, waist, and hip measurement these brides are attempting to use their body to appeal to their audience (average bust size of 34.82 inches, waist 24.66, and hips 34.55). These brides are self-objectifying by advertising their physical characteristics to potential husbands. Women are typically associated with physical self-objectification more often than men (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Since we are a culture obsess with breasts and breasts are used to sell absolute everything (Kilbourne, 2010). Therefore, this finding was not surprising as the societal value placed on this statistic.

Table 9: Physical Description – Weight of Sample

Weight	Actual number of female	Percentage of female (N100)
70-80	(n=2)	2%
81-90	(n=8)	8%
91-100	(n=12)	12%
101-110	(n=47)	47%
111-120	(n=20)	20%
121-130	(n=9)	9%
131-140	(n=1)	1%
161-170	(n=1)	1%

Table 10: Physical Description – Height of Sample

Height	Actual number of female	Percentage of female (N100)
4'10	(n=5)	5%
4'11	(n=2)	2%
5'0	(n=4)	4%
5'1	(n=2)	2%
5'2	(n=10)	10%
5'3	(n=9)	9%
5'4	(n=14)	14%
5'5	(n=18)	18%
5'6	(n=23)	23%
5'7	(n=11)	11%
5'9	(n=2)	2%

Preferred Husband Descriptions

An additional part of the profile that I researched were potential husband descriptions. Many of the profiles listed specific characteristics they were looking for in husbands, while some preferences were written as passable requests or wishes. Some profiles framed their preferences as inflexible demands. The most popular and frequently preferred personality traits reflected were for a concern for relationship stability, including the terms: responsibility, honest, kind and mature. Other common husband personality traits were used in the profiles were prince, older man, and family-oriented. Other personality traits included words such as romantic, caring, loving, gentleman, loyal and fit. A trait such as a father-figure was surprisingly present. Overall, most profile texts used rhetoric phrases in this section of the online profile (Table 11). An example of one of the rhetoric phrases was "I'm looking for my man who's loving, caring, kind, patient and understanding…I want a sincere and true man, not someone who's only looking for fun" (Sample ID: 1). By beginning this statement with the phrase "I'm

looking for" and "I want" this profile text contained a direct request and reflects language in a contract of a buyer and seller. A more demanding example is illustrated by the following profile text, "Has to be [a] God-fearing man…[A man] who will be with me 'till forever" (Sample ID: 3). This text frames the request in contractual language by using "has to have." The result is that the preferences seem non-negotiable.

Table 11: Rhetoric of Samples

Phrases used on profiles	Actual number of female	Percentage of female (N100)
"I want"	(n=36)	36%
"I need"	(n=11)	11%
"I desired"	(n=20)	20%
"I'm seeking"	(n=5)	5%
"I'm looking for"	(n=18)	18%

Many brides preferred an older man as a husband (Table 12). Xiaohong wrote, "I'm hoping I can find a man who is much older than me" and explained it was because she wants to have that sense of financial security and maturity in her husband (Sample ID: 29). Another bride named Yue stated, "I'd like a mature man who is much older than me because I always admire my father who is a successful man in every areas. I like someone older than me can bring me the love of my father" (Sample ID: 54). The connection between older man, father-figure, and marriage is interesting. There are several explanations. For example, it is possible that the population of potential husbands belong to a group of men who are older than potential brides. Very frequently older men may be financially secure and are potentially better prospects than younger men. Although older men may not be perfect, younger brides can be viewed as trophy brides and men may be more willing to accept imperfections in younger women. It appears that the textualization takes the form of marketing the women. It shows women in two

prospectives (traditional, and also as sexual and desirable). The women describe their

desired men as Disney like characters- and very different from the men in their "home

countries. It is one thing to prefer a husband who is mature and older than you in age but

looking for a father-figure in a potential husband can lead to disastrous results for this

bride. A father is more likely to love his daughter unconditionally. A husband's loves

for his wife is not unconditional. He will be looking at a woman's personal and physical

traits to see whether there is any compatibility. He will look at other variables before

making the decision whether he loves and/or wants to marry this woman as his future

wife. A husband can love his wife today and divorce her later. Such requests from Yue

and other brides are harder to meet for their personal and psychological needs.

Table 12: Husband Preference of Samples

Description of husband	Actual number of female	Percentage of female (N100)
King/Prince/Knight	(n=37)	37%
Responsible	(n=38)	38%
Mature	(n=21)	21%
Older man	(n=32)	32%
Family-oriented	(n=21)	21%
Loving	(n=15)	15%
Caring	(n=13)	13%
Kind	(n=28)	28%
Honest	(n=34)	34%
Father figure	(n=10)	10%
Romantic	(n=18)	18%
Gentleman	(n=4)	4%
Loyal	(n=14)	14%
Fit	(n=1)	1%

Moreover, if all of the couples reflected a wide age-gap, the older men's age

range might be from 40s -70s, while the bride's age range was from 18-55 from our

sample, managing the age difference could be a source of conflict. What if the bride,

now a wife, wants to have a child but he cannot and/or he no longer wants to have children because he is already old. Also, many of the brides will be in their first marriages (88 percent) and had not had the chance to bear children. It is not difficult to assume and understand why they desire children later in their marriages. The husbands, on the other hand, especially older men and/or father-figure, were either in their second or third marriages and therefore believed they are either too old to have children or they no longer wish to have any since they already have children from their previous marriages. Although many of the online brides said that the age differences were relatively minor concerns, several described that these differences did present some difficulty in managing their relationships.

Many brides prefer a responsible husband (38 percent). According to these brides, this is a code word for economic and financial stability. A bride named Ma Angelica illustrates this well when she wrote: "I want a man who's responsible…capable of taking care of me for the rest of our lives" (Sample ID: 96). One bride said "I want him to be responsible" but then elaborate that he needed to have a stable job to take care of her and treat her like a princess (Sample ID: 21). Another stated that she wants to find a financially stable man to take care of her and her family. Statements such as these often become stereotypes that all foreign brides are financially motivated to seek Western men (i.e., they are "gold diggers"). Moreover, this text can lead to the idea that potential husbands are more economically successful than foreign brides. Thus, it interprets transnational relationships from a First World viewpoint.

The perception of impoverished foreign brides may also encourage a rescue fantasy among some men. For example, the following bride appears to look for a hero to

rescue her. She said, "I don't want to find a man in China. I admire western culture and living style. You are my hope. You are who I am looking for. I want you to be my knight to always rescue me and protect me." Men interested in saving these "damsels in distress" may imagine themselves as saviors to Third World women (Schaeffer-Grabiel, 2006), and online brides' agencies sometimes capitalize on this within their advertisements (So, 2006). Asserting a form of agency, these brides had continued to resist the tradition of marrying within your own kind and are, instead, looking to marry Western men, whom they had been socialized to believe are more loyal, considerate, and less demanding than their local counterparts.

For those brides who wanted a responsible man to care for her and her family, these brides believe they owe their parents the gift of life and that they are required to repay this debt as long as they live (Bale, 2004, p. 39). These women believe that they are expected to contribute to their families' wellbeing. There are deep historical roots as to why Asians place such tremendous value and priority on the family (Yutang, 1935). This vision of the "extended family" predominates in the Asian culture. According to Nguyen (2008), the Asian family as a household consists of a father, mother, and children, but is usually relationally extended among a wider kin group. Even if members of a kin group do not live together, they are expected to take part in family activities as well as to help family members during hard times (Wells, 2006). For many of the Western husbands, this posed a challenge for they found themselves in many instances having to support the "extended family" in so far as sending other siblings to school, providing financial support to parents and other members of the kin (Belanger & Le

2011; Belanger & Tran, 2011; Pessar & Mahler 2003). This could create some conflict in their relationships based on their different culture.

Although poverty is a common stereotype of foreign brides, it is often not true (Constable, 2003; Luehrmann, 2004). In fact, some foreign brides may be highly educated, economically successful, and/or come from privileged families (Constable 2003; Constable 2005; Johnson, 2007). Even though the majority of the brides' profiles did not state whether they are rich or financially successfully, there were some brides who stated that they are successful. For example, Bonnie described that she is lucky to be born in a rich family where her parents take care of everything and they help her a lot in financing her business. Therefore, she does not care if her husband is rich or not (Sample ID: 18).

Descriptions by brides of the preferred physical characteristics of a husband do not exist in the profiles, except for one bride's profile that stated that she wants her future husband to be healthy and fit. By not focusing on the physical appearance of the potential husbands, these women will not eliminate any potential candidates based on physical characteristics. Most of the brides did not have any interest in the physical traits of their preferred husband; personal characteristics were highlighted as more important.

Recurrent themes

Disney/Fairy Tales

Women often speak of their dream man/husband like a fairy tale but fairy tales often reveal characteristics of relationships that depict internal tensions surrounding gender, class, marriage, and global and national politics (Constable, 2003, p.92). In a

105

famous Disney story, Cinderella, it serves to bring family values and sex together without ever having to explicitly allude to sex (p. 95). Similarly, Asian online brides refer implicitly to sexuality under the veil of family values, love, and marriage. Like Cinderella, Asian brides' are often thought of as poor, innocent/pure, young women who are beautiful, gentle and kind. The idea of a fairy tale continues for these brides throughout the profile narrative as they share the traditional value of responsibility, home, and family.

> Bonnie Jean wrote "I will love a man that is nice and brave to protect me from any danger. I want a prince" (Sample ID: 60).

> Angela said "I am a virtuous, sentimental and loving woman…I long to have a romantic life with my prince" (Sample ID 14).

> Angel stated, "I can be a good and perfect wife for my beloved prince" (Sample ID: 33).

> Sherry described she wants a family-oriented, romantic and passionate man to be her prince and she will love and follow him forever (Sample ID: 6).

The idea of being rescued from menial labor in their countries and shabby clothes by way of marriage to a Western hero prince follows the idea of the brides and husbands similar to that of the damsel in distress and her hero prince in fairy tales.

Descriptions of potential mates as perfect individuals were also present. For instance, descriptive words such as king, prince or knight were used as the second highest word used for husband preferences, and this type of language is reminiscent of an ancient era because it puts men on a pedestal. Words such as queen and princess also indicate a

patriarchal relationship revolving around the king. Some profiles reflect this: "He will treat me like a princess." Or "I will be the Queen of his Castle!" These statements indicate that the husband will support, provide, and protect the woman he marries. It reflects the bride's interest in a household structure where the man occupies a masculine and patriarchal (king) role and the woman the compliant and domestic (queen) role.

The Good Life and Ideal Husband

Many of the women who have online profiles proclaim very romantic ideas in their search for a husband abroad. Conjuring up images of Hollywood husbands and driven by idealized notions of the American Dream, these descriptions insinuate the desire to find a 'better life.' While a 'better life' may naturally include a compassionate husband with a house and children, perhaps the strongest underlying theme among the women in search of a 'better life' is the desire to improve their socio-economic opportunities (Hughes, 2004). Hughes stated that "women accept risky offers of... marriage in hope of finding a better life" (p. 49). The overwhelming majority of countries that supply the mail-order bride industry are poor and/or in some form of transition (Clark, 2004, p.18). As a result of struggling economies, many of the source countries suffer from high unemployment and limited professional opportunities for women (ILO, 2003). These dire economic realities often have the harshest effect on young women (Human Rights Watch, 2003). This fact is directly correlated with the cross-section of women profiled online. While the ages of the women range from 18 to 55, the majority of women online, and those ultimately most successful in finding a husband are in their twenties (Scholes, 1999).

Furthermore, a number of social and cultural factors may encourage women to become online brides. For instance, in some countries like China and Viet Nam, there is intense pressure for women to marry, and an unmarried woman of thirty is essentially considered an old maid. In addition to the increasing difficulty of finding a mate, many women are also trying to escape harsh domestic realities that cultivate high rates of alcoholism and condone domestic violence (Vu, 1999; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 2008). Thus, for many of the women who put their best face forward on the internet, the arrangement is not only personal and romantic but also economically practical and socially necessary.

Recognizing these unique economic and cultural circumstances, online bride websites capitalize on the Hollywood notions of Western men being both emotionally and financially superior. Indeed, "[t]he purpose behind the perpetuation of these stereotypes is to convince clients [the brides] that they are getting a higher quality mate than they could find in their home country" (Mobydeen, 2004). Conversely, the international marriage brokers remain attuned to the desires of Western men and advertise their brides "(implicitly, or in some cases, explicitly) as submissive, docile, faithful and loving domesticated wives who are looking to build a traditional, old-fashioned home in which they will cater to their man" (Clark, 2004, p.19).

QinXue, an online bride, described what it meant to have a good life with her future husband,

> A good life is one that I find a foreigner as husband…we can travel around the world together, play golf with my parents in the free time…teach you…yoga…so we can do yoga together…make a warm family together…I don't care you are rich or poor…I don't care your age…your appearance…just want to love each other and we can live near the ocean.

108

It is perhaps not difficult to understand why QinXue's definition of a good life translates to financial security, given the economic and social conditions that have served as a backdrop to this women's current lifestyle and circumstances. Her definition of a good life contradicts itself. While she states that she does not care whether her husband is rich or poor, she also wants to travel around the world, playing golf, and have a place near the ocean, which require a substantial amount of money. She also claimed that she is a virgin and has not done anything with another man. And she wants to know what man wants her first time? (Sample ID: 58). A majority of the women focus on what they want, need, desire, and/or are looking for in a man. Therefore, not many women described what a good life is and/or potential future life is going to look like.

The online brides describe the "ideal husband" almost identically. The common characteristics of an 'ideal husband' were: responsible, honest, kind, and older man. It is important to mention that about ninety-two percent of all Filipina brides want a God-fearing man as their ideal man. Other brides requested their future husband be romantic, understanding, reliable, and that the man has the ability and willingness to support the immediate and extended family. For instance, Cecilia expressed that she desires "a man with a warm big heart who can take his promises and make some action to make it happen…Of course, I will be very happy if you are a giving gentleman when we are together" (Sample ID: 98). Another bride named Christian May who is looking for a man who is "romantic, responsible, faithful and loyal." A man who will love her and her family and is willing to care for her parents (Sample ID: 84).

One can see the similarities and parallels in all of the women's answers with regard to their notion of an 'ideal husband.' This consistency in their descriptions was perhaps prompted by the women's similar past experiences in many of their relationships with local men. One bride emphasized the qualities of responsibility, honesty, and loyalty as must-haves for her future husband because she had negative experiences in her previous relationships with her ex-husband cheating on her (Sample ID: 50). This lack of faith and trust in the local men was also echoed by another bride. "I'm only interested in a western man…they are kinder, more caring and loving…they are more responsible and help me when I needed" (Sample ID: 37). One bride named Parichat demanded a foreign husband because he will have leadership qualities and not that of a dictator (Sample ID: 40).

Again in these articulations, there were the emergence of the qualities of dependability and reliability. The characteristics described by these women in their explication of what an 'ideal husband' entails are described in relationship to inadequacies they have discovered in the local men they have met and with whom they had established relationships. While some of these women magnified economic and financial security as one of the primary reasons why they chose Western men over local men, perhaps other factors such as the perceived inadequacy of local men may have also contributed to the increased desirability and appeal of Western men.

This line of thought is consistent with Constable's (2003) assertion that "political economy—global and local patterns of power—plays a role in these relationships and in the gender ideologies that promote a perception of the attractiveness and desirability of western (usually white) men and Asian women" (p. 28). Constable asserts that even

110

though social inequalities invoked by the political economy in these women's countries as well as issues of gender, race, and imperialism may have goaded these women to choose to marry foreign men, it did not preclude their opportunity to make informed decisions for themselves. Constable (2003) argues that these women, by virtue of choosing foreign men over the local men (in this case choosing the dependable over the unreliable) are exerting their own individual self-agency. The online brides are making choices and negotiating contextual constraints such as poverty in choosing to better their circumstances.

What would be interesting to see is if this preference for Western men over local men would prevail, if local men became transformed from the "perceived unreliable" to the "perceived reliable" and financially productive. Although it is important to recognize the diversity and the heterogeneity in these women's experiences, their beliefs, and their personal and individual circumstances; it is also just as noteworthy to recognize the patterns of similarities that emerged in their discourses as they related their notion of the 'ideal husband.'

Romanticism

One unexpected trend in the texts was the amount of overly romantic and unrealistic language used. Romantic language was not included in any of the categories that were used for coding. However, during the content analysis, it became clear that this was a common element within profile texts that was so prevalent it could not be ignored in the textual analysis. Previous research about the Asian online bride industry has not addressed the romantic language women used, making this result an interesting development.

The language used in many profile texts is unrealistic and idealizes relationships and partners. Even more perplexing, some of the brides in the research had been married at least once. Instead of becoming disillusioned with marriage and long-term relationships, these brides professed to still be looking for their soul mate. The term soul mate, or words that conveyed the same expectations, were used in about a third of the sample to describe their preferred husband. For example, one bride wrote, "I am enjoying my life, and want to find and share it with my soul mate" (Sample ID: 33). Statements such as these could indicate an unrealistic anticipation of finding the perfect mate. For example, Wendy described that

> I believe in LOVE…and finding my soulmate…he knows what love is…he will bring warm and happy family…a life where we can read together, laugh together, run our family together and together we will redefine the meaning of love…we will walk hand in hand in the sunset when we grow old…he is my Mr. Right!

By using phrases such as "together we will redefine the meaning of love," this bride romanticizes the concept of an intimate relationship. Although she has not yet found a husband (based on the profile text), she is envisioning a romance that stretches beyond imagination in depth and greatness. This type of language indicates an idealization of relationships, something that can be a precursor to distressed marriages (Constable, 2003 & 2012). It is difficult to determine how many of the profiles that women put online were copied and how many of the men that are expected include classical American profiles

The Asian's romanticization of the United States has long been apparent. As Constable (2003) talked about this positioning of the U.S. as the place of 'fantasy.' To

112

many Asians, America represents a place where they can obtain what cannot be had in their home country.

In this backdrop, it is important to mention that some ambivalence and uncertainty toward the romanticization of the America/West will set in full motion once the brides arrived or settled in the United States. The need for them to learn a new language and acquire new communication skills crucial in their interracial/intercultural marriages and relationships was overshadowed by the myth and the desire for arrival in the "fantasy land." For many of these women, the hurdles they encountered in their marriages and the obstacles they faced in adjusting to life in the United States may have tempered their earlier extreme admiration and valorization of Western life. It would be interesting to see if this would also be the case for the online brides once they come to leave their countries to live in the West.

Conclusion

This study found that many profiles engaged in consumerist language and referenced gender roles and household structures. Although not initially part of the study, romanticism emerged as a common theme throughout the profiles. The textual analysis added to the findings of the content analysis. My textual analysis allowed me to use the results of the content analysis to set the criteria for doing the textual analysis. For instance, romanticism was noticed in the quantitative study. The textual analysis compliments the content analysis by adding a level of depth to the quantitative study (Neuendorf, 2002).

113

By analyzing the personality traits often centered on issues of trust, although stereotypical heteronormative masculine and feminine images were also often present. Descriptions of physical characteristics often objectified brides. It was interesting to see that many of the women's profiles included preferences for older men as father figures. Additionally, Western men added stability to a relationship. Moreover, women held on to their dreamlike fantasies. It appears that the texts allow for flexibility that could not be included in a strictly structured "romantic" web site. In the following chapter, the visual analysis of all the profiles' pictures will be presented and discussed.

CHAPTER 6

VISUAL ANALYSIS

In *Gender Advertisement* (1979) Erving Goffman uses one of the most important tools that will be utilized in this chapter, visual analysis. This type of analysis provides a way to understand our visual culture and the way it links up with the important issues of gender and power. The book is less about the effects of advertising on us and much more about what advertising tells us about ourselves.

> "Advertisements depict for us not necessarily how we actually behave as men and women but how we think men and women behave. This depiction serves the social purpose of convincing us that this is how men and women are, or want to be, or should be, not only in relation to themselves but in relation to each other" (Goffman, 1979. vii).

Goffman believes that images fall into a certain categories. For example, he arranged pictures under the categories of "The Feminine Touch," "Relative Size," "Function Ranking," "The Ritualization of Subordination," "Licensed Withdrawal" etc. For this research, I focus on two categories: The Feminine Touch and the Ritualization of Subordination. These categories provide a lens for understanding the visual images of these online brides.

I utilize visual analysis to examine the images on www.asianonlinebrides.com to understand the visible and invisible of the women who posted their pictures on this website. A picture is a visual indicator of what can be seen and interpreted. A picture is visible by way of bodily signs and invisible through that which exceeds the photograph, the beliefs, ideas, attitudes, and structural components that tacitly inform interpretations

of images. I selected this website because of its affiliation with *A Foreign Affair*, one of the largest and most popular global sites that is connected to other smaller dating services and corresponding agencies (See Loveme.com). In this chapter, I analyze 100 online profile pictures of women brides. These images represent a purposive sample. As noted before, nonrandom sampling is appropriate in situations that do not allow for a sampling frame (Neuendorf, 2002). This was the best option for my study because the website consistently updated profiles and/or images. Thus, while the profile images were selected based on their last recent login, it was impossible to organize the profile images by any length of time because of the constant updating of images. The choice to include recent users was to ensure that the profile images selected were those of active users.

The images were originally coded based on Goffman's categories regarding "The Feminine Touch," and "The Ritualization of Subordination;" however, as the analysis progressed, I included other categories that emerged from the data, allowing for the description of any noteworthy aspects of an image which may not have been directly addressed in Goffman's two areas. These additional emergent categories are explained in more detail in Chapter 4 and Table 13.

In the last chapter, Chapter 5, the focus was on the written content of the online brides' profiles and this chapter, Chapter 6, focuses on the visual analysis of the photographs presented by the brides. These chapters are two sides of the analytic coin: the written and the visual. This chapter will first focus on Goffman's visual analysis categories: (1) the gender displays of these images; (2) the feminine touch; (3) the ritualization of subordination; and then it will examine (4) the women's agency and constrained agency as part of this analysis. In addition to the Goffman's categories, I

116

have included subcategories under the ritualization of subordination section to further the observations of these profile images. These subcategories include women pictured in poses such as sitting on the floor/bed, reclining in bed, with bent knees or with the body or head canted, and also depictions that I describe as fantasies. In this chapter, I attempt to understand what these visual images symbolize and how they accomplish these meanings.

Gender Displays

Goffman says that perhaps the most negative thing that we can say about these gender displays in ads is that they do not look strange to us, that is, as depictions of reality they do not look peculiar or weird (p. 2-3). His comment is an apt description of the images in my sample. For example in Figure 1, the online brides actually appear to be relatively normal and in socially acceptable poses. However, when we look more carefully at them, we begin to see how problematic they actually are and only then, do we begin the process of thinking independently about these photos. These displays, then, provide evidence of the women's "alignment in the situation" (p.1). These brides' appearance informs those who witness her through her pictures. These images provide information about her social and cultural identity, mood, intent, and create an invitation for contact and interactions between her and her future husband.

In every culture, there are spoken or unspoken guidelines about what are appropriate behaviors and appearances. In my sample, a bride's gesture, her expression, and her posture reveal so much about her, her situation, and her cultural values. Each culture is different, and there are different social expectations for men and women. The

117

advertisement pictures of these brides do not tell us how these women actually behave but their images, nonetheless, convey meanings about them. If gender is informed by culture, then gender display refers to the typical portrayals of gender characteristics that women inherit genetically or learn through their environment. Goffman suggested that we need to review what our culture holds up as normal, which will help us to see some of the deepest aspects of our identities (p. 7). We have to go outside ourselves to see the messages that surround us.

In a way, people have to become visual anthropologists who look at a world that seems familiar and natural, but in reality, has underlying messages that we should analyze. Visual analysis teaches us to look at advertising in a way that provides some analytical distance from it. If we can do that, we can analyze the smallest details of these women's images that envelope us. We can use the same meticulous care and attention to detail in our analysis that accompanied the production of the images in the first place. By so doing, we can offer analytic insights about the creation of the images and the meanings that they convey.

In examining the gender display of the women's online profile pictures, the clothing that these brides wear in an entry point for understanding the different messages that these brides want to convey to their viewers/potential husband. As we can see in table 13, only six women are fully clothed; the remainder of the women wear lingerie, underwear, a swimming suit, or sexy/revealing dresses. Only three of the seventy who wore lingerie, underwear and/or a swimming suit are wearing shorts (Table 13). There are four women pictured that appear naked and/or topless; two women wear peek a boo top/shirts (Table 13). Examples of these women and their clothing can be seen in

118

Appendix B. Of course, the women and their photos can be located in more than one category. For example, a picture can reveal a woman who shows cleavage while sitting on the bed and canting her head.

Table 13: Photograph Details

Explicitness	# of pictures out of 100
Women's Clothing in the pictures	
Fully Clothed	6
Lingerie/underwear/Swimming suit	61
Dress	24
Peak-a-boo Top/shirt	2
Appearing Topless/naked	4
Short with Lingerie/underwear top	3
Women's display in their pictures	
Showing Cleavage/breast	69
Crawling on bed	5
Crawling on sofa	4
Sitting on the bed	14
Sitting on the sofa	14
Laying on bed	5
Kneeling on bed	8
Canting of head or body	64
Leaning against or holding an object for support	21
Feminine touch – just barely touching themselves or an object	83
Sitting on the floor or in the corner with a camera angle taken top down	6
Quality of Photo	
Professional	100
Home/Amateur	0

Figure 1. Gender Display

Perhaps the pictures in Figure 1 could be interpreted as examples of Asian women exercising their agency in today's society as compared with women in a more traditional society. However, alternative interpretations are more likely. For example, two of the women appear partially naked, and the frame reveals their long, exposed backs and partial buttocks. Another picture displays the woman in a profile position covering her breast with her hand. The gender display of these brides by exposing their skin creates the idea that these women are flawless. There are no visible lines or wrinkles on their skin, nor scars or blemishes. The photos would seem to have taken in a professional setting. Having their pictures taken by a professional means that the result will be a better picture regarding lighting and camera angle. It also means that the picture can be easily photoshopped to make their appearance even more perfect. A professional photo-shoot would mean that the brides would receive suggestions and recommendations from the photographer about what to wear and how to pose for the camera to maximize their

120

chances for the male's gaze. The suggestions would most likely be given before and during the photo-shoot. The pictures appear to have been edited to the point that the women are flawless. Other scholars have commented on this aspect of flawlessness. It cannot be achieved: no one looks like this, including these women (Kilbourne, 1999). I argue that the advertising of the above images "play on the stereotypes of Asian women as [natural, petite,] subservient and docile...The stereotypes of Asian women as exotic sexual toys for white-male consumption pervades company catalogues" (Lloyd, 2000. p. 355).

The brides seem to have different relationships with their clothing and in terms of the body language depicted in the pictures. The types of clothing (dress, short, lingerie, etc.) and poses represent choices of how to express oneself based on societal views of clothing and body language. Some of the online brides in the photos seem unnaturally posed and uncomfortable in their clothing as if they were assigned an outfit and a pose for the purpose of creating the 'perfect photo.' Perhaps this sense of discomfort is because the clothing may belong to the photographer and/or the owner of the website, and were provided as a part of the service. For example, Sample ID 19 and 20 are wearing the same clothing. This is not a single instance because in my sample, many women are wearing the same outfit as other women. While Sample ID 19's picture portrays a young, joyful woman who is not self-conscious about her swimsuit outfit, Sample ID 20 does not look equally comfortable in her swimsuit. Even though Sample ID 20 is smiling, her smile seems forced and her facial expression is at odds with her smile. Her body language is that of an uncomfortable woman in her clothing. The sample also revealed five outfits that many women are using for their pictures. If these

121

clothes are like the costume and these brides are characters in their costume then who is the real person and what does that say about what is portrayed in the image. Whether these brides have to conform and accept the clothing assigned to them or can choose what they wear, the self-presentation through their clothing points to an objectification of Asian women. The brides are being portrayed in a way that leads the viewer(s) not only to consider them as playmates, exotic, a sexual being, fragile, submissive and vulnerable, but also to question their moral character, thus turning them into the inferior beings that serve as contrast to the worthy traditional 'good wife'.

Moreover, there are many online brides wearing clothes that are in print patterns, which convey Asian sensibility. The print on the clothing showed branches of a cherry blossom tree stretches out across the outfit, and some outfits have pinkish-white cherry blossoms that float and fall from the branches. These photo attempts to create a visual effect of the Japanese culture and nature in which the Asian online brides belongs. This type of advertisement indicates that 'culture sells,' especially faraway cultures in far East Asia that symbolize the "Other." As remarked in the literature of Orientalism and Asian representation, the Orient has long been feminized and associated with Oriental women. Asian culture in advertising has been objectified, marginalized, and commodified along with the Asian female to satisfy consumers' visual desire for the unique Asian femininity. Therefore, both the Asian online brides and the Asian culture have become something that "sells," which fosters viewers' visual consumption of the product and encourages dominance over the delicate brides and the feminized Asia.

The sample shows many pictures of brides spreading their legs, showing their cleavage, pulling up their dresses to reveal their underwear, and in other sexual situations

122

and positions (69 pictures in Table 13; see visual example in appendix #B). These examples directly contradict the more socially acceptable view of a good, traditional Asian wife and woman. However, these brides are adapting to the changes in the mail-order brides industry by assuming more promiscuous poses that might attract the male gaze. They are simply adapting to the idea that 'sex sells' in the advertising world. Therefore, these brides maximize their sexuality to viewers/potential husbands, as they believe that is what expected from them from the Western World (Kilbourne, 1999).

From the camera angles and lighting, the background, and the quality, all of the pictures seem to have taken professionally in a studio setting (Table 13). Many of the pictures also have light backgrounds that emphasize the natural, purity, and innocent looks of these brides, thus underscoring the brides and/or subject's darkness and/or otherness. Societies have associate light/white color to Angels and dark/black color to Demons and Devils. The sample images in this research demonstrate how the brides, photographer(s) and/or the website's owner(s) create the Asian online bride's world that perpetuates stereotypes but also provides these women a place to find a husband. In a sense, because these women are seeking husbands, these agencies can be seen as within the purview of their own agency.

As part of my examination of the construction of these images, I have also investigated why these women would want their pictures portrayed this way. Bower (2001) conducted a study using highly attractive models (hereinafter HAMs) to sell to consumers and what accounted for their effectiveness. In this study, Bower questions the use of HAMs and the difficulty of real women to match up to the images of models.

Bower's research is important and relevant to this study as it provides a way to understand the brides' perspectives toward the process of creating an online profile image to find a husband and how they want to construct who they are through their image. These brides have learned and/or have been conditioned by society to recognize certain differences between beauty and ugliness. Most supermodels from advertisements are considered to be skinny, have asymmetrical facial structure, beautiful skin and hair, and are sexy and erotic (Bowers, 2001). Therefore, if one wants a foreign husband, she would have to look like a model or at least do so in her profile picture. Research demonstrates that ideal images of beauty affect women's self-esteem (Killbourne, 1999). Ideal images also influence how men feel about the very real women they meet on the website. When men are shown photographs of supermodels in studies (Bowers, 2001), they then judge real women much more harshly. Thus, what society learns, and by relation these brides, is that what is the most important thing for the viewer of their image is their clothing, their bodies, their beauty – the visual image that fits society's idea of a perfect woman or model. Comparatively, the message is that men do not want to see that the bride is smart, talented, successful, or conservatively dressed; they want to see someone who is flawlessly beautiful, thin and dresses like a Victoria's Secret models and or playmate in Playboy magazine.

It is important to note that not only men have this idealistic view of perfect women, but even women buy into the narratives and expect themselves or others of their sex to look a certain way in order to be beautiful (Bowers, 2001). A woman's image is forever effected by the culture that encourages women to believe they can and should remake their bodies into perfect commodities. The pictures of these brides seem to affect

124

men/potential husband most strikingly by influencing how they judge the real women in their lives. For instance, a male who viewed one episode of Charlie's Angles was harsher in evaluating women's attractiveness than those who did not watch the TV series (Kendrick & Gutierres, 1980). In another study, men found their women less sexually attractive after seeing pictures from Penthouse and Playboy (Weaver, Masland, & Zillmann, 1984).

What is the creation, the posing, the clothing, the image itself supposed to make visible and invisible in these pictures? The visible and invisible representations of the online brides are positioned among three points: (1) the reality, (2) the male's uncritical gaze and interpretation of the image, and (3) the photographer's style, intention, and aesthetic, all of which may ultimately serve to objectify Asian women's image and once again undermine difference.

The pictures prompt us to reflect on the nature of the photographs while at the same time alerting us to the whole host of ideas, assumptions, social and cultural constructions, and power relations that transcend the image and inform the viewer's gaze. Even within a contemporary understanding of gender display as social and cultural construction, visible signs of difference such as skin color, hair texture, bone structure, the shape of the nose, clothing, posture, body language, etc. are captured in the photographs and are understood to be representational images of these online brides. Rather than understanding that those visible bodily signs that the picture points to are subject to interpretation by way of historically dependent ideas and perceptions tied to various power relations, the viewer/potential husband may choose to interpret the visible

125

sign as proof of the reality of beauty and the inferiority and undesirability of 'other'

bodies.

Figure 2. Natural Asian Women

As part of Goffman's (1979) Gender Display category and discovering the visible

and invisibleness of an image, Figure 2, shows brides presenting themselves as 'natural

Asian women' who are petite with beautiful smiles, long dark hair, and who are playful

and willing. For example, the brides' pictures illustrated that they are perfectly healthy

by the balance of their skin color. In Asian culture, the color of your skin says a lot about

your beauty. These women have light skin color, which is preferred over women with

dark skined women (Jones, 2013). Additionally, their hair is styled, and their makeup is

professionally done so that it looks to be natural. These women are so natural that from

their face to their décolleté and to their legs, the color remains the same without any

indication of color variation. There are no visible birthmarks and/or blemishes. The

126

image is constructed to convey the sense that they were born this way. Visibly we see flawlessness. The invisible is what it takes to create that visibility.

What do these pictures tell us about women? Are these women flawless? Do they really have no scars, blemishes, lines or wrinkles? These pictures tell us that a critical factor used to influence men reflects our perceptions—generated by the media—about looks and a dichotomy of invisible and visible measures. Thus, in a survey of men and women and their reactions to several advertisements, Shields (2002) discovered that women are much more affected by advertisements that represent prevailing stereotypes of sex roles and ritualized gender behavior. Shields found that the constant repetitions of these images in advertisements became "so fundamental to a woman's feelings of self-worth and social valuation and subordination to eating disorders, low self-esteem, even rape" (p. 179). She also asserts that these ads encouraged women to be viewed as objects by "the all-important male." The advertising used by these brides appears to reinforce the idealized stereotypes that some online brides hold of Western men.

Furthermore, Kilbourne (2010) argues that print advertisements and TV commercials often degrade women, reinforcing stereotypes and encouraging the objectification of women. A visual analysist helps to make the invisible in these pictures visible again. It is important to make them visible without materializing the very practices that led to their oppression/objectification and subsequent invisibility. It is also helpful for this project because we need to recognize that advertisement's influence is quick, it is cumulative, and for the most part, it is subconscious. It is not just that we see these images once, or twice, or even a hundred times. They stay with us, and we process them mostly subconsciously, but continuously (Kilbourne, 2010).

127

The Feminine Touch

In this section, I examine online bride's profile pictures through the lens of Goffman's category of Feminine. According to Goffman (1979), men do not use their fingers and hands like women do in body language advertisement. One will not find many pictures where men would "trace the outlines of an object or to cradle it or to caress its surface" (p. 29). On the other hand, women frequently can be seen using their fingers and hands in advertisements to introduce, grasp, hold, or manipulate objects. Women can also pretend to touch an object to give the effect that Goffman called "just barely touching" (p. 29). The visual analysis of the profile pictures indicated that the majority (83/100) of brides utilize 'the feminine touch' in their pictures (Table 13). A touch is an act of making contact to show intimate behavior like compassion, appreciation, and understand. A touch provides tangible clues as to our moods and inner feelings, particularly in relation to comfort, flirting, and sexual posing.

Our society and media have defined women in terms of their relationships to men. The media emphasize the woman's maternal and marital roles and her function as a sexual object for male perusal. Women are also defined by their "femininity" and/or are assigned traditionally female traits when they appear in advertisements, television, films, and commercials. Therefore, it is important to analyze the feminine touch to understand the messages behind those poses. Visibly we see petite, fit, sexy women in their lingerie/underwear/swimming suits. The invisible is what it takes to create that visibility. Here, the pictures prompt us to look at the hand placement in each photograph and the

purpose behind each pose. Whether these brides are assigned these poses and instructed

to use their hands in a particular manner is part of the invisibility.
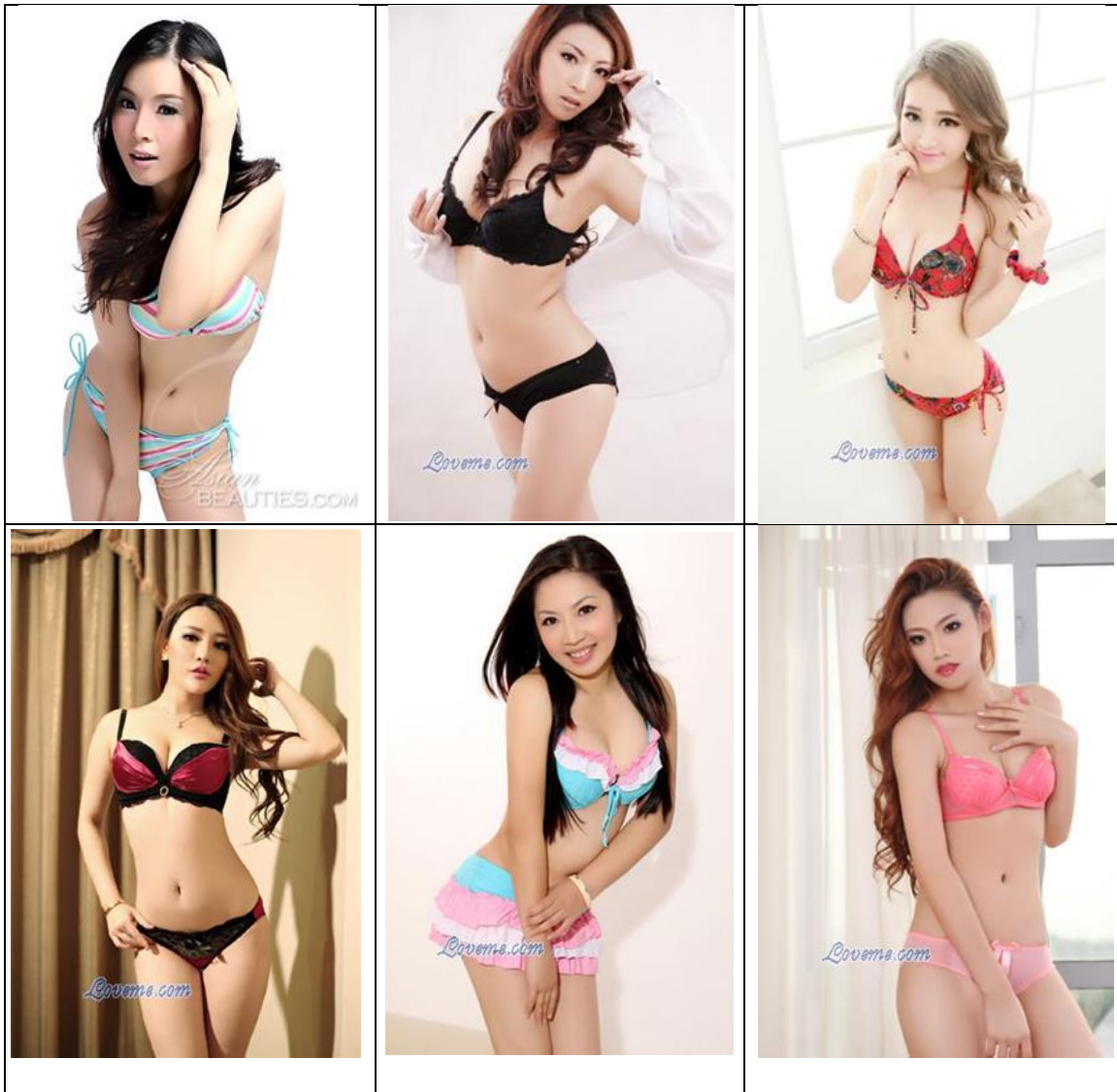

Figure 3. The Feminine Touch

Today, women on these websites are no longer limited to just one black and white headshot photograph where the brides look serious and businesslike. More often, these brides are photographed in their lingerie/underwear/swimming suit in a provocative pose. In Figure 3, the women display the feminine touch by using their fingers and hands to touch their hair, chest, face, and hip. They also use their hands to cover their private areas. Goffman (1979) stated that a woman touches her hair to convey several different messages at the same time. It may convey a sense that she is sensitive about her body. It may also show that a woman is sensual or that her body (hair) is precious (p. 29 & 31). This feminine touching ritual is different from that of man. It demonstrates the softness, sensuality, and delicacy of a woman, a sense of invitation. She is gentle and graceful in her touching, suggesting that she can be that gentle and charming to her husband as well. Touching her private parts also draws attention to them. It is clear that these brides are maximizing their sexuality while conveying their feminine traits to their viewers/potential husbands.

Ritualization of Subordination

For Asian women, de Beauvoir's (1968) articulation of patriarchy's ascribed positions for women is relevant in my visual analysis: ''she is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the unessential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute, she is the other'' (p. 51). Asian women of various regions, cultures, and religions have been portrayed in their literature as being disregarded since time immemorial. They have been portrayed as vessels of men, as a part of their husband, as the property of their families, as producers of heirs and

descendants. Oppression is not only a form of direct domination or tyranny; it is the result of formal, personal power relationships. It is also structural, the result of systemic constraints "embedded in unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols. Oppression is contained in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules" (Young, 2011, p. 41).

The online bride industry is a form of exploitation, especially of women who are valued for stereotypes of their "exotic-erotic" race and ethnicity (Belleau, 2003; Young 2011). All these stereotypes are not only racialized and sexualized but also gendered. The industry exploits the desire of these men to have a certain type of woman. With the advent of the women's movement, women with a full range of options are more likely to decline to enter marriages with men who expect wives to subvert her personal and professional goals to serve his personal needs and care for his house and children. Online bride businesses "collude" with these men to blame American women for failed relationships and then profit from the collusion by selling a gender-role fantasy in which women are subservient (Young, 2011, p. 606).

The ritualization of subordination, a third category used by Goffman (1979) for visual analysis in this research, is the stereotyping of one group or a person as inferior to another group/individual. The pictures of online brides in my sample show the physical "lowering" of their body to look "less than" their viewer. The pictures endorse the sense that these Asian women are socially ingrained to be less than a man. The women exist to serve and obey their husbands. In this section, I examine the different types of ritualization of subordination found in these brides' online profile pictures. I evaluate the

131

pictures that show (a) the way they sit on the floor/bed and lay in bed; (b) their bashful knee bending; (c) their body/head cant; and (d) their portrayal of fantasy.

Women pictured sitting on the floor/bed and lying in bed

In this type of ritual subordination, the women are positioned either laying or sitting on a floor, which demonstrates a conventionalized expression of sexual availability (Goffman, 1979. p. 41). The positioning also indicates vulnerability because she cannot physically defend herself and has to be dependent on a benign benefactor. In addition to the bodily position, floors are associated with being less clean and less pure, and thus are sexually provocative (p.41). Men are rarely seen on the floor or on the bed in advertisements. There is thus a gendered element to the positioning (p. 41). In my sample, fourteen brides are sitting on the bed, fourteen are sitting on a sofa, six are sitting on the floor, and five are lying in bed (Table 13).
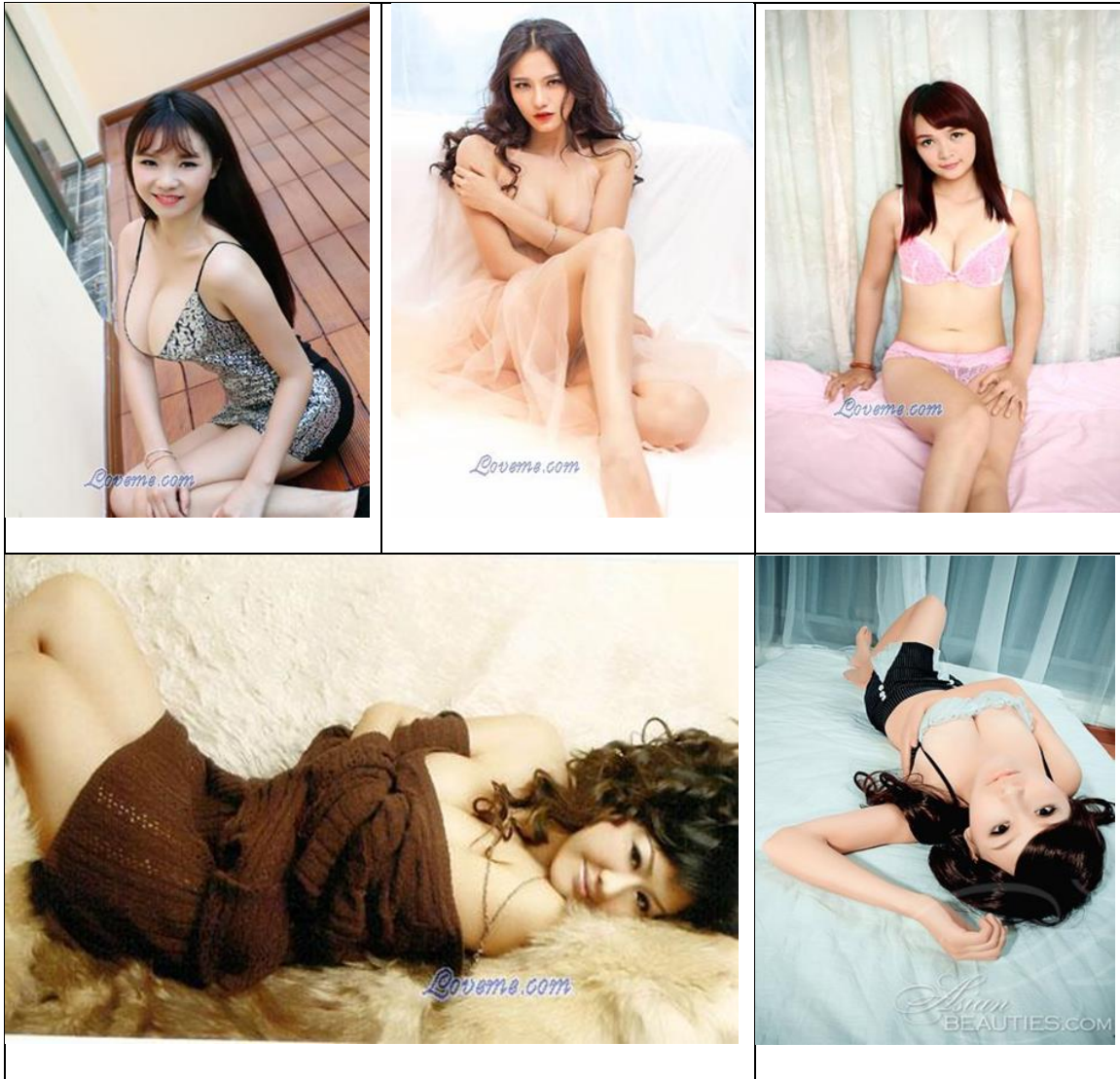
Figure 4. Sitting on the floor/bed and lying in bed

In Figure 4, the first picture shows a young woman sitting on the floor with both of her knees bent to one side. Her posture is facing the white colored wall while her head is turned sideways to look at the camera. This bride is displaying herself visibly as physically petite, with large breasts, subdued, and in a lowered and angled position. Many of these pictures emphasize a woman's breasts by deemphasizing her face. More than half the sample (69 pictures) showed cleavage/breasts (Table 13). This bride is

133

positioned t on the floor in a posture that reflects the stereotype of a traditional Asian woman, and thus the power belongs to the viewer (man/potential husband).

Moreover, this indicates an invisible notion that men are of a higher status than women, perhaps suggesting that men have control over a subordinate. Thus, the picture creates a visual image that she is lower than the viewer and invisibly she can be exploited because of the positioning (Goffman, 1979). In the second roll, a young woman is laying on a bed in her underwear looking into the camera with longing eyes. She looks pure and defenseless as though she will be dependent on a man (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004). She, too, is in a defenseless position because she is on her back with one arm around her waist and the other touching her hair. She looks relaxed, perhaps trusting of whomever may become her husband. It may also be an indication that she will always wait for her husband to come home to her.

There are five pictures of women in their lingerie crawling on the bed and four pictures of women crawling on the sofa toward the camera (Table 13). These poses display both alluring beauties, and by crawling on the bed/sofa toward the camera, her sexuality. They evoke a portrayal of the "Dragon Lady" the stereotypical media image of the Asian women as diabolical, immoral and seductive (Uchida, 1998). As discussed in Chapter 3, actress Anna May Wong complained that all her roles were typically that of a temptress, a prostitute, or a slave. She portrayed the typical passive Asian women. In choosing to display themselves as "Dragon Lady," these brides go against the other stereotype of a "Lotus Blossom" who is a docile, passive, and an obedient object for men (Uchida, 1998). In Figure 5, the women are in swimsuits or lingerie. Some of them have partially open lips, suggesting sensuality, loose hair, suggesting that a woman is

134

sensuous, a natural long neckline, and an inviting gaze to suggest she is ready to connect. With her inviting gaze, she crawls toward the camera and the viewer. Her expression and her poses send a message that while she is an Asian who may be a "Lotus Blossom," she can also become a "Dragon Lady" who is willing to seduce and satisfy her future husband. These images focus on the Asian sexual appeal, which alludes to the historical "Oriental" female image with sensuality, sexual license, and mobility. Such images also highlight a trend with online brides that combine the lotus-like and dragon-like images.

These advertisements attempt to integrate some of the most outstanding qualities of the two dominant images into a single figure. The most used strategy is to show the Asian online brides in a strong and severely dressed style, yet with a delicate, vulnerable, passive and innocent face. Asian women are reconstructed as a "dragon lady" in the body but made less "deviant" by the "lotus blossom" face and more desirable for dominance and conquest.

Figure 5. Crawling and Inviting Gaze

Some photos did show the women in less overtly sexual poses (Figure 6). With many of these, the framing of the photo and the angle of the camera present a vulnerable looking Asian bride. In some of these, the picture was taken with the camera above the young woman to look down on the bride who sits with bended knees. She looks vulnerable, and she is beneath whoever is looking down at her. The pose conveys a sense of fragility and weakness. She looks like she is in need of protection and/or rescue (Hughes, 2004). These poses, chosen either by the women or by the photographer, capture the brides' eyes as she seemingly begs for help. By depicting the Asian woman as delicate, weak, submissive, vulnerable, and inviting protection, the gender hegemony of male dominance over female subordination is reinforced. As the Asian woman is portrayed as silent and mysterious, her Asian femininity invites demystification by Western viewers. Perhaps this vulnerability is a trait that makes women attractive to men. Perhaps such pictures appeal to chivalrous men who want to rescue the women in distress. This is similar to the fairy tales theme discussed in the last chapter where the prince/king/potential husband will come to the rescue. However, these pictures should be viewed with caution because they might also be attractive to pedophiles or to human traffickers (Aronowitz, 2009; Bales 2004; Hughes, 2004). Consistent with this emphasis on oppression, the Internet has provided a means of further exploiting women in the sex industry, and the Internet would not be advancing at its current rate without the sex industry, thereby condemning the Internet as the main facilitator in oppressive prostitution and sex trafficking (Hughes, 2000). While these brides have chosen specific ways to display themselves in these online profile pictures, the question remains, how much agency do these women possess in these decisions. These women may see these

displays as a declaration of empowerment, but the choices are made within stereotypical

and genderized cultural acceptance of what is feminine, what is sexy, what is natural, and

what is a "traditional" Asian woman (Goffman, 1979; Prasso, 2005; Uchida, 1998; Bauer

& Bell, 1999; Nguyen, 2008). To reframe presenting oneself in the most clichéd and

stereotypical way possible as a kind of liberation. When a culture offers women only one

way to be sexy, it can hardly be considered an authentic choice to choose it; one choice

equals no choice.

Figure 6. Vulnerable looking Asian Brides

Bashful knee bend

While men typically pose with straight legs in pictures, women tend to display their bended knee (Goffman, 1979). In bending the knees, the brides convey a sense that they are feminine and that they are flexible in personality, unlike more rigid men. Goffman suggests an additional interpretation: the women in such poses can leave their current situation at any given moment. In Figure 7, one bride not only bent her knees, but she also contorted her body; another bride leaned forward, resting her hand on one bended knee. These poses convey the sense that these brides are ready and willing participants in this any forthcoming journey. The brides also pose in a way that emphasizes their sexual "best assets" (legs; breasts) for the men. These poses reminded us of the "data' reported in Chapter 5, that is, details of their physical measurements (bust, waist, and hips). Perhaps these poses are designed to demonstrate the accuracy of their claimed measurements.
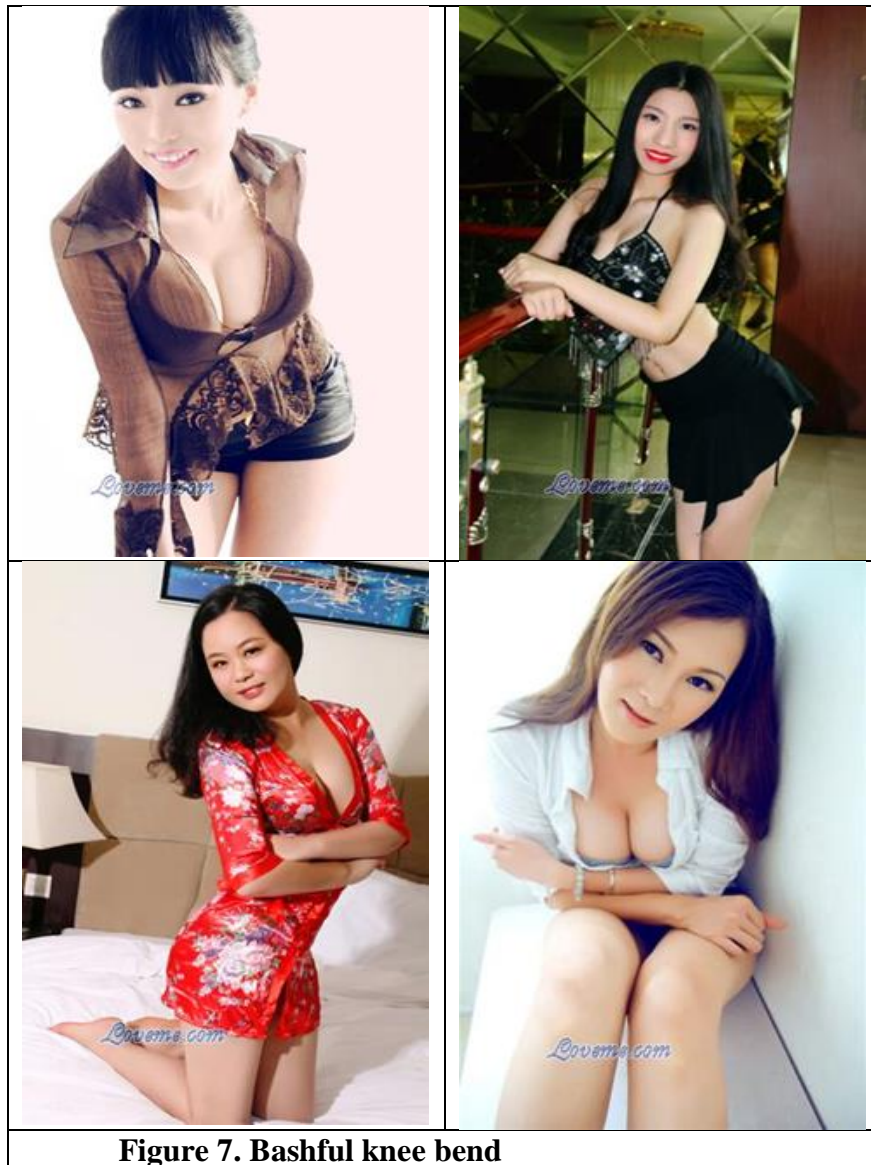
Figure 7. Bashful knee bend

Furthermore, the bride in the red outfit is a reminder of 'how to behave like a
traditional Asian girl' – the pose of kneeling, arms folding, and bowing one's head.
These poses are informed by behaviors that are often taught to young Asian girls as a way
to respect their superiors. The bride in the red outfit emulates these lessons, albeit she is
posed on a bed (Figure 7). In many traditional cultures, when a child does something
wrong, they are punished by being made to kneel on the floor in the corner of the room.

139

The bride in my sample not only showed that she is submissive, but also that she is inferior like a child and is potentially willing to be punished on the bed. But, again, she is smiling which may signal that she finds it enjoyable to be punished (Figure 7).

The visual specifics from these profile pictures include being on a bed or kneeling, with bended knees and with the head down. These poses demonstrate specific points that are tied to visible and invisible relations. These women bent their knees, tilted their head, and contorted their posture in a way that is socially acceptable to oblige men in order to secure a husband and financial stability, but also because in a manner that reflects the cultural stereotypes and traditions for Asian women (Figure 8).

Body/Head Cant

Moreover, according to Goffman (1979, p. 46), the act of lowering the head relative to others (the viewer) can be construed as an "acceptance of subordination, an expression of ingratiation, submissiveness, and appeasement." In my sample, there are 64 pictures of women canting their heads or body (Table 13). The women in Figure 8 are happy and smiling while they lower their heads. The pictures also illustrate that these women are happy with where they belong and are aware and accepting of their circle and environment. The lack of seriousness in these pictures suggests that these brides are ready to begin the adventure of looking for a husband. They are ready to communicate with various potential husband without the guises that they will tie the men down immediately. This means that these brides are willing to entertain any potential husband who contacts them even from another country. The visual details in these women

pictures and their profiles illustrate that these women are open and willing to

accommodate the men even if it is uncomfortable for them.

Figure 8. Body/Head Cant

Fantasy

Additionally, when even in situations of exploitation and subordination, women

and children are often depicted as in need of protection (Bales, 2004; Belleau, 2003;

Narayan, 1995; Jackson, 2002; Nguyen; 2008; Aronowitz, 2009; Farr, 2005; Gallagher,

141

2012; Young, 2011). In analyzing the multiple gendered displays in the photos, I noticed that a group of pictures did not match any of Goffman's categories. From these photos (Figure 9), I created a new category, Fantasy. In this category, women dress in school uniforms, wear bunny ear hats, or wear nightgowns with stockings (Figure 9). Some of these pictures, especially those who wear bunny headbands, are reminiscent of the playmates in *Playboy* magazine. Some of these pictures show the women acting like children (Figure 9). Thus, these women are portrayed as sexy little girls (Kilbourne, 1999). Women are already vulnerable in a society where there is widespread use of self-objectification of their bodies, and this increasing sexualization of children's images goes a step further and borders on pedophilia (Kilbourne, 1999). The brides in the pictures in my sample displayed their youth and sexuality as the pretended to be schoolgirls. While there could be an interpretation that these women are signaling that they are willing to dress up and roleplay different characters, this visual display of child-like sexuality nonetheless entails a dangerous dimension, one that could easily send the wrong message and allow the women to be preyed upon by sex traffickers and others. Moreover, the gendered idea of sex in this display is that sex and sexuality belong only to the young and beautiful. If you are not young and beautiful (and perfect), you have no sexuality (Kilbourne, 1999). The body language of these women is usually passive, vulnerable and very different from the body language of boys and men. This type of body language indicates a willingness to fulfill the potential husbands' fantasy with a desired outcome of marriage and maybe relocation to the United States.

Figure 9. Fantasy

Exercising Constrained Agency

In order to discuss constrained agency, we need to understand how we define agency for these women. According to Showden (2011), women's agency is an individual's "ability to make effective choices and to transform those choices into desired outcomes" (World Bank Report, 2012). Agency can be understood as the process through which women take advantage of economic opportunities to achieve desired

143

outcomes. Thus, the agency is key to understanding how gender outcome emerges and why they are equal or unequal (p. 1-37).

Constrained agency is similar to structured agency. Structured Agency acknowledges that people have agency, however, it is constrained by situational factors (Hays, 1994). These factors may include race/ethnicity, gender, social class, culture, and even nationality. Norms are not absolute but vary and can include government policies, and economic factors. Therefore, the brides in my study chose to use asianonlinebrides.com, norms for poses, and make statements on their profiles, but there are still certain realities that they must confront such that, maybe being a bride is a matter of choice, but it is a choice within a bounded world.

Across all Asian countries, women and men differ in their ability to make effective choices in their environment; women are typically at a disadvantage due to gender discrimination and traditional social expectations of gender roles Constable, 2003, 2005, 2012; Aronowitz, 2009; Bales, 2004). Many scholars argue that women in Third-World countries are usually victims in need of a variety of protections (Monhanty, 1998 & 1991; Narayan, 1997; Callaghan, 1994; Villapando, 1989; Gallagher, 2012). The scholars describe these women as young, naïve, vulnerable and submissive. Therefore, these women are being exploited by men and have severe limitations on the exercise of free will and self- autonomy. The media in the form of television programs and films also support this victimology concept by presenting women as commodity objects, as victims, and eventually as victimizers (Two Brothers and a Bride, 2003; Mail Order Wife, 2004; & Nesting Dolls episode 13 in Season 5 of the CSI television series, 2005).

144

On the other hand, Constable (2003, 2005, and 2012) argues that the women who utilized the internet to find a husband are not victims. The social inequalities and the political economy in these women's country may have motivated these women to choose to marry foreigners, but it does not preclude these brides from making informed decisions for themselves. The fact that these women choose husbands outside of their country might be considered as a way wherein they are exercising their free will and self-autonomy (Constable, 2003, 2005, 2006, & 2012). Seen in this light, these women are not merely helpless victims.

Asianbridesonline.com argues that they are not a Mail Order Bride company and stated that

> "A Mail Order Bride company implies that you are actually ordering something and paying for it. Our service simply supplies you with the names and addresses of women who have expressed an interest in meeting an American man. It is actually up to them to respond to your letter. We strive to help bring people together who really want to form a loving, caring, and lasting relationship" (Foreign Affair).

This website maintains that the brides who participate and utilize their services do so of their own free will and are not forced in any way. However, this view does not take into account the role of society and the way gender roles and ideal images for Asian woman inform a constrained (or structured) agency. Again, the fact that these brides chose to be part of this particular website means that they are acting within their rights to be independent women, but within the confines and rules of the society and the website. The website further contends that these brides are educated women who are capable of thinking and deciding their own future. Another example where these brides exercise

145

their agency is the argument that this website provides the women opportunities to improve their economic status and help them by encouraging these brides to express their independence in a format that normally would not have been available for them. The website also argues that the media, social organizations, and scholars have inaccurately reported the rate of success of marriages through their services website (asianonlinebrides.com).

The debate between the positive and negative effects on these online brides continues. I argue that the issue should not be seen simply as black and white, rather it is a constrained agency as I have argued. Those who think that this website exploits these brides and leads them into dangerous situations like human trafficking and/or sex trafficking have some support in reports that these brides are victims and are exploited (Hughes, 2004). However, when researchers and the media portray these Asian brides as weak, shy, and eager to please, they are actually perpetuating the stereotypes about Asian woman as docile and exotic. We must take care and not neglect the real and complicated situation of online brides by oversimplifying the issue. I argue that it would be presumptuous to say that these brides do not possess free will, self-autonomy, and agency. However, I also recognize that Asian women are socially trained to uphold traditions, values, and customs that may interfere with their ability to fully exercise their agency. This situation is why I refer to a constrained agency for these brides.

Constable (2003) argues that because these women are educated they pick and choose who to reply to when utilizing the website service and that the women then have agency. I argue that in order to reply to men who are interested in them, either in English or using the translation service, the women have to at least: have some education; enough

146

money to access the internet, and a way to travel to the website office to submit their reply. Most likely, these women do not live in rural communities. Therefore, the women that Constable mentions are not the typical poor.

Conclusion

This chapter should be understood in conjunction with the previous chapter. Chapter 5 is the content analysis of the written online brides' profiles, and Chapter 6 is the visual analysis of the photographs included in their profiles. In this chapter, I argue that Asian brides displayed their gender and power through their images that they believe to be socially acceptable to find a husband. The brides exercised their constrained agency by choosing how to pose for the pictures, what to wear, and how to communicate with their viewers. Similar to advertisements, these pictures are a representation of femininity that is that are informed by the social and cultural norms for traditional Asian women. Using Goffman's categories of "The Feminine Touch" and "The Ritualization of Subordination," this chapter presented a comprehensive observation of the images by considering the brides' clothing, hands, eyes, knees, facial expressions, postures, positioning and placement of the body and body parts. As seen in this chapter, the brides perpetuate the mainstream medias two contrasting stereotypes of the "Dragon Lady" and the "Lotus Blossom" in their photographs. In addition to these stereotypes, the women portrayed sexualized images through their poses and expressions. Many brides wore lingerie/underwear/swimming suit for their pictures. Even those who wore different outfits displayed breast cleavage. However, these sexual images are not solely intended to sell men on sex; they are also intended to sell the viewer on a dream. They are

designed to promote the fairy tale, the ideal woman, the perfect relationship, and the potential blissful, loving marriage.

Research demonstrates that the messages that are conveyed to the public regarding women's body images are for the most part are undetected. Moreover, advertisements often degrade women, reinforce stereotypes and encourage the objectification of women (Bower, 2001; Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, 1998; Kendrick and Gutierres, 1980; Kilbourne, 1999; Lloyd, 2000; Shields, 2002; Weaver, Masland, and Zillmann, 1984). This ideal image of beauty affects women's self-esteem and also influences how men feel about real women. For this visual analysis it is important to recognize that the advertisement's "influence is quick, it's cumulative, and for the most part, it's subconscious" (Kilbourne, 2010). It is not that the viewers see these images once, or twice, or even a hundred times. They stay with us, and we (the viewers) process them mostly subconsciously (Kilbourne, 2010). I conclude from my analysis that these online brides' profile pictures sell more than products. They sell social values, images, concepts of love and sexuality, and in effect, they sell aromas of success (Kilbourne, 2010). Perhaps most importantly, they sell feelings of normalcy. They also tell us who we are and who we should be.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This research set out to determine the ways in which Asian online brides portray themselves through the images and profiles that advertized on Asianbridesonline.com website. From the literature, I found that a number of studies about advertising and images of women's bodies generally (Bower, 2001; Goffman, 1979; Jhally, 1990; Kilbourne, 2000; and Shields, 2003). However, these studies only examine the effects of advertising and not the messages that are communicated to potential suitors/husbands in these advertisements. For that reason, my research is designed to examine and address (1) how and what messages the brides' profiles communicate to their potential suitors/husbands; and (2) how and what these images symbolize verbally and visually. In order to conduct this research, I first established that a mixed methods approach is required. A content analysis is an appropriate method to examine the representation of brides through their profiles, and visual analysis is used as a method to gather data from still images of these Asian online brides. This research is employing Fanon and his theories of colonization, racism, power, and exploitation. Works such as Foucault, Collins, Young, Mohanty, Constable, Kim and Chung, Uchida, and West and Zimmerman, provide perspectives in the social construction of gender, power and exploitation of women, and the culture, societal, systematic and structural subordination.

From the beginning of my research on context and historical background, I noticed that there is a continuum from mail order brides to human trafficking. There is a consistent argument of whether these women exhibit individual agency or they are innocent victims in need of rescue from their traffickers and potential suitors/husbands as

149

potential abusers. The two schools of thoughts provided interesting arguments, and my research found that there are correlations between the two sides of these issues. Perhaps the evidence in my research provides an argument for the middle ground or a qualified view of agency. I conclude that these brides exercise agency (the complexities of agency – beyond the binary), but under the rubric of constraining social, culture, economic structures. Those structures, represented in Asian online brides' profiles and images, include a set of cultural beliefs that stereotype Asian women as essentially docile, shy, exotic, traditional, submissive, and "others." It was common to see these brides staging themselves on their profiles to conform to the gender roles that men expect when reading their profiles. The language used in their profiles exemplifies the traditional, obedient, devoted, family-oriented Asian women that the media has molded them into the stereotypical image at the first glance. These Asian brides seek to find a way out of their current predicaments, whatever they are, just as playing in a game. They need to calculate pros and cons of their choices to negotiate restrictions on different aspects in the game of their life and prioritize preferences for action they would like to take with limited resources and information available to them. These brides' decision to give up what they currently have in order to pursue an uncertain future might sound irrational or too materialistic, yet in fact, their decision-making in such circumstances reflects their agency.

Society has taught people the importance of the first impression, and I found that these brides are no exceptions. Regardless of occupation, age, demographics, social and economic status, these brides seek to make a good impression on potential suitors/husbands by manipulating their profiles and images in ways consistent with

hegemonic notions of what is desirable femininity. They may have deliberately misrepresented themselves and reinforced the Asian women's stereotypes on the website; these brides undeniably established themselves as agentive women. They were agentive in China, Thailand, and the Philippines when they decided and carried out their plans for marrying American men. My content and visual analysis data support the findings of Constable (2012, 2006, 2005 & 2003) and others (Belleau, 2003; Aronowitz, 2009; Hughes, 2000 & 2004; Luehrmann, 2004; Johnson, 2007) who found that, even though these women are vulnerable and caught within oppressive social structures, they have nevertheless utilized those structures to their advantage. By doing so, the brides have acted as assertive agents in that they have looked out for the interests of both themselves and their families. The brides indeed took intentional agentive steps when they strategized plans for meeting an American and subsequently migrating to the United States for marriage. The brides provide their demographics, age, marital status, education level, job title, self-descriptions, physical descriptions, and husbands' preferences in their ads. They will write letters and emails, send pictures, screen undesirables, and may accept foreign men into their homes to test for compatibility with both themselves and their families. Some brides were well aware of the risks as indicated by their comments in their profiles but they still believe it is better than picking local men. In looking at Asian online brides, I found that just because these brides come from Third World countries and may lack bargaining power does not mean they are lacking agency. In exploring the relationship between the media, the role of culture and social construction, and women's agency of online brides allows us to avoid both simply attributing women's

different degrees of agency to their racial difference or romanticizing Asian women as more obedient, submissive and innocent victims.

Next, my research demonstrated that self-personality traits within this study are closely associated with stereotypical views of Asian women as traditional, docile, and as an exotic image. Profile texts consistently mentioned family-oriented, kind, good wife and innocent/pure as the top three personality traits, with good wife and innocent/pure tie at third place (Chapter 5, Table 7). These brides through their profiles confirmed that they are willing to take care of their husband without any negotiation and considered it the wife's obligation and/or duty as a good wife. These brides portraying the message that they are innocent and simple that they have yet to be contaminated by our complicated society. However, there are a minority of profiles that included words such as hard worker, confident and well-educated in their personality self-descriptions. It showed a discontinuity from the normal stereotypical perspective of Asian online brides. Another interesting finding is that, according to the profiles, traveling is the number one hobby follow by cooking and reading. I found this to be interesting because traveling and reading were not found on the hobby list when I researched and gathered data on this topic six years ago. At that time, cooking and housekeeping dominated the hobbies section. Today, the brides reported that traveling is their favorite hobby and they are willing to be a travel guide for their potential suitors/husbands when he traveled to their country to see them. Some brides further elaborate their love for travel and/or wanting to live in a foreign country with their potential suitors/husbands. The idea of a Western husband moving to a foreign bride's country is rarely mentioned and/or considered by these online brides.

Through the examination of the profiles where the brides described their own physical appearance, all eighteen brides from the Philippines reported their physical measurements, especially bust, waist, and hip size. No Chinese or Thailand brides provided these measurements. I argue that by including an exact bust, waist, and hip measurement, these brides are attempting to use their body to appeal to their potential suitors/husbands. These brides are self-objectifying by advertising their physical characteristics to potential suitors/husbands. Women are typically associated with physical self-objectification more often than men (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Equally important is the finding that many brides said they preferred an older man as a husband. Some brides expressed their need and want for a father figure in their potential suitors/husbands. It is possible that the population of potential suitors belong to a group of men who are older than potential brides. Very frequently older men may be financially secure and are potentially better prospects than younger men. Although older men may not be perfect, younger brides can be viewed as trophy brides and men may be more willing to accept imperfections in younger women.

My research found three recurrent themes in the content analysis of the profiles. They are Disney/fairy tales, the good life and ideal husband, and romanticism. Of the three, romanticism was an unexpected theme as the romantic language was not included in any of the categories that were coded. Previous research about the Asian online bride industry has not addressed the romantic language women used, making this result an interesting development.

Additionally, the images portrayed by the Asian online brides can be broken down into two contrasting stereotypes: the diabolical, immoral, seductive "Dragon

Lady," and the docile, passive, obedient doll—the "Lotus Blossom" (Uchida, 1998). These constructed stereotypes have dominated the media advertising world and now Asian online brides' pictures. As evidenced in this research, the brides perpetuate these stereotypes in their photographs by wearing sexy and provocative lingerie/underwear crawling on the bed or wearing school uniform outfits and wearing a dress sitting on the bed waiting for their potential husbands. These images provide a window to the stories that these women wanted to convey to their potential suitors/husbands. I found each picture has a purpose in their display of gender. I found that the pictures were taken in a professional studio where lighting, background setting, furniture, and posing are part of the story that these brides wanted to display. Whether these brides have to conform and accept the clothing assigned to them by the photographers or can choose what they wear, the self-presentation through their clothing points to an objectification of Asian women. The brides are being portrayed in a way that leads the potential suitors/husbands not only to consider them as playmates, exotic, a sexual being, fragile, submissive and vulnerable, but also to question their moral character, thus turning them into the inferior beings that are serve as contrasts to the worthy traditional "good wife" images. These brides have learned and/or have been conditioned by society the differences between beauty and ugly from their upbringing, culture, and the media. Therefore, if one wants a foreign husband, she would have to look like a model or at least in her profile picture.

History has influenced how many countries and men view Oriental (Asian) Woman. Mythology and fables have been used to describe her many characteristics and traits. She can be docile, gentle, shy, obedient, submissive, and pleasing wife material. She can also be erotic, sexy, exotic, seductive, sinister, corrupt, immoral, and evil. She

has all the characteristics attributed to human beings. These stereotypes and fantasies of an Asian Mystique have been shaped and reinforced through cultural, political and economic forces. Asian women have been influenced by their individual life experiences. The characteristics of Asian women have been perpetuated by the general and specific misrepresentations in the media. In the online "Bride Industry," Asian women are described so that men will go out of their way to connect with a woman who possesses whatever traits they want in a woman. We need to learn from our lengthy history of how to prevent the continuation of maltreatment and the discriminations of Asian women (as well as other women). Stereotypes continue to have the serious effect on all women as they are still being dominated and defined by those other than themselves.

As an Asian woman researcher, I may be damaging my image and the image of my culture as much as I seek to represent it. "To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means, above all, to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (Fanon, 1972, p. 13). Having seized the power of speech and writing, one must ask if Asian women have succumbed to the temptation of restaging orientalism? Mohanty argues that there is a similarity of assumptions about Third World Women; the texts which she studies defines women as victims of male violence, the colonial process. The Arab familial system, the economic development process, and the Islamic code all define women primarily in terms of their object status, and even benevolently motivated objectification needs to be challenged (Mohanty, Russo, & Torres, 1991, p. 4). It is true that many Asian women writers do create texts, which define women as victims, generally of patriarchy, the cultural

155

conventions, and of economic circumstances. By Mohanty's argument, Asian women writers would be objectifying women by this victim-fixation, even as these same writers are attempting to combat objectification. As Fanon insisted to "celebrate one's identity is…empowering…But to affirm one's identity is not, in itself, to change the world" (Gordon, Sharpley, & White, 1996, p.133).

This research contributed to the study of online brides seeking western suitors/husband by examining one hundred profiles and images samples. However, the sample could not be chosen randomly because the website organization of the profiles constantly changed. The changing organization and disappearing information of the website made it impossible to organize the profiles by recency for more than a few minutes at a time. Thus, it was impossible to create the sampling frame needed for a random sample. Because this was a convenience sample, the results cannot be generalizable to other Web sites or even to other users on Asianonlinebrides.com. However, the content analysis was conducted as an exploratory study to be used for the textual study, so it does not need to be generalizable.

Through this study, I have presented a significant body of data provided first hand through the written and visual narratives of the online brides. These brides have offered valuable insight into the field of Asian online brides. Their stories have presented a unique perspective to the online brides' process that can only be captured through the narratives provided in this research. Moreover, I feel that my perspective as an Asian woman researcher assisted the analysis and findings critical to this study.

This is important because previous studies did not focus on the profile and images of these women. Specifically, there have been no studies which have examined these

156

pictures as narratives in the Asian online brides' practice. My research contributes to this field by providing more examples of Asian online brides' diverse pictures' categories. Although the results of the content analysis are not generalizable to all such websites, my analysis does contribute to the evolving understanding of Asian online brides who seek foreign husbands. These results provide a starting point for future quantitative and qualitative studies. The theoretical approach further helped in analyzing whether the women's profiles and images communicate messages to their potential mates and whether these women who want to marry American men were subject to power and exploitation or they have the freedom and economic independence to make their own decision to participate in this process.

Limitations

There are three limitations to this research. One, I chose not to register for any of the websites and chose Asianonlinebrides.com where I collected data, and so I was only able to obtain public information on the main pages of the websites. Perhaps if I had registered on the sites, additional information would have been presented additional information for the analysis of my research questions. However, it would also introduce ethical issues. Two, I have not been able to interact with subjects or get the first-hand experience from brides-to-be and those who have recently married. As a result, I do not know if brides, in fact, do experience pressure from the website agents to submit certain photographs of or whether they have to write their profile in a certain way. In addition, it would be interesting to interview potential brides and wives from different social classes to learn about their matchmaking experiences. I would also like to know if their potential

husbands meet their expectation that they listed on their profiles. Finally, because many individuals have a hard time recognizing and understanding mass media's portrayal of reality from actual reality (Kane et al., 2000), doing qualitative interviews could enhance our knowledge on how brides truly feel, rather than only deciphering how the media tells brides they should feel and act. This research could be enhanced if later on, I pursue qualitative interviews.

Future Research

In a future project, I would like to build on this study and previous research on the topic of men seeking a foreign wife as it has not been well researched by scholars. I want to find out the reasons men look for foreign brides; how they describe and compare Asian versus Western women; and what are they saying in their video testimonials to the services provided by these websites. I also would like to evaluate all the video clips where Vietnamese women appearing naked to show their womanly assets. These clips are used to attract a foreign man so that a marriage contract can be arranged. It reminds me of the Western movies where cowboys would inspect horses teeth. This was done to ensure that the horse was healthy. A similar approach was used when buying slaves at a market.

Furthermore, it would be helpful if I could interview men in the United States instead of relying on the website. Similar to my research, this would be important due to the fact that the profiles and images of these men provided on the website may not accurately reflect the traits of the prospective husbands. Moreover, the interview process could provide important cues of the actual personalities of these men. Using this

approach might allow me to ask specific questions regarding their views on gender roles and household structures. In addition, I would like to know their opinion concerning taking care of their potential brides and her immediate family. It would provide an important level of discussion into the challenges of taking care of the wife's family and any of the conflicts that may result based on their different culture.

As evidence in this research that women used romantic languages in their profiles, I want to find out if men will also use romantic language in seeking a foreign wife. It would be interesting to gather this data from the men's profiles to compare and contrast the language used between the men versus the women. This will shed lights into the men's idealization of women and relationships.

Finally, I also want to look into the legal framework of Mail-Order Brides and Human Trafficking. There is a broad set of research conducted on the 'mail-order bride' industry that has focused on the legal aspects of the industry. Since limited action can be taken on the cultural side of the 'mail-order bride' issue, the government and laws that were implemented in order to protect foreign spouses have become a central point of study. Lloyd (2000) and Belleau (2003) all discuss the importance of implementing and enforcing a law in the U.S. to protect foreign spouses. In 2005, the federal legislation enacted the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act (IMBRA) to protect mail-order brides from domestic abuse and seeking to alleviate many of the problems facilitated by the IMB industry (IMBRA, 2005).

Some experts claim that mail-order bride agencies are not only related to trafficking in women for forced sex work, but they may constitute a form of trafficking in women (Belleau, 2003, Hughes, 2001, Raymond & Hughes, 2001). The mail-order bride

159

trade is closely associated with sex tourism, Internet pornography, and prostitution. For example, mail-order bride websites often provide links to Internet porn, sex tourism, and escort service sites. These industries fuel the demand for trafficked women (Belleau, 2003). Countries over-represented in the bridal trade are the same countries that are the most popular destinations for sex tourism. In order to facilitate correspondence between potential brides and consumer-husbands, some marriage agencies provide Internet access at their office, charging a fee to their clients for the service. This Internet access increases the likelihood of women corresponding with or meeting traffickers (Hughes, 2001 p. 4). When a marriage broker is connected with trafficking, the business may be a 'front' for the trafficking operation. These types of sites may also be run by criminal enterprises because they require funding and can be used to launder money in both this country and in foreign countries. The U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime believes traffickers use offers by agents to send contraband with young women who may become sex slaves rather than brides. Agents lure women with promises of a better life, but once a woman leaves her country, they may be entirely under the control of traffickers (Raymond & Hughes, 2001, p. 24).

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165

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APPENDIX A

CODING SHEET SAMPLES

Geographical:

Country	# of female	% of female
China		
Shenzhen		
Nanning		
Cixi		
Zhanjiang		
Zengchen		
Guangzhou		
Hangzhou		
Philippine		
Cebu City		
Davao City		
Thailand		
Bangkok		

Physical Descriptions:

Measurements	Frequency	% of females
Bust		
Waist		
Hips		
Height (in)		
Weight (lb)		
Hair Color:		
Black		
Brown		
Others		
Hair Length		
Long		
Medium/shoulder		
Short		

Demographics:

Age:	# of female	% of female out of 100	Mean
18-21			
22-25			
26-30			
31-35			
36-40			
41-45			
46-50			
51-55			
56 - up			

Marital Status:	# of female	% of female out of 100	Age of children
Single			
Divorce w/o child			NA
Divorce w/1 child			
Divorce w/2 children			
Widow w/o child			NA
Widow w/1 child			
Widow w/2 children			

Religion:	# of female	% of female out of 100	
None			
Christian			
Buddhism			
Muslim			
Others			

Education:

Level of Education	# of female	% of female out of 100	
No Education or blank			
High school			
College			
University			
Graduate School			
English Skills			
Fair			
Poor			
Good			
Very Good			

Profiles Info:	# of female	% of female out of 100	Others comment worth mentioning for the paper. Do not forget to give women id number.
Hobbies			
Cooking			
Knitting			
Housekeeping			
Shopping			
Traveling			
Dancing			
Reading			
Description of self			
Sweet			
Kind			
Nice			
Innocent/Pure			
Caring			
Devoted			
Young			
Cute			
Virgin			
Gentle			
Shy			
Sexy			
Loyal			
Natural			
Traditional			
Beautiful			
Calm/Temper			
Good Wife			
Family-oriented			
Well-educated			
Career-oriented			
Confident			
Hard-worker			
Description of mate			
King/Prince			
Responsible			
Mature			
Older man			
Family-oriented			

Loving		
Caring		
Kind		
Honest		
Father figure		
Romantic		
Gentleman		
Loyal		
Soulmate		
Wealth/Wealthy		
Sexy		
Fit		

Rhetoric

Phrases used on profiles	# of female	% of female out of 100
"I want"		
"I need"		
"I desired"		
"I'm looking for"		

Job:

List Job title:	# of female	% of female out of 100
Blank		
Teacher		
Clerk		
Sales		
Nurse		
Business Owner		
Model		

Photograph details:

Explicitness	# of female	% of female out of 100
Fully Clothed		
Lingerie/underwear		
Swimming suit		
Dress		
Short		
Topless		
Nude		
Showing Cleavage/breast		
Crawling on bed		
Sitting on the bed		
Laying on bed		
Kneeling on bed		
Canting of head or body		
Leaning against or holding an object for support		
Feminine touch – just barely touching themselves or an object		
Sitting on the floor or in corner with camera angle taken top down		
Quality of Photo		
Professional		
Home/Amateur		

APPENDIX B

PHOTOGRAPH DETAILS – EXPLICITNESS

Fully Clothed	Lingerie/underwear/ Swimming suit	Dress
Short	Peak a boo Top/shirt	