



Marriage of Inconvenience: Japanese War Brides' Cultural Identity in Houston's *Tea* during post-war United States

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ABSTRACT:

After World War II, almost a million Japanese women immigrated to America as the wives of American GI soldiers. Cross-cultural and cross-racial marriages were prone to various disadvantages including the issue of adaptation of new culture. Maladaptation of war brides separates them, marginalizes them and compels them to remain tied to their ethnic culture and identity. John W. Berry's theory of acculturation and adaptation defines several social factors of the "society of settlement" (Berry 1994) which result in cultural and psychological maladaptation of long-term immigrants. In this project, the persistent racism towards ethnic groups in American societies is analyzed which leads them towards marginality, alienation, "adaptation stress" and resultant adverse outcome. Berry's four-fold model of acculturation is used as a heuristic tool to highlight the specific case of Japanese war brides in postwar America. The main purpose of this study is to explore racism as the major reason of maladaptation of Japanese war brides as presented in Velina Hasu Houston's play *Tea*. *Tea* presents the narrative of five Japanese war brides, living in America for almost two decades, victims of racism and discrimination. The close analysis of this play also explores that war brides' only way of survival in racist American society is adhering to their Japanese identity and formulating separate identity as a group from the larger society.

Key Words: War Brides, Acculturation, Acculturative Stress, Racism.

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After World War II, many Asian women migrated to European countries, America, Australia and New Zealand, as war brides. War brides are defined as “a Japanese woman who married a member of the foreign armed forces or a foreign civilian who was in Japan as a result of the military occupation after World War II and the subsequent military presence in Japan up to 1960” (Tamura, 2010, p. xv). After World War II, the marriages to foreign soldiers results in, an “unprecedented migration of women” worldwide (Tamura, 2010, p. 2).

Japanese war brides’ marriages to American soldiers brought several disadvantages for them. Being Japanese, they were common victims of racism and prejudice in American society. With respect to the cultural adaptation process, it was mandatory for their survival in American society to adapt to the mainstream culture because most of the Japanese war brides were not able to return to Japan. Many studies and research records that because of marrying foreigners many of these Japanese women were disowned by their families and accused of bringing shame to their families and generally, people did not have favorable sentiment towards them (Crawford et al., 1910; Tamura, 2010).

These interracial marriages occurred due to several reasons such as American soldiers’ offering jobs to Japanese women, during American occupation of Japan; misconception instilled in these women about the riches of American society; women’s increasing insecurities in their ruined country. (Crawford, Hayashi, & Suenaga, 2010, p. 37) Further, after World War II, Japanese women outnumbered Japanese men and the remaining men who returned from war in their tattered clothes were undernourished and unattractive in comparison to healthy American soldiers in their crisp uniforms. (Tamura, 2010, p. 19)

Often ethnic and racial minority groups, encounter discrimination while living in America in their everyday life (Brenda, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002, p. 56). Among Japanese war brides the experiences of racial or ethnic discrimination have been recorded in the form of biographies, autobiographies, interviews and literature- poetry, novels and plays. One such play is Velina Hasu Houston’s *Tea*, which clearly demonstrate that racism in American society towards ethnic groups is keeping them from living a successful life in their new context as they expected earlier before immigration. In the dramatist note, Houston acknowledges that *Tea* is “based on the virtually undocumented historical fact of communities of Japanese ‘war brides’ who have lived in Kansas over the last twenty to forty years.” (Uno, 1993)

Tea illustrates the story of five Japanese war brides, immigrated from different parts of Japan by marrying American soldiers- racially white or mixed. The play exposes numerous incidents of these women which they encountered as the result of Americans presence in their life. The play begins as the four war brides, Atsuko, Setsuko, Chizuye and Teruko gather for having ceremonial tea for the redemption of fifth war bride, Himiko Hamilton, who commits suicide at the end of prologue. By using role playing technique, in the play, these five war brides assume the personas of their husbands and daughters and narrate their perspectives. Their narratives are instrumental in bringing several issues at front which are the reasons of war brides limited mobility in the American society. These Japanese women, as analysis of the play demonstrates, encounter various cultural adaptation issues. Due to prevalent racism, American





society's attitude was unfavorable towards them thus, their learning of the new culture, which ensured their successful life in America, was hindered.

Different studies show that after migration, living and adjusting in the new culture was the major challenge for these war brides. During occupation of Japan, American government decided to open war brides' schools to teach them the lifestyle of American society so they could move easily in that society (Crawford, Hayashi, & Suenaga, 2010, p. 49). But the knowledge given to them were insufficient for them as they had to face many other grim problems there except food and clothing. The lack of communication and incomprehensibility of English language further exacerbate their situations. Their family lives were also in jeopardy due to insufficient language competence. Their American husbands, in America had access to the women to whom they could easily communicate so, after marital affairs became the major cause of the negligence Japanese women had to face in their households. (Tamara 31)

In this existing context, this study aims to explore the role of American society in constructing their identities. The main argument of this research is that despite every sacrifice made by Japanese war brides to adapt into the host culture, they are compelled to stick to their ethnic identity. *Tea* is discussed, in this research, from the perspective of John W. Berry's acculturation theory to explore the influence of racism in Japanese war brides' cultural adaptation process which often results in negative adaptation and leads towards mental illness and psychopathology. In cross-cultural psychology, acculturation and adaptation of immigrants to their new environment is studied in view of various group level or individual level factors. Further, this study explores that War brides' heritage identity functions as a protective factor from the possible psychopathologies results due to cultural maladaptation.

From the time of their marriage, the war brides perpetually remain stuck in a liminal space both in their native homeland and in their newly adapted environment. Thus, adapting to a new culture was a necessity for these war brides but racism was the major constraint in this process so their cultural identity remains stuck to their ethnic identity.

The subject of war bride has been discussed over the year through media coverage and literary works. The case of war brides interests many sociologists as well as psychologists. Many studies over their cultural adaptation have been done which are predominantly divided into two arguments. First, Japanese war brides faced racial discrimination in the society as well as in households while attempting to adjust in American society and culture. Second, they were given a very warm welcome by Americans on their arrival to America. Further the argument is raised that they faced little problem in cultural adaptation but then they did not assimilate in the mainstream culture.

In the history of Japanese war brides' literature, *Hello War brides*, was the first ever series of stories based on interviews conducted together by two war brides, Kazuko Umezu Stout- a community activist- and a poet Foyoko Taira Martely. It consists of the stories of seventeen individuals and four groups, mainly written by Stout, based on her conversation with the participant war brides while each story also includes few Senryu- a form of Japanese free verse- written by Martely. (as qtd in Ayaka Yoshimizu in her article, *Hello War Brides: Heteroglossia, Counter-Memory* defines that the column series contains multiple voices of war brides. Each voice, according to her, counters the stigmatized public image of war brides





created by Japanese media. Both writers, themselves war brides, recorded various everyday engagements of war brides in multiple fields while living in America which helped them to counter the prevailing negative images and stereotypes about war brides among Americans as well as pre-second world war Japanese immigrants living in America. Importantly, two narratives; Japanese women as “victims” and as “Strong women” run throughout this series. Yoshimizu comments that by taking both narratives together one may be able to construct a new image of war brides who faced hardships in the earlier years of their arrival in America but later, after several years, they quite adjusted in that culture.

Many stories have included in this text about such women who later on get to adjust into the new environment. For example, the stories of Taeko Gable and Toshiko Puett who were the victims of domestic violence by their alcoholic husbands but the end of the stories demonstrate them as living happy lives as Gabel turn to Buddhism and Puett remarries after the death of her first husband. Other stories included by the authors tell the tales of women who faced discrimination by the white communities and later by large because of their own efforts lived peaceful lives in America as analyzed by Yoshimizu. But one point is significant to notes that the time period, in which they consider themselves as “strong women” is actually the time when they had made peace with their loneliness. Many stories illustrated in *Hello War Brides* end with the Japanese war brides turning to an alternative mean to sustain their lives in America. It is significant to analyze that these women do not seek attention of the white community, after facing years of racism, and find alternative means. For instance, Trotta says, “I always work hard so that I don’t experience discrimination!” (qtd in Yoshimizu 124)

Hello War Brides challenges the negative images and stereotypes created by the Japanese mainstream media in post war era. For Yoshimizu the text presents a “counter-narrative to tell an alternative story of Japanese war brides” (122). Further, the purpose this column series fulfills is of portraying Japanese war brides as strong individuals who struggled hard and they adjusted to their new environment.

After the publications of *Hello War Brides*, war brides living in European countries started sharing their experiences with the world. There are many biographies and autobiographies of Japanese war brides mostly written by their daughters. Daughters’ perspective is also significant to note as they lived with their mothers and observed their suffering while adapting to a new culture, very closely. Daughters’ narrative also helps to differentiate the experiences of racism faced by them as a second generation of war brides and their mothers as of Japanese origin. Debbie Storrs in her article, *Like a Bamboo: Representation of Japanese war brides* recorded her mother’s experiences as an immigrant. Her mother, Yoshiko, after migrating to America faced many problems which hinder her to adjust to the American society and the one dominant problem was the lack of linguistics competence. Her mother used the analogy of a bamboo stick to delineate her ordeal after migrating to America. “It hasn't been easy sometimes. My life feels like a bamboo, you there's a lot of skin, like layers? I feel like every time, all the layers are being away and I've got nothing left” (194). In her research, she is exploring the racial marriage experiences of war brides. She also explores the role of Hume’s cartoons in shaping U.S. GI’s minds about Japanese women as “Exotic and passive” (200). The image of “Babysan”- created by Hume- was one major factor in the racial stereotyping of Japanese women (200). Storrs research concludes that in the construction of a war brides’ identity societal structures play





an important role. Storrs's recording of her mother's initial experiences in American society, gives the knowledge about the issues these war brides faced due to cultural diversity. Yet at the same time, she believes Japanese war brides demonstrated bamboolike strength, flexibility and resilience in their cultural adaptation.

Furthermore, the ultimate loneliness of war brides as an outcome of acculturation is a recurrent theme in most of the literature written over the topic of war brides. Whether class difference, racism, cultural adaptation issues, these women are ultimately left alone to deal with their self and cultural identity. They are left in a liminal space from where they are unable to pick and choose one path for themselves. Similarly, *A Town Where the Mockingbirds Live* by Mori Reiko is a story about Japanese War Brides living in America in utter loneliness. It is a story of a woman, Keiko, feeling homesick for her native country due to the suffocated environment in which she is forced to live in white racist community. Her marital problems exacerbate the situation for her. Her children have gone, her husband, Jeff- a retired military officer, is involved in extra marital relationship and she is growing old in a prison like house. Due to her inability to adapt to the American culture her mobility in society was equal to nothing. She spends her days and nights in doing house chores and questioning about her existence. Keiko's alien-ness and perpetual loneliness actually make her non-existent for the world. The consciousness of identity crises emerges in Keiko after the return of another war bride, Jun, from prison. Jun is also a victim of abusive marriage with one of the American soldiers, Captain Atkins. She killed her son out of frustration and because of that she was incarcerated for years. Jun explains to Keiko the nature of her relationship with Captain Atkins and her struggle with her own cultural identity as a Japanese living in America:

. . . when anything went wrong, he'd yell at me and call me a "Jap". That's why I did my best to behave like an American. He was so proud of Ronny because he was blond, blue-eyed and smart. When he left for Korea, he told me to make sure that Ronny was an 'A' student. I raised Ronny just the way he wanted, because I didn't want to lose him. (Flores, 2017, p. 18)

In contrast to the widespread view of inconvenient interracial marriages, academic articles, *Cultural and Marital Adjustment of Japanese Brides* and *Strain and Harmony in American-Japanese War-Bride Marriages* demonstrated interracial marriages between American soldiers and women from former enemy nations, were "stable" and working (Strauss, 1957, p. 99).

Unbroken Thread: An Anthology of Plays by Asian American Women edited by Roberta Uno (1993) is the first anthology of the plays written by Asian American female writers. In the introduction to Velina Hasu Houston, Roberta describes various biographical threads of the author's life. Author herself is a daughter of Japanese war bride so she observed the discrimination against her cultural group in America very closely. Houston migrated to American with her mother when she was two years old. One striking instance of racism in American society was the segregation camps for war brides. Immigrated war brides were given space near army bases where they spend their several years after immigration. Houston states that she ever felt while living in America that she is living in Japan because, American society had segregated the whole cultural group from the mainstream society and there was no cross-





cultural interaction between the dominant and non-dominant groups as termed by Berry (1994). Further Uno writes about Houston's experiences of prejudice outside her home from both whites and African Americans (1993).

Houston (1993) writes mostly about the interracial and intercultural identities and their problems of cultural adaptation in a new environment. *Tea* is the last play of trilogy, describing Setsuko's decision to marrying an American soldier in the first play, second play- *American Dream* further sheds lights over American society's attitude towards immigrants and the last play, *Tea* is specifically about war brides' unfortunate experiences in American society. Josephine Lee introduced *Tea* in the class of theatre and says that the play holds up racism "as an impassable boundary" in interracial marriages. Their departure "literally and symbolically is associated with death" and their arrival is seen as the endless sacrifice they must make for their relationships while they feel "suspended between two worlds".

Caroline Chung Simpson in her article, *Out of An Obscure Place Japanese War Brides and Cultural Pluralism In 1950s*, elaborately exposes the scheme of American government to justify their cultural plurality by representing Japanese war brides "successful Americanization" (50). They were reluctant to grant fundamental freedom to the Africans and pre-war Japanese Americans and it raises questions on their claim of cultural pluralist society. Simpson further explores that the emerging stories and celebration of war brides' Americanization in 1950 was in fact a way to divert the attention from the broader issues of Africans and Japanese Americans' demand for American citizenship and widespread reluctance to grant African American freedom (50). In contrast to the growing narrative of successful Japanese war brides, Simpson quotes Janet Wentworth Smith and William L. Worden's article "They're Bringing Home Japanese Wives" published in 1952 edition of *The Saturday Evening Post*, on January 19. According to this article, Japanese war brides or these new "Madame Butterfly's" who were trained "for the rigors of American domesticity in special Red Cross classes" have very little chance of having a bright future in America (53).

By reviewing existing literature, it is revealed that Japanese war brides did face cultural adaptation problems due to various factors such as incompatible linguistic skills, lack of education, lack of economic prosperity, racism and prejudices in American society, abusive marriages and so on. Velina Hasu Houston in her play *Tea* employ creatively all these stories and differing perspective regarding their struggle to adapt to the new culture while confronting racism. The present study attempted to extend relationship between the war brides' mental illness and racism in American society. It will also explore the relationship between acculturation and mental health of war bride while simultaneously examining their preserving of cultural identity as a defense against racism.

The study of *Tea* through the perspective of Berry's acculturation theory (1994) manifests the ethnic/racial discrimination war brides are experiencing at group as well as individual and psychological level in America. In culturally plural American society, Japanese war brides, as illustrated in the play, face unfavorable attitude and unacceptability in the society. The discrimination against them is shown in the form of political policies and prejudices which result in war brides' forced estrangement from the American culture. The adverse consequences of racism, as shown in the play, become the cause of committing suicide of Himiko Hamilton,





the protagonist of the play, after long suffering from mental illness- depression, stress- due to isolation and alienation. Racism at social and domestic level, alienates and isolates Himiko from any possible contact with the mainstream society as well as with her own heritage culture (Houston, 1993). She is described in the prologue of the play as “*beautiful, but beaten, and exudes an aura of sultry mystery. There is no lunacy in this woman, rather the sense of one who has been pushed to the edge, tried desperately to bom on, and failed*” (Houston, 1993, p. 163)

Berry’s four-fold acculturation model delineates the four possible acculturative strategies which individuals or groups can accommodate due to the process of acculturation. Redfield, Herskovits and Linton’s definition of acculturation is considered seminal in cultural studies. Acculturation is defined by Redfield (1936) as “those phenomena which results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups. . .” (1997).

Berry in his acculturation framework describe various factors which can affect the acculturation process of group and individuals. There are number of factors of “society of settlement” which affect acculturation such as “immigration policy”, “immigration history”, “attitudes towards specific groups” and “attitude towards immigration.” (Berry J. W., Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation, 1997, pp. 16,17)

American society, though culturally plural society, have a long history of racism towards its ethnic groups. In Houston’s play, *Tea*, the working of racism in American society and its effects on war brides’ acculturation process is demonstrated. Though being American citizens, they are segregated from the mainstream society and alienated into their ethnic enclaves because of their Japanese origin. “It was more than racism. It was the gloating of victor over enemy. It was curiosity . . . about why in the hell their red-blooded Amerikan boys would want to bring home an ‘Oriental’” (Houston, 1993, p. 185).

To whatever cultural background they came, all war brides forms a community because of their common experience of being “army wives” and “all Japanese”. Due to a government policy they had to live along with their husbands at army bases. “Kansas City . . . Where the army’s resettlement policy exiled our husbands because they were married to ‘Japs.’” Group segregation in the case of war brides is equivalent to the withdrawal adaptation strategy which is defined by Berry in *Acculturation and Psychological Adaptation* as an adaptation strategy “which reduces contact with the environment; in a sense, it is removal of the group or individual from the adaptive arena, and can occur either by forced exclusion or by voluntary withdrawal”.

Moreover, the four strategies which can be pursued by immigrants, in accordance to the various social and psychological factors, are “assimilation” . . . “separation” . . . “integration” . . . “marginalization”. (Berry, Kim, et al., 1989) For Berry, these strategies generate when individuals or group respond to the two main issues concerning immigrants i.e. “cultural maintenance” and “participation and contact [in host society]”. (Berry, Kim, et al., 1989) For adopting assimilation mode, the total shedding of original culture is required so the total immersion into the new environment would become possible. On the contrary, when only the heritage culture is maintained by individuals or groups and the desire to pursue new culture is absent then the separation strategy is defined. The balanced relationship between heritage cultural and the culture of dominant society (society of origin) generates integration strategy in





individuals or groups. Finally, the most complex and ambivalent strategy constitute when neither heritage culture is pursued to be maintained nor the larger society' culture is desired to be upheld. (Berry 1994)

Collectively, at a group level, all five war brides faced segregation. But at individual level their choices of acculturation strategies are different such as Atsuko, is a staunch separationist, Chizuye, an assimilationist, Setsuko and Teruko show signs of desiring for integration strategy as their tendency remain towards Japanese traditions and customs along with their tolerance for American life style. And lastly, Himiko is forcefully alienated from Japanese as well as American culture thus, forced marginalized by her husband in a narrow space literally as well as metaphorically.

Berry introduces the concept of “fit” to define the positive relationship between an acculturating individual and society. He delineates, when an individual or group's orientation is towards assimilation or integration strategy while society is also accepting her, then the ‘fit’ is achieved. On the other hand, a ‘fit’ is not achieved when society of settlement is having unfavorable attitudes towards immigrants or ethnic groups which results in separation/segregation or marginalization strategies which further leads to stress and psychopathology. (Berry, & Sam, 1980)

Chiz, apparently, is the most assimilated character as she has changed her language, dressing code, food and even her Japanese name. “Her nickname sound so stupid. Like food. She even wears pants now and grow her hair long like a hippy” (Houston, 1993, p. 166). Despite having quite favorable attitude towards American society and culture, she is unable to forget her Japanese identity. In the beginning of the play Chiz confesses, “. . . that underneath my comfortable American clothes, I am, after all, Japanese” (Houston, 1993, p. 169).

In a similar vein, Setsuko and Teruko are segregated from the main stream society despite their implicit desire to participate in American culture. One such example is their tolerant behavior for Chizuye's wish to have coffee instead of tea, in a cultural ceremony. (Houston, 1993, p. 174) Their dream of America as “the Land of Milk and Honey, the Bible Belt; the land of great” is soon shattered (Houston, 1993, p. 185). As Chiz reminds them, “you think your white husband buys you a position in town society, but, deep down at heart, you're still a ‘Jap’ to them and you always will be. . .” (Houston, 1993, p. 184).

Further, Setsuko's reminiscent of her arrival demonstrate the attitude of common American individuals which forced war brides to the marginal spaces. “Excuse me. We are looking for a hotel. What? Interracial couple? What does that mean? You reserve the right to refuse service? . . . My husband works for your government . . . I am speaking English” (Houston, 1993, p. 186)

The above examples of discrimination demonstrate that even though characters' orientation is towards positive acculturation strategies (assimilation and integration) but the unacceptability of the society and racism towards ethnic groups constrain them to Japanese culture by formulating negative strategies.





Houston's robust characterization, in above mentioned play, can also be studied to analyse the concept of psychological acculturation. Houston portrays that just like negative social acculturation, psychological acculturation in war brides is also negative which often results in mental illness. Fernando in *Racism and Xenophobia* states racism in society of settlement as generating severe psychological problems and risk factors for immigrants (as qtd in Berry 1997).

Berry's model of psychological acculturation is based on the Graves' (1967) distinction of acculturation and psychological acculturation. Psychological acculturation is the cultural changes at individual level. (Berry J. W., *Acculturation and Psychological Adaptation: An Overview*, 1994, p. 222) Psychological acculturation mainly studied the psychological adaptation and 'acculturative stress' due to the cultural changes in individuals or their collective group. Acculturative stress refers to the social and psychological problems that occur during acculturation. Psychological or social strains, experienced by immigrants in the process of psychological acculturation are given different terminology such as 'Cultural shock' (Oberg, 1960, p. 39), 'marginality' (Stonequist, 1937), 'acculturative stress' (Berry, 1997) and 'adaptive stress' (Kim, 2001). Psychological adaptation is considered to be the learning of new culture which enables an individual's mobility in a new culture. Previous studies suggest that acculturation is positively associated with mental health (Chiriboga, 2002, p. 30). However, it was also related to distress or problem behaviors (Nguyen, 1993, p. 71).

Himiko Hamilton, protagonist of the play, is an evocative portrayal of the victim of racism as it meddles with her mental health. For Himiko, negative attitude and high level of prejudice and racism in at social and individual level, in America, become the main factors of her loss of cultural identity and her inability to culturally adapt to a new culture. Himiko's character is an effective example of acculturation stress due to forced marginalization and segregation which can best be explained in the context of racism in American society.

Himiko's act of murdering herself and her husband is indicative of the high level of acculturation stress. Killing her husband is suggestive of the intensity of anxiety which leads her to such violent action. Facing everyday discriminatory behavior and domestic violence might have resulted in the piled-up frustration in Himiko which outburst in the act of murder. Where at one hand she endured Billy- her husband- ripping off her lip which doctors had to sew back (Houston, 1993, p. 191), on the contrary she murders him for not appreciating her soy-sauce. She kills herself as she had left with nothing to hold on to in American society. She murdered her abusive husband then her daughter was raped and murdered, further, she could not return to Japan because her father had already disavowed her due to marrying an American soldier.

Her seeming obsession with American life style can be seen her way of coping inferiority complex which her husband is instilling in her. Admiring American life style and attempting to imitate it contradicts her appreciation for Japanese culture. At one hand, Himiko pronounces her life in America as living in war, on the contrary, she admired Chiz as she "had become a model Amerikan" with "'perfect Amerikan' accent". Her desired to be accepted by American society and her insufficient knowledge about it results in her apparently strange behavior. As Setsuko narrates, ". . . I would see her walking in the middle of a humid summer day in a heavy coat and the yellow-haired wig".





Himiko's act of pouring out the beer on the grave of her husband also demonstrate the amount of psychological trauma she was going through while living with her husband. In a hysteric moment, she hallucinates that her husband is going to fetch her and torture her again. "No, I don't want to be alone with you anymore. I don't want to kiss and make up. (*pushes away an unseen presence*) . . . Billy's going to take me away. . . . He's going to beat me up again" (Houston, 1993, p. 173).

Her declining mental health, from Berry's acculturation perspective, is linked with several factors prevalent in the society of settlement. At first, she is segregated with rest of the war brides in Kansas City. Secondly, she was trapped in an abusive marriage with a white American who is proud to be a pure American and not racially mixed contrary to the rest of the war brides' husbands mentioned in the play. He did not let her participate in the American society and also oppressed her to shed her ethnic identity. "He never let her out of the house and hardly let her have guests" (Houston, 1993, p. 167). For psychological adaptation, the cultural learning of the dominant culture which she requires, is not granted to her. Third, she was left alone by the community of other war brides due to her deteriorating mental health. "All the Japanese women who were too ashamed to say hello to me in public because I was 'no good.'" (Houston, 1993, p. 169). Abandonment of war brides further accentuates her mental illness as Berry theorizes that support from cultural group is influential in coping with acculturative stress.

This study also examines that in the correlation between racism and mental health of the Japanese war brides, ethnic identity has served the role of a potential protective factor. Japanese culture provides a protective shell for their immunity from psychological distress. These war brides are shown to retain their cultural identity by having association with their own (Crawford, Hayashi, & Suenaga, 2010, p. 88) cultural group. According to identity management theory, which focuses on maintenance of relationships, Collier and Thomas define cultural identity as identifying with and having acceptance in a group that shares the same norms and customs and symbols and meanings. (Collier, 1988, p. 133). Alternatively, Hall sees it as externally imposed by others and also internally situated by a group by way of a norm and/or history. (222). In his words, it is "what we really are" or what we are "becoming" (Hall, 1993, p. 225). These terms express the transformative nature of cultural identity as Hall believes that cultural identity is not static but fluid.

In *Acculturation Attitudes in Plural Society* Berry et al (1989) define separation as "the maintenance of a traditional way of life outside full participation in the larger society may derive from a group's desire to lead an independent existence, as in the case of separatist movements." Similarly, war brides were already forced to live in ethnic enclaves but after the detailed overview of interaction with Americans, they conclude that "family is the most important thing" (Houston, 1993, p. 196). Japanese war brides have nothing else to hold onto except other war brides of their own origin. Their ethnic enclosure become protective against the exposure of individual or collective discrimination which if not tackled will lead to the adverse circumstances (similar to the suicide of Himiko). Collectively they are discriminated and segregated so, collectively they strive to restore their lost statuses.

. . . we're here today because we hurt inside like we never have before. Because when the first of us goes so violently and it's all over the papers, it wakes us up.





For the first time in our lives, we gather together all the pieces of our used-up hearts and come running here hoping we'll find some kind of miracle that will glue it all back together and send us into our old age with something to hold onto (Houston, 1993, p. 195).

For their mental well-being and to overcome the stress related to environmental conditions, war brides' sense of cultural identity can be seen as a potential protective factor in the play. After the death of first war bride, rest of the four come to realize that in the racist American community to avoid the consequences which Himiko endured, they should remain tied to their own community.

Houston's play *Tea* narrates the everyday life events of Japanese women whose marriages to American soldiers became a traumatic event of their lives. Their marriages were that unfortunate point in their lives which pushed them to a liminal space from where they had no chance of progression and of returning back. Their lives have been reduced to the perpetual war between being American and Japanese. "Atsuko: I am not a war bride. I didn't marry the war. / Setsuko: Maybe we did" (Houston, 1993, p. 185).

From the perspective of Berry's acculturation theory, *Tea* delineates the negative relationship between the American society and war brides. The society's lack of acceptance of the ethnic groups in mainstream culture is due to prevalent racism. This negative relationship leads further towards the mental illness in immigrants. This study explores that Japanese war brides, living in America, are imposed to retain their cultural identity due to racism and further, their own desires of choosing acculturating strategies are also shaped according to the larger society's influence. At first, they are segregated thus not provided much space to contact with American community, secondly, certain prejudices and stereotypes hold by Americans further alienate war brides, third, most these women are alienated in their own domestic places due to their abusive marriages. Due to all these factors, positive acculturation become impossible for these women and results mostly in negative. It can be concluded that in spite of American citizenship, racism in American society alienated and segregated Japanese war brides as they are forced to retain their cultural identity and do not participate into the mainstream culture. This forced separation causes high level acculturation stress in these women which causes mental illness as in the case of Himiko, due to deteriorating mental state, she commits suicide and also murders her husband. Rest of the war brides, in the aforementioned play, also faced equal racial/ethnic discrimination but their adherence to their heritage culture identity remain instrumental in keeping them away from "psychopathology" or severe "acculturation stress" as theorize by Berry (1997). Their choice of practicing Japanese values and restoring communal ties in American society saves them from similar consequences which Himiko faced.





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