

Navigating Cultural Differences: A Qualitative Descriptive Study of Filipinos in Marriages with Foreign Partners

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ABSTRACT

Intercultural marriages have become increasingly common due to globalization, migration, and international mobility, bringing together individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, languages, traditions, and values. While these unions provide opportunities for cultural enrichment and personal growth, they also require continuous adaptation and negotiation of cultural identities. This study aimed to describe the experiences of Filipinos in marriages with foreign partners through the lens of Berry's Acculturation Theory. A qualitative descriptive research design was employed involving eight Filipino participants married to foreign partners and residing abroad. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted via Google Meet and Facebook Messenger and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that participants experienced the four acculturation processes identified in Berry's theory. Integration was reflected through communication, mutual respect, and support from Filipino communities that facilitated cultural adjustment. Assimilation emerged as participants gradually adopted aspects of their spouses' cultural practices, lifestyles, and values while developing greater independence and resilience. Separation was evident in participants' continued preservation of Filipino values, traditions, food practices, language, and religious beliefs despite living in different cultural environments. Marginalization was experienced through feelings of alienation, language barriers, and challenges in communication and social interaction. Despite these difficulties, participants emphasized that effective communication, mutual understanding, emotional support, and cultural adaptability were essential in maintaining harmonious intercultural relationships. The study concludes that intercultural marriage is a continuous process of balancing cultural adaptation with the preservation of one's cultural identity. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of intercultural marital experiences and may serve as a basis for culturally responsive programs, counseling interventions, and future research on intercultural relationships in diverse cultural settings.

Keywords: intercultural marriage; Filipinos with foreign partners; acculturation; cultural adaptation; qualitative descriptive research.

INTRODUCTION

The Problem and its Setting

In an increasingly interconnected world, relationships that transcend national borders, cultures, and languages have become more common, with cross-national marriages rising as a notable social trend driven by globalization and increased mobility (Lu & Yeung, 2024; Parashar, 2025). Among these are marriages between Filipinos and foreign partners, which reflect the broader realities of globalization, migration, and intercultural interaction. While marriage is generally understood as a partnership grounded in love, commitment, and mutual respect, marriages that involve partners from different cultural backgrounds often present distinct challenges that require ongoing negotiation and adaptation.

Studies have shown that Filipino–foreign marriages involve complexities related to communication, cultural values, expectations, and life experiences (Dayot-Nepomuceno, 2022; Ullah, 2023). Differences in language may affect everyday communication, cultural norms may influence marital roles and family relationships, and variations in age and upbringing may shape perspectives on responsibility, decision-making, and long-term goals.

These differences, while potentially enriching, may also create tensions that Filipino spouses must continuously navigate within their marital relationships, as intercultural unions often require ongoing negotiation and adaptation in everyday life (Yurtaeva, 2024).

Globally, cross-cultural marriages have increased as a result of advances in international mobility, education, employment opportunities, and digital communication (Alnaimi et al., 2018), and international marriage migration has been characterized by ongoing negotiation of cultural adaptation and power dynamics across socio-cultural contexts (Ullah, 2023). In the Philippine context, marriages between Filipinos and foreign nationals have steadily grown, influenced by labor migration, transnational social networks, and international exposure. Despite the prevalence of these unions, limited local research has focused on the experiences and perspectives of Filipinos who are married to foreign partners.

This study described the experiences of Filipinos in marriages with foreign partners, focusing on how they navigate differences within their marital relationships. Through their accounts and descriptions, the study aimed to understand how Filipino spouses adapt to, navigate, and negotiate their everyday experiences in intercultural marriage.

The study further examined these lived experiences through the lens of Berry's Acculturation Theory, particularly the processes of integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization within intercultural marriages.

Research Question

This study sought to describe the experiences of Filipinos in marriages with foreign partners through the lens of Berry's Acculturation Theory (1997). Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of Filipinos in marriages with foreign partners in terms of integration in adapting to both Filipino and foreign cultural practices within their marital relationships?
2. What are the experiences of Filipinos in marriages with foreign partners in adapting to and adopting their partner's culture?
3. What are the experiences of Filipinos in marriages with foreign partners in maintaining and preserving their Filipino cultural identity within intercultural marriages?
4. What are the experiences of Filipinos in marriages with foreign partners in terms of feelings of isolation, misunderstanding, or exclusion in their intercultural relationships?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it describes the experiences of Filipinos in marriages with foreign partners and how they navigate cultural differences within intercultural relationships. Anchored on Berry's Acculturation Theory, the study provides insight into the processes of integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization experienced by Filipino spouses in adapting to their partner's culture while maintaining their own identity. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of intercultural marriage in the Philippine context, particularly in relation to communication, cultural adjustment, and relationship dynamics.

The study may benefit Social Studies teachers, counselors, researchers, and future researchers by providing research-based insights on culture, identity, globalization, and family relationships. It also supports the promotion of cultural awareness, mutual respect, and intercultural understanding, aligned with the Vision and Mission of Holy Cross of Davao College in developing socially responsible individuals who value diversity and humane relationships.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Berry's Acculturation Theory (1997), which explains how individuals adapt when exposed to a culture different from their own. The theory identifies four acculturation processes: integration,

assimilation, separation, and marginalization, which describe how individuals maintain their original culture while adapting to a new cultural environment.

In the context of intercultural marriages, the theory helps explain how Filipinos married to foreign partners navigate cultural differences, adjust to their partner's culture, preserve their Filipino identity, and cope with challenges within their relationships. Berry's Acculturation Theory served as the basis for understanding and interpreting participants' experiences in this study.

Conceptual Framework

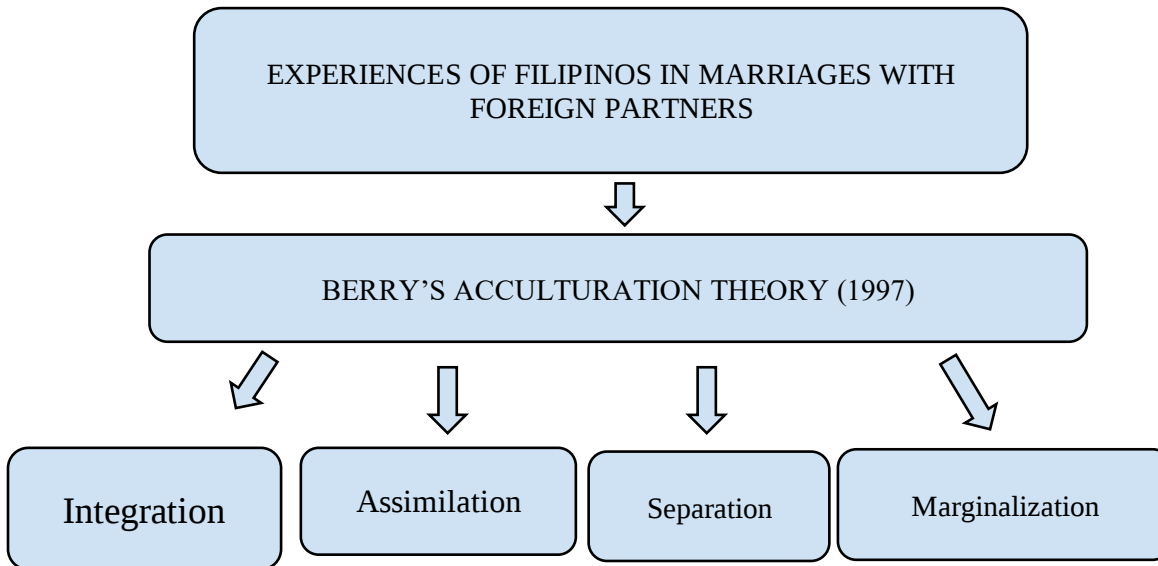


Fig 1. Anchored on Berry's Acculturation Theory (1997).

Assumptions

In my study, I assumed that Filipinos in marriages with foreign partners experience cultural, social, and communication differences that influence their marital relationships and everyday interactions. I also assumed that their experiences in intercultural marriage involve continuous adjustment, adaptation, and negotiation of cultural identity as they interact with their foreign spouses. Moreover, I assumed that the participants' experiences may reflect the acculturation processes presented in Berry's Acculturation Theory, particularly integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. Through examining these experiences, the study aims to provide meaningful insights into how Filipino spouses navigate cultural differences, maintain their identity, and build harmonious relationships within intercultural marriages.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to describe the experiences of Filipinos in marriages with foreign partners. Qualitative descriptive research focuses on providing clear and direct descriptions of participants' experiences and perspectives in their natural context (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024). This design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to gather detailed descriptions of participants' cultural adjustments, communication experiences, and identity preservation within intercultural marriages through in-depth interviews.

Research Locale

I conducted this study virtually through online interviews using Google Meet and Facebook Messenger calls, as these platforms were the most accessible and convenient for the participants. Most of the participants were living abroad either in their spouses' home countries or in countries different from both their own and their spouses' nationality, exposing them to diverse Western, Middle Eastern, and Asian cultural environments. This setting

was appropriate for describing the experiences of Filipinos in intercultural marriages. Conducting the study through virtual platforms allowed me to gather diverse perspectives and meaningful experiences despite geographical distance while ensuring accessibility, flexibility, and convenience in the data gathering process (Archibald et al., 2019; Tracy, 2020).

Sample and Sampling Technique

My study involved 8–10 Filipino individuals who had been married to foreign partners and had lived within intercultural marriages for at least three years. The participants were residing in different countries and came from diverse cultural environments, allowing the study to gather varied experiences related to intercultural marriage. Participants were included regardless of educational or professional background, provided that they were Filipino citizens, of legal age, and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

To ensure relevance and depth of information, I employed purposive sampling, Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasized that a non-probability sampling technique is appropriate for qualitative research, as it prioritizes rich and meaningful experiences over generalization. In line with this, the participants were intentionally selected based on their direct experiences in marriages with foreign partners, enabling the study to obtain detailed and relevant insights into intercultural marital relationships.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide for in-depth interviews. This instrument was appropriate for a qualitative descriptive research design because it enabled participants to provide detailed descriptions of their experiences, perceptions, and perspectives regarding intercultural marriage. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that encouraged participants to discuss their experiences with foreign spouses in their own words. The use of semi-structured interviews also allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions and seek clarification when necessary, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the participants' responses while maintaining consistency across interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Gathering Technique

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, targeting Filipinos who were married to foreign partners and met the inclusion criteria of the study. Recruitment was conducted through referrals, personal networks, and online communities where intercultural families were present. Once participants voluntarily agreed to participate, I conducted In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) using Google Meet and Facebook Messenger calls to gather rich qualitative data. Each interview lasted approximately one hour or more, depending on the participants' availability and responses. The interviews were conducted in English, Filipino, or Visayan based on the participants' language preference and were audio-recorded with informed consent to ensure accurate transcription and analysis.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the in-depth interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. Following the recommendations of Creswell and Poth (2018), the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and repeatedly reviewed to facilitate immersion in the data and a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences. Significant statements were identified, coded, and organized into meaningful categories. Through an iterative process of coding and clustering, themes were developed to capture the shared experiences of Filipinos in intercultural marriages and how they navigated cultural differences within their relationships.

The interpretation of the emergent themes was guided by Berry's Acculturation Theory, particularly the concepts of integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization, which provided a lens for understanding participants' experiences of cultural adaptation and interaction. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, peer debriefing was undertaken through regular consultation and critical review with the research adviser. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), peer debriefing helps researchers examine interpretations, challenge assumptions, and reduce potential bias during the qualitative analysis process.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, I applied several strategies throughout the research process. Credibility was established through in-depth interviews and careful review of the participants' responses and narratives. Dependability was ensured by maintaining clear documentation of the research procedures, interview process, and data analysis. Confirmability was strengthened through peer debriefing and consultation with the researcher's adviser to minimize bias and ensure that the interpretations were grounded in the participants' accounts and descriptions of experiences. I also secured the necessary ethical clearances and institutional approvals, including a Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE) certificate and endorsement from the Graduate School Dean. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the interview procedures, and their rights through an informed consent process. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms and secure handling of all collected data.

RESULTS

In this chapter, I present the findings of my study on the experiences of Filipinos in marriages with foreign partners. Through thematic analysis, I identified themes that reflect how participants navigate communication, cultural differences, adaptation, and identity preservation within intercultural marriages. Guided by Berry's Acculturation Theory, the findings are organized into four acculturation processes: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization

The findings revealed that participants continuously balance adapting to their partner's culture while maintaining their Filipino identity. Although participants experienced challenges related to language barriers, emotional expression, and social adjustment, they also developed understanding, resilience, and mutual respect within their relationships.

Integration

On Navigating Communication Challenges in Relationship: Participants described communication barriers as one of the major challenges in intercultural marriage, particularly in expressing emotions and understanding each other because of language differences.

One participant shared:

"We had a relationship for almost a year and then we decided to get married. Very strange because we cannot really communicate, but we can. I cannot really speak Thai that time, but love binds us together." -IDI-6

This reflects how emotional connection became stronger than language barriers for some participants. Even though they could not fully communicate verbally, they still managed to build commitment and understanding within the relationship. Love and patience helped them maintain connection despite communication difficulties.

Another participant expressed:

"It is challenging because the first thing is like we have a lot of differences. First thing is our language. The language barrier because sometimes like we're fighting and then I can't really express my feelings." -IDI-4

This shows that language differences affected how participants expressed emotions during conflicts and misunderstandings. Participants struggled to communicate their feelings clearly, which sometimes created emotional frustration within the relationship. Communication barriers influenced both emotional expression and understanding between partners.

Another participant stated:

"Sometimes you want to say something, but they can't understand it... you try to explain everything, but still, they don't get it." (IDI-3)

This indicates that participants experienced emotional difficulty when they felt misunderstood despite making efforts to explain themselves clearly. Miscommunication created frustration and emotional distance at times. However, participants continued trying to understand one another despite these challenges.

On Mutual Respect for Cultural Differences: Participants emphasized the importance of respecting each other's cultural practices, preferences, and routines despite differences in lifestyle and traditions.

One participant shared:

"I cook my favorite Filipino foods anytime I want... he just says, 'Don't give me the dried fish,' and that's fine with me." (IDI-3)

This reflects how acceptance of Filipino cultural practices helped participants feel respected and emotionally comfortable within the relationship. Small acts of understanding strengthened mutual respect between partners. Cultural acceptance also helped participants maintain their identity despite living in a different environment. Another participant stated:

"My husband don't say that 'Hey, don't do that. Hey, don't cook rice' because, like that, like that, um, I feel that he still wants me to do things the way we do them in our culture." -IDI-1

This shows that maintaining familiar practices, such as cooking rice during meals, allowed participants to preserve their cultural identity. Everyday routines became meaningful expressions of their Filipino culture. Respect for these practices contributed to harmony within the relationship.

Another participant expressed:

"Uh, so, our daily routine is really simple but meaningful. Most mornings, we eat breakfast together, he likes bread and cheese, and I still prefer rice, so sometimes we laugh about how different our plates look." -IDI-5

This suggests that participants learned to appreciate cultural differences through humor, compromise, and shared experiences. Instead of treating differences as conflicts, they developed openness and understanding toward each other's preferences. This reflected mutual adjustment within the relationship.

On Support Systems Facilitating Integration: Participants highlighted the importance of Filipino friends and support systems in helping them adjust to intercultural marriage and life abroad.

One participant shared:

"my Filipino friends really helps me cope. Especially the girls who have been here longer than me. They sometimes explain, 'This is how the culture is here, and since we live here, we should adjust.' And, uhm... I think that's true. They didn't force us to come here, we chose to live here so we should learn to adapt (Norway)." -IDI-2

This reflects how fellow Filipinos became important sources of emotional support and cultural guidance for participants adjusting to a foreign environment. Their advice and experiences helped participants better understand cultural expectations abroad. Support systems played an important role in helping participants cope with adjustment challenges.

Another participant stated:

"Talking to Filipino friends here really helps, because they understand what I'm going through. We share stories about missing home, and uh, it makes me feel less alone (Denmark)." -IDI-5

This indicates that connecting with people who shared similar experiences reduced homesickness and emotional loneliness among participants. Filipino friendships created a sense of familiarity and belonging despite living far from home. These social connections also helped participants emotionally manage cultural adjustment.

Another participant expressed:

“My older friends, it’s them whom I can ask for advice. So you learn to ask for advice to older people who stayed here in Thailand for a long time because they already know. So yeah, maybe that really helps me.” -IDI-6

This shows that experienced Filipino migrants became valuable sources of advice and reassurance for participants. Their guidance helped participants better understand how to adjust and navigate daily life abroad. Shared experiences also contributed to participants’ sense of comfort and support.

Assimilation

On Embracing Foreign Cultural Practices: Participants described adapting to their partner’s cultural practices, lifestyle, and expectations as part of their adjustment process.

One participant shared:

“In the Philippines, mostly, the wife is holding their money, right? But here it’s different. Like, my money, my money, and your money, your money. That’s like the reality here and then in the Philippines, mostly wife is just staying home. Not, like, not all, but like, a lot and then they’re like, taking care of the baby, but here, it’s like you both are working.” -IDI-4

This reflects how participants adjusted their perspectives regarding financial roles and responsibilities after exposure to different cultural expectations. Participants became more open to different ideas about independence, work, and partnership within marriage. Cultural adaptation influenced how they understood gender roles and family responsibilities.

Another participant expressed:

“At first, drinking wine with meals felt strange, but now I enjoy it.” -IDI-7

This highlights how repeated exposure to unfamiliar practices gradually helped participants become more comfortable with their partner’s culture. Practices that initially felt unfamiliar eventually became part of their daily routines. This reflected openness toward cultural adaptation and change.

Another participant stated:

“I’ve learned to be more independent... now I see it as a way to grow stronger.” -IDI-5

This indicates that adapting to a foreign culture encouraged participants to become more independent and resilient. Living abroad required them to handle responsibilities on their own, which contributed to personal growth and self-confidence. Cultural adjustment also shaped participants’ sense of capability and independence.

On Blending Partner’s Culture: Participants shared experiences of gradually incorporating aspects of their partner’s culture into their routines and communication. One participant shared:

“Adopting or adjusting to their culture is not totally different for me because he’s always there to guide me.” -IDI-1

The statement emphasizes the importance of spousal support in helping participants adjust to unfamiliar cultural practices. Guidance and reassurance from partners made cultural adaptation less overwhelming and easier to

manage. This also reflected the importance of patience and understanding within intercultural relationships.

Another participant expressed:

“Understanding one another is like how you're going to adopt their culture.” -IDI-4

This suggests that mutual understanding and communication played an important role in helping participants adapt to cultural differences. Participants viewed openness and compromise as necessary in building cultural adjustment within the relationship. Adaptation became possible through shared understanding and cooperation.

Another participant stated:

“I also try to speak French every day, even if I make mistakes.” -IDI-7

The participant's response illustrates active effort in adapting to their partner's culture through language learning and everyday communication. Despite difficulties, participants remained willing to improve their understanding and interaction with their spouses. This demonstrated commitment toward cultural adjustment and integration.

Separation

On Preserving Filipino Values: Participants emphasized preserving Filipino values and teaching these traditions to their children despite living in a different cultural environment. One participant shared:

“We're teaching him Filipino practices like mano po... and 'po' as a sign of respect.” -IDI-4

This highlights how participants intentionally preserved Filipino traditions by teaching them to their children. Respect for elders remained an important value that participants wanted to maintain within their families. Passing these traditions to the next generation reflected their strong attachment to Filipino identity.

Another participant stated:

“I also teach my kids to say 'po' and 'opo,' because respect for elders is something I don't want to lose.” -IDI-7

I observed that participants viewed Filipino values as an important part of family identity and upbringing.

Another participant expressed:

“Tudloan nako akong anak anang pagmamano...” -IDI-8

It became evident that participants viewed Filipino traditions as meaningful expressions of respect and identity. Even while living in intercultural settings, they continued prioritizing these values within their families and parenting practices. Preserving these traditions helped participants remain connected to their culture.

On Maintaining Filipino Food Practices with Spousal Support: Participants continued practicing Filipino food traditions with encouragement and acceptance from their spouses.

One participant shared:

““I still cook Filipino dishes, and he even tried to learn.” -(IDI-2)

This reflects how support from spouses encouraged participants to continue practicing Filipino traditions within the household. Their spouses' willingness to participate in Filipino food practices showed openness and cultural acceptance. Shared participation also strengthened understanding within the relationship.

Another participant stated:

"I still keep my Filipino values like cooking pancit, lumpia, or adobo..." -IDI-7

I observed that Filipino food became a meaningful way for participants to stay connected to their culture and share it with their families abroad.

Another participant expressed:

"My husband still let me eat what I want... Filipino practices and all that stuff." -IDI-1

On Upholding Cultural and Faith Traditions: Participants shared that they continued practicing Filipino traditions and religious beliefs despite cultural and religious differences. One participant shared:

"I still go to the Catholic church, even my husband is Christian." -IDI-3

The findings indicate that the faith remained an important source of identity, stability, and comfort for participants.

Another participant expressed:

"I still pray every night... because it makes me feel connected to my faith and my family back home." -IDI-5

I observed that religious practices provided emotional comfort and helped participants maintain connection to home and family. Another participant stated:

"Traditions like Christmas... we celebrate together with my family too." -IDI-6

It became evident that Filipino traditions remained important because they preserved familiarity and emotional connection for participants. Celebrating these traditions allowed them to maintain cultural identity while also sharing these experiences with their spouses and families.

Marginalization

On Experiencing Alienation and Exclusion: Participants described feelings of isolation, exclusion, and emotional disconnection caused by cultural and language differences.

One participant shared:

"I feel... lost because the culture here is very different." -IDI-5

This reflects how adjusting to a different cultural environment sometimes caused participants to feel disconnected from familiar social interactions and ways of life. Cultural differences created emotional difficulty and feelings of unfamiliarity during adjustment.

Another participant expressed:

"I felt frustrated, like I wasn't being listened to." -IDI-7

The participant's experience reveals how differences in communication and parenting styles created feelings of frustration and emotional exclusion. Participants sometimes felt that their opinions and cultural perspectives were not fully understood by others.

Another participant stated:

“At first, I felt left out with his family because I didn’t know Norwegian.” -IDI-2

I realized that language barriers affected participants’ ability to fully participate in social interactions and connect with others.

On Facing Challenges in Relating: Participants experienced challenges in social interaction, communication, and emotional expression because of cultural differences.

One participant expressed:

“Sometimes I feel misunderstood because what I meant is different.” -IDI-1

This suggests that participants experienced emotional frustration when their intentions and feelings were misunderstood because of language differences. Communication difficulties affected their confidence in expressing emotions clearly and effectively.

Another participant stated:

“My pronunciation, my accent... people will notice right away.” -IDI-3

I observed that participants became self-conscious about their accent and pronunciation, which affected their confidence during communication.

Another participant shared:

“His mom didn’t like seeing me eat with my hands. For her, it looked disrespectful.” -IDI-2

I realized that cultural misunderstandings sometimes caused participants to feel judged or misinterpreted within unfamiliar social environments.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the study revealed how Filipinos in marriages with foreign partners continuously navigate cultural differences, communication challenges, adaptation, and identity preservation within intercultural relationships.

1. Integration through Communication, Respect, and Support Systems

Participants experienced communication challenges in their relationship. Despite these challenges, they maintained mutual respect for cultural differences and support systems from Filipino friends and communities.

2. Assimilation through Adapting to the Partner’s Culture

Participants gradually embraced foreign cultural practices and blend on their partner’s culture.

3. Separation through Preserving Filipino Identity

Participants continued preserving Filipino values, maintain Filipino food practices with spousal support, and uphold cultural and faith traditions.

4. Marginalization through Alienation and Difficulty Relating

Some participants experienced feelings of alienation, exclusion, and faced challenges in relating.

DISCUSSIONS

Discussed in this chapter are the findings of the study in relation to previous literature and Berry's Acculturation Theory (1997). Presented as well are the implications for practice and future directions.

Integration through Communication, Respect, and Support Systems

In my study, I found that the participants experienced communication challenges in their relationship. Despite these challenges, they maintained mutual respect for cultural differences and support systems from Filipino friends and communities. My finding aligns with Mayer (2023), who explained that intercultural couples commonly experience communication difficulties, emotional adjustments, and cultural misunderstandings that require patience and adaptability. Similarly, Machette and Cionea (2023) found that communication, family expectations, and cultural differences are among the most common challenges experienced in intercultural marriages. My findings affirm that communication and mutual understanding play important roles in maintaining intercultural relationships despite cultural differences. However, Hill et al. (2025) argued that intercultural differences may create barriers to communication, trust, and relationship satisfaction because of differences in beliefs, language, and cultural expectations. This suggests that cultural differences within intercultural marriages may also contribute to emotional tension and relational difficulties when couples struggle to effectively manage communication and adjustment challenges.

The findings further revealed the importance of support systems in facilitating adjustment. Filipino friends and migrant communities provided emotional support, reassurance, and guidance that helped participants cope with homesickness and cultural adjustment. Berry (1997) explained that integration becomes more successful when individuals maintain social support while adapting to another culture.

Assimilation through Adapting to the Partner's Culture

My finding showed that the participants gradually embraced foreign cultural practices and blend on their partner's culture. My finding supports Mayer (2023), who noted that intercultural couples often develop coping mechanisms, flexibility, and cultural awareness as part of relationship adjustment. Similarly, Mercer et al. (2025) explained that intercultural relationships encourage cultural learning, adaptability, and development of communication skills. These findings support the idea that intercultural marriages contribute to personal growth and cultural openness among couples. However, Janicka (2025) argued that intercultural adaptation may become difficult when couples strongly hold on to conflicting cultural expectations and values, which may create adjustment problems within the relationship. This means that adaptation in intercultural marriage may not always occur smoothly for every couple.

I also found that adaptation contributes to participants' personal growth, independence, and resilience. Berry (1997) described assimilation as a process where individuals gradually adopt aspects of another culture while adjusting to a new environment.

Separation through Preserving Filipino Identity

My finding revealed that the participants continue preserving Filipino values, maintain Filipino food practices with spousal support, and uphold cultural and faith traditions. My finding aligns with Machette and Cionea (2023), who emphasized that maintaining cultural traditions and identity provides emotional comfort and stability among intercultural couples. Similarly, Janicka (2025) explained that cultural traditions and family practices help individuals maintain familiarity and emotional connection within intercultural relationships. These findings support my observation that preserving Filipino identity remained important despite participants' adjustment to another culture. However, Devjak et al. (2023) suggested that prolonged exposure to another cultural environment may gradually influence individuals to lessen attachment to their original cultural practices in favor of adapting to the dominant culture. This implies that maintaining cultural identity may become challenging when individuals are highly exposed to another cultural environment for a long period.

I also observed that Filipino food practices and religious traditions became important sources of comfort and identity preservation for participants living abroad. Berry (1997) explained that individuals may continue valuing and maintaining their original culture even while adapting to another cultural environment.

Marginalization through Alienation and Difficulty Relating

My finding showed that some participants experienced feelings of alienation, exclusion, and faced challenges in relating. My finding aligns with Mayer (2023), who explained that intercultural relationships may involve emotional and social difficulties caused by cultural adjustment and communication barriers. Similarly, Turan and Kutsal (2025) found that language barriers, differences in emotional expression, and cultural misunderstandings contribute to communication breakdown and relational stress in intercultural marriages. These findings support my observation that communication and cultural differences can affect emotional adjustment and social interaction within intercultural relationships. However, Mercer et al. (2025) argued that intercultural marriages may also strengthen intercultural competence, resilience, and emotional growth because couples learn how to navigate cultural diversity together. This suggests that challenges in intercultural relationships may also become opportunities for growth and stronger relational understanding.

I also realized that communication barriers affected participants' confidence in social interaction and emotional expression. Devjak et al. (2023) explained that misunderstandings often emerge because of differences in communication styles and cultural expectations.

Implications for Practice

The findings of the study suggest that intercultural couples may benefit from stronger emotional, social, and cultural support systems to help them navigate communication challenges and cultural adjustment. Counselors, social workers, and family practitioners may develop culturally sensitive programs that promote intercultural communication, conflict management, and emotional support for intercultural couples. Community organizations and Filipino migrant groups may also provide support networks that help individuals cope with homesickness, social isolation, and cultural adjustment abroad.

Future Directions

Future studies may further explore intercultural marriages in different cultural and geographic contexts to better understand how cultural adjustment varies across societies and backgrounds. Researchers may also examine the perspectives of children, extended family members, or foreign spouses to gain a broader understanding of intercultural family dynamics. Future research may additionally use quantitative or mixed-method approaches to further examine the relationship between communication, cultural adaptation, identity preservation, and relationship satisfaction among intercultural couples.

Modified Paradigm

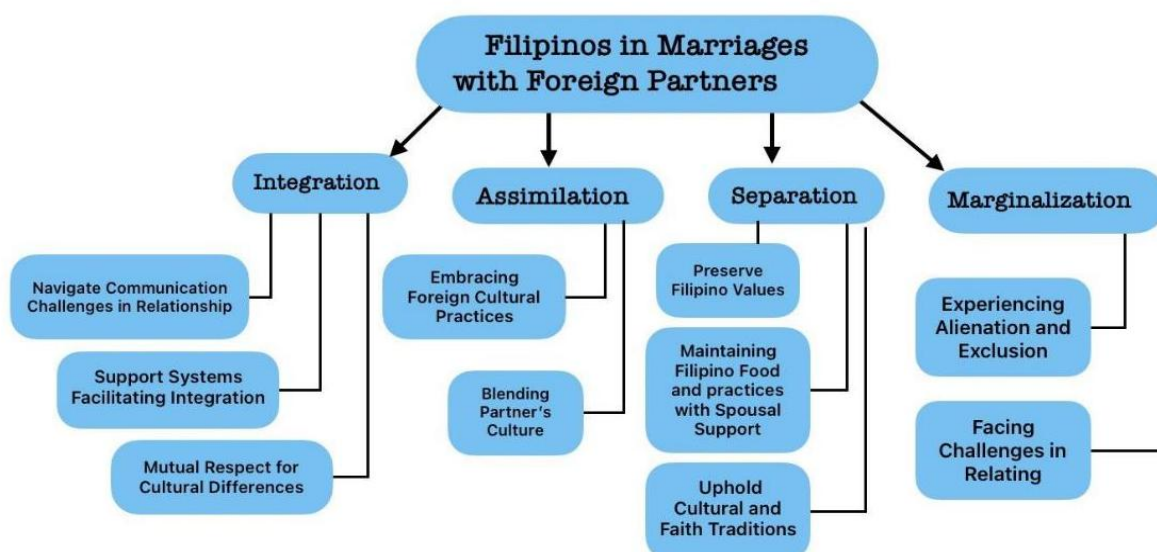


Fig 2. Modified Paradigm.

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