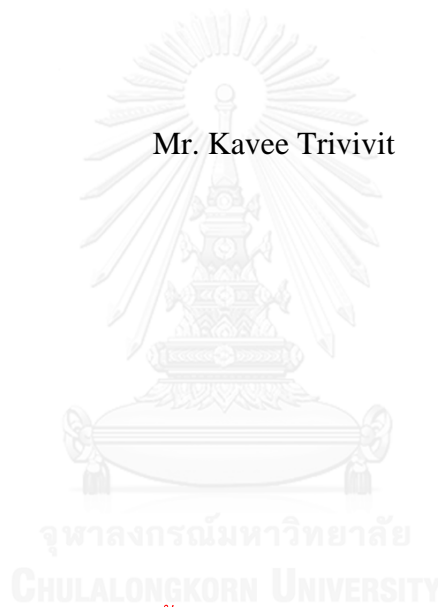


INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE: THAI WOMEN AND SINGAPOREAN MEN IN
SINGAPOREAN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

Mr. Kavee Trivivit



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การศึกษาเรื่องการแต่งงานข้ามชาติระหว่างผู้หญิงไทยกับผู้ชายสิงคโปร์ในประเทศสิงคโปร์มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจปรากฏการณ์การแต่งงานดังกล่าว งานวิจัยนี้ศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ทางเพศสภาพ, อิทธิพลของทัศนคติต่อภาพลักษณ์เฉพาะกลุ่มคน, แรงขับเคลื่อนวัฒนธรรมและโครงสร้างของสังคมสิงคโปร์, ทางเลือกและความคาดหวังของบุคคลในการแต่งงานในปัจจุบันและอนาคต งานวิจัยนี้เป็นการศึกษาเชิงคุณภาพ โดยใช้การสัมภาษณ์แบบเจาะลึกกลุ่มสมรสจำนวน 20 คู่ มีทฤษฎีหลักที่ใช้ คือ ทฤษฎีการแต่งงานข้ามชาติของทาคาชิ อินูเอะ, ทฤษฎีลำดับขั้นความต้องการของแอบราฮัม มาสโลว์, และทฤษฎีโครงสร้างนิยมของแอนโทนี กิดเดนส์

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า มีความขัดแย้งในการเลือกคู่สมรสและความคาดหวังในการแต่งงานของกลุ่มสมรส ความขัดแย้งเหล่านี้เป็นสาเหตุทำให้เกิดการโต้แย้งและชีวิตสมรสที่ไม่ราบรื่นระหว่างคู่แต่งงานข้ามชาติ ความรู้สึกในด้านลบที่ยังคงมีอยู่เหล่านี้เป็นผลเสียอย่างใหญ่หลวงต่อคู่สามีภรรยา อย่างไรก็ตามคู่สมรสเหล่านี้ไม่ได้เป็นเหยื่อในสภาพการณ์ดังกล่าว แต่พวกเขาล้วนเป็นผู้มามีส่วนร่วมสร้างความก้าวหน้าในชีวิตและฐานะทางสังคมอย่างต่อเนื่องในฐานะคู่สามีภรรยา

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The study of international marriages between Thai women and Singaporean men in Singapore aims to investigate the phenomenon of such marriages. The paper examines gender relations, influence of stereotypes, cultural and structural forces that guide Singaporean society, individual choices and expectations in a marriage in the present and the future. The study relies on qualitative research methods in particular in-depth interview with twenty couples in total. The main theories include, Takashi Inoue's theory of international marriage, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and Anthony Giddens' structuration theory.

Based on the findings, there is a conflict in choices of mate selections and expectations in a marriage of such couples. These conflicting ideas have caused a point of contention and created an unhappy marriage for couples involved in international marriage. The lingering of such negative sentiments can prove to be catastrophic for these couples. However, these couples are simply not victims of their circumstance. Instead, they are active agents who continuously endeavour to make progress in their lives and social status as a couple.

Field of Study: Southeast Asian Studies Student's Signature

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale

Singapore is better known to be one of the ‘four Asian tigers’ or ‘Asian dragons’ due to being a highly developed economy alongside South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan (Sarel, 1996). Its status of being one of the ‘four Asian tigers’ was given due to the ‘phenomenal growth’ (Sarel, 1996) of its economy due to its ‘powerful and intimidating economic performance’ (Sarel, 1996). Incidentally, this title has also set itself apart from its Southeast Asian counterparts. It has elevated Singapore to being known as ‘the 9th most developed country in the world’ (Singh, 2014) while other Southeast Asian economies are considered to be developing. The developed status has boosted the perception of its citizens to establish themselves apart from citizens in neighbouring Southeast Asian nations.

It comes as no surprise of the fact that the nation state experience a large transnational flow of people to take advantage of living in a “near perfectly run country” (Asiaone, 2016) with “competitive, fast-paced, ultra-modern, yet clean, safe and economically solvent” (Asiaone, 2016) environment due to its highly developed status. The large transnational flow of people include migrant women from other Southeast Asian nations who flock to Singapore with the hope of finding their husbands from a “relatively wealthy country” (Asiaone, 2016) in the hope of providing them with comfortable lives. The resultant of such inflow led to the increase in international marriages with ‘a 40 per cent jump from 3,988 in 2002 to 5,599 in 2013 in the number of Singaporean men taking foreign brides specifically from countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand’ (T. Tan, 2013). However, the exact number as quoted from Ms Khalijah, the representative of the Registry of

marriage of Singapore that, 'We are sorry that we are unable to assist further in your request.' This thus shows that this phenomenon is relatively new in the Singapore society and that little attention or importance is given to the topic of international marriage in Singapore. Therefore, by doing a research on this topic, it would be able to shed light on such phenomenon; especially when the numbers are seen to be on the rise in recent years. A further communication of the email is seen in Appendix 1 of this research.

It is given that, Singapore is home to more than '40, 000 Thai immigrants many of which are Thai women married to Singaporean men' (T. Tan, 2013). However, many of these women find their expectations of 'happily ever after' dashed once they got married and moved into their Singaporean husbands' households. These expectations were often replaced with the reality of numerous tribulations ranging from 'poverty to abuse and immigration woes' (T. Tan, 2013). This is due to the fact that many Thai migrant wives in Singapore mostly married 'lower- educated Singaporean men who find it hard to attract a local wife'(T. Tan, 2013). Moreover, most of these lower educated Singaporean men are blue-collared workers who 'earn too little to support their families or are too old to land a job' (T. Tan, 2013). Thus, this leads to a wide range of troubles and insecurity. Thai women, therefore, consider their stay in Singapore as temporary and maintain a relationship with their homeland. It was reported that blue-collared workers are laborers who deal with machinery and manual works with many of these workers earning 'a gross \$1450 per month' (Singh, 2014).

It is interesting that the prevalence of international hypergamy marriages between Singaporean men and women from other Southeast Asian countries could be attributed to an escalated sense of 'masculine anxiety' on the part of Singaporean men as no local Singaporean women 'want to fulfill traditional women role' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009) as the society progressed. Therefore, these men chose to marry foreign wives in order to sustain their patriarchal privileges (Jongwilaiwan, 2009) in Singapore.

Singapore is considered to be a patriarchal society as seen through the numerous numbers of laws and policies which “separate women from men in areas of personal growth and development”(Onlinewomeninpolitics.org, 2016). One of the most outstanding examples of such law is the “quota on women entering medical school” (Onlinewomeninpolitics.org, 2016) while men do not have such quota inflicted on them. The rationale of such law is the fact that it is impossible for women to balance between home and work (Onlinewomeninpolitics.org, 2016). This suggests a greater level of inequality between males and females in Singapore. Another example is evidenced by the birthright of the child born outside of Singapore. Presently, a child born to a “Singaporean mother and non-Singaporean father has to apply for Singapore citizenship by registration” (Onlinewomeninpolitics.org, 2016). However, this is not the case when the gender roles are reversed since a “man is the head of the family” (Onlinewomeninpolitics.org, 2016).

In this research, I intend to conduct a study on the lived experiences of couples involved in international marriages using the case study of Singaporean men and Thai women in order to shed light on the lived experiences of such couples. This is with the hope of creating an awareness to help such couples in the future to manage these challenges. Furthermore, as such phenomenon is relatively new and there are limited ‘safety nets’ available to help such couples, this study may help social institutions, especially government officials understand the plight of such couples and create respective ‘safety nets’ for them.

1.2 Definition of Key terms

International marriage in this research refers to the intermarriage between Thai women and Singaporean men.

Hypergamy refers to the act of a Thai woman marrying with a Singaporean man with the perception of him having a ‘higher social status’ in the economic sense.

Patriarchal society refers to a social system in which Singaporean men are in

authority over Thai women in the economic and cultural aspects of Singapore society.

Lived experiences in this study refer to the first-hand accounts and impressions of living as members of society; in this case Singaporean men and Thai women involved in international marriages.

Safety net refer to a safeguard against possible hardship or adversity that couples in international marriages might face.

1.3 Research objectives

In this study, I aim

- i) To investigate the phenomenon of international marriage between Thai women and Singaporean men.
- ii) To study how Thai wives adapt themselves to Singaporean patriarchal society.

1.4 Research Questions

Through the course of this research, I seek to provide a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of couples involved in international marriage through the case study of Thai women married to Singaporean men. The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What motivates Thai women and Singaporean men to get married to each other?
2. How do Thai wives live their lives and negotiate their identity as female Thai migrants in Singaporean patriarchal society?

1.5 Methodology

I will inquire on the lived experiences of couples involved in international marriages specifically between Singaporean grooms and Thai wives living in Singapore. The lived experience of these couples will be examined through the use of qualitative methods. The role of the qualitative method is to collect primary data for the purpose of analysis. For my primary data, I will conduct in-depth and open ended-recorded interview with twenty couples involved in this phenomenon to inquire the motivations behind international marriage between Thai women and Singaporean men. The interviews are conducted in English which is the communicative language of these couples. The couples are interviewed together as per the request of the informants. The 'observer effect' between the couples may not be able to affect the data collected during the interviews since there was a low Thai proficiency in the Singaporean grooms and a low English proficiency in the Thai brides. As such, the response given by the Singaporean grooms will not be understood fully by the Thai brides and vice versa. Therefore, I deemed that it is acceptable for the interviews to be conducted together. Moreover, due to the short time span of this research, interviews conducted together will be more viable as opposed to individual interviews.

The research informants are gathered through the use of purposive sampling of which the husbands must be Singaporean and the wives must be Thai involved in international marriage. Furthermore, 'snowballing' method is also used to gain access to these couples. The 'gate keeper' for me to access these informants was Luck, a close acquaintance of my mother who is a Thai woman married to a Singaporean man for nineteen years.

In order to fully grasp the phenomenon of 'international marriage' and the issues surrounding it, I linked the data collected from the fieldwork to various literatures on 'international marriages', 'hypergamy', 'gender' and 'cultural studies' in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected during the fieldwork.

Furthermore, I will use 'Giddens' Structuration Theory' which argues that the relationship between social structures and human practices is inseparable' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009) as a focal point to understand the living experiences of Thai brides in Singaporean patriarchal society. I also intend to argue that the living experiences of these women are shaped by the structural properties that guide them'(Jongwilaiwan, 2009). However, given the dynamic nature of any given social structure in that it is always involved in a 'process of reproduction through these human activities which in turn enables opportunities for humans to challenge, circumvent and change an existing structure' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009). Therefore, these wives are not merely a passive victim of their circumstance. In fact, they are active agents who continuously endeavour to ensure that they are able to maintain their identity and continue to make progress in their lives and social status in a place that they come in contact with even though they might be seen as 'sojourners rather than settlers'(Yi'En Cheng, 2015). I linked the data collected from fieldwork to Journals and books on 'International marriage' and 'Patriarchal society'. The main aim of this process is to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected during the fieldwork. This process is also used to identify the theoretical framework and concepts that can be used to help aid our understanding of the phenomenon.

That being said, this study relies heavily on qualitative research methods and it is important that we pay close attention to the data collected from the fieldwork. In addition, there should also be an analysis of the data collected from the fieldwork so as to allow us to link it to the conceptual models and theoretical frameworks as outlined in chapter 2. The analysis of the research findings will be done in the next chapter.

1.6 Hypotheses

- i) Thai women are involved in international marriage as they perceive Singaporean men to have higher status economically and socially and have an expectation of leading a comfortable life after marriage whereas Singaporean

men are involved in international marriage with Thai women as they want to sustain their patriarchal privileges in Singapore.

ii) Thai wives adapt themselves to Singaporean patriarchal society by showing that they comply to their husbands.

1.7 Significance of research

The findings from this study will provide a clearer understanding and knowledge of the challenges of international marriage and help couples to be able to make an informed choice. Moreover, through such awareness, couples will be able to discuss solutions of the challenges and minimise conflicts and misunderstanding in their marriage.

In addition, this study could also be used as an 'instrument' to help various social institutions to understand the challenges experienced by couples involved in international marriage and provide a 'safety net' respectively. Finally, this study may subsequently be a 'blue print' for researchers interested in studying such phenomenon between couples in other countries in the future.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW, CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Prior to researching on the various concepts and theoretical framework, a literature review on the issues surrounding international marriage in Singapore was conducted. This is to ensure that enough knowledge about the Singapore society and International marriage were gathered at hands. Moreover, the literature review would also provide a better understanding to the phenomenon and issues surrounding international marriage. Finally, the literature review is conducted with the purpose of identifying the ‘gaps’ of knowledge in the field of this phenomenon.

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Social and Economic issues surrounding International Marriage in Singapore.

Marriage is a private matter between two individuals. However, the consequence of marriage has social and public policy implications for the nation in areas such as population policies and family laws. This is especially crucial for a young nation like Singapore where international marriage is seen to be on the rise.

According to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, ‘in 2004, over a quarter of male Singaporeans and permanent residents married foreigners, and 9 per cent of women married foreign males’(Asiaone, 2016). This increasing trend is seen over a period from 1996 to 2005 and is projected in Table 1.3 below. The table shows the rising percentage of individuals from both gender marrying foreigners in Singapore over a 10 years period. There is an increase of 8.1 percent of men and 2.2 percent of women marrying foreigners from the period of 1996 to 2005 with the highest peak being in the year 2005 for both gender. Moreover, the table also shows that there is a higher

percentage of Singaporean men opting to marry foreigners as opposed to women. This hence shows a consistency that increasingly, more Singaporean men are opting to marry foreign women.

Table 1.1: percentage of people marrying foreigners in Singapore

Year	% of men marrying foreigners	% of women marrying foreigners
1996	19.1	4.7
1997	16.0	4.1
1998	20.1	5.2
1999	18.3	5.5
2000	19.9	5.8
2001	21.5	6.1
2002	21.2	6.0
2003	20.1	6.4
2004	23.5	6.8
2005	27.2	6.9

Source: Department of statistic, Singapore

Such trend is seen to remain consistent over the next ten years period with 36 percent of marriages in Singapore being a transnational marriage involving at least one Singapore citizen. The graphic representation of the proportion of transnational marriages is seen in Chart 1.1 below.



Chart 1.1: The graphic representation of the proportion of transnational marriages in Singapore.

Source: Department of statistic, Singapore

As seen in chart 1.1, the highest number of transnational marriages peaked in the year 2005, 2009 and 2010 with 41 percent of marriages being a transnational one.

The increasing trend in the number of transnational or international marriage is observed over the twenty years periods with an average of 26.4 percent of international marriages in the period from the year 1996 to 2005 and an average of 39% from the year 2005 to 2015. All in all, there is an increase of 12.6 percent in the number of international marriages in Singapore over the 20 years period.

The rise of international marriage has caused the nation to be malleable in its population policies and family laws in response to declining fertility rates as shown in Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2: Fertility rates of Singapore from 1970 to 2015

Fertility	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2014	2015
Total Live- Births	45,934	41,217	51,142	46,997	37,967	42,232	42,185
Resident Live- Births	n.a.	40,100	49,787	44,765	35,129	37,967	37,861
Crude Birth Rate (Per 1,000 residents)	22.1	17.6	18.2	13.7	9.3	9.8	9.7
Total Fertility Rate (Per female)	3.07	1.82	1.83	1.60	1.15	1.25	1.24
Gross Reproduction Rate (Per female)	1.49	0.88	0.88	0.77	0.56	0.61	0.60
Net Reproduction Rate (Per female)	1.42	0.86	0.87	0.76	0.55	0.60	0.60

Source: Department of statistics, Singapore

As seen in table 1.2, Singapore's total fertility rates has fallen by 1.83 per female from the year 1970 to 2015 with a total live births being recorded at 42,185 in 2015 down from 45,934 in 1970. Table 1.4 is a good summary of the declining birth rate in Singapore. The low fertility rate has led to 'bifurcated embrace of international marriages' (K. P. Tan, 2003) by Singapore which influenced the 'apparent liberalization' of attitudes, policies and laws in this area against the backdrop of the

state's domineering conception of Singapore society as a patriarchal one' (K. P. Tan, 2003).

The economic success of Singapore is 'wildly disproportionate to its size' (Teo, 2010). The state has glorified the role and function of the family to be a factor that led to its economic success. Singapore states that such success comes as a result of the fusion of characteristics of 'the West - its technological advances and competitive spirit' (Teo, 2010) and fuse it with the values of 'the East' in which the social institution, in particular the family becomes both which must be 'protected and that which will protect society from the negative fall-outs of economic growth (Teo, 2010). Therefore, to Singapore, family is an important institution that helps to boost economic growth while maintaining social cohesiveness in the country.

Besides state-led initiatives and policies, there are many other factors that gave rise to international marriage in Singapore. It starts with the theory of 'marriage squeeze' which is 'a shortage of marriageable women (Kort & Gharbi, 2013) with similar ideals to that of the males in Singapore which led to the men having to source elsewhere for women of similar ideas. The surge in international marriage in Singapore is traditionally a 'search by males who face problems in domestic marriage markets for brides from poorer countries, who are not in a position to be as 'choosy' as local women' (G. Jones & Shen, 2008).

However such understanding has since then been expanded to include people wanting to experience new cultures and to seek new opportunities outside of their home countries. Moreover, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (K. P. Tan, 2003) also gave a further explanation that the rise in international marriage in Singapore is natural, 'given that more Singaporeans now live and work abroad and many foreigners live and work in Singapore' (G. Jones & Shen, 2008). Moreover, some academics such as Wang and Chang (2002) also attribute the emergence of profit-oriented transnational matchmaking agencies and the availability and ease of access of online dating platforms to be some the 'most immediate and influential factors' (Kim, 2010) that led to the increase in international marriages.

Traditionally; however, Jones and Shen (2008) noted that although the proportion of international marriage is high in Singapore, ‘the proportion of international marriages with a partner from a different ethnic group is not nearly as high’ (G. Jones & Shen, 2008). This trend is what is changing as more and more Singaporean men are opting for wives from countries such as Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia. This is due to the search in other lands for partners who possessed the ‘qualities that they think are increasingly hard to find’ (G. Jones & Shen, 2008) in local women. This view is coupled by local women who are opting to find men from wealthier more developed countries as mate due to the perception that these men tend to be more ‘sophisticated, civilized, romantic and open minded than local ones’ (G. Jones & Shen, 2008).

Another factor that led to the rise of international marriages in Singapore could be the social and population policies that is engineered by the state in order to reverse the trend of low fertility rate that has befallen Singapore. It is the state’s narrative that ‘family is critical to society-‘an anchor’’ (Teo, 2010) which is needed for both the growth of individuals and the Singapore society that could have caused the rise in the number of international marriages as men seek brides in order to start families. The state narrative of the family as an anchor of individual’s and societal wellbeing is seen in the excerpt by Ministry of Community Development and Sports in 2003 as follows:

The family is an important institution. It brings fulfillment to our lives and is our anchor in this fast-paced, ever-changing environment. Families serve as an important pillar of support for the nation. At the individual level, families are the primary source of emotional, social and financial support. At the national level, they contribute to social stability and national cohesiveness as they help develop socially responsible individuals and deepen the bond Singaporeans have with our country.

Moreover, government of Singapore dishes out incentives such as an easy access to public housing, baby bonuses and tax relief measures for married couples and families who has children and thus portrays marriage and childbearing as ‘ideal

behaviours that justify greater rewards as citizens' (Teo, 2010). This led to the rush of singles to search for ideal partners in order to reap the benefits and to portray themselves as ideal citizens. Therefore, this could be another reason for the increase in the number of singles searching for partners in the bid to start a family and in turn led to the rise in the numbers of international marriages as singles believed they will not benefit much from remaining single. Hence, Social engineering by the state could be another attributing factor that led to the increase in the number of international marriages in Singapore.

2.1.2 Singapore as a patriarchal society

Singapore as a state is largely guided by the state's use of the 'Asian values/traditions' (Teo, 2010) discourse and is coupled with self-governing as 'gender and class aspirations interact to produce 'fears of falling'' (Teo, 2010). The fear of falling can be linked to the need for tight control which can be linked to the male trait typically found in patriarchal society. The governing body of Singapore is known to be 'a paternalistic and patriarchal post- colonial government' (K. P. Tan, 2003) who dishes out 'authoritarian policies' (K. P. Tan, 2003) in the bid to control its population whose individuals are known to be 'sexually repressed and repressive' (K. P. Tan, 2003).

The most blatant form of Singapore as a patriarchal society is through the renaming of the Ministry of Labour to the Ministry of Manpower in 1998. The renaming gave a justification of a 'male centred' society where the center of the activity of work is on men. In addition, this also gave 'institutional legitimacy' (Doran & Jose, 2002) to the idea that work is what men do and that it is not a place for women. The measure of labour force participation is measured in units of 'manpower'. It excludes women from the sphere of work through phrases such as 'manpower needs,' 'manpower strategy,' 'manpower planning,' 'manpower development,' 'manpower management,' and so on ("The Economy of Singapore," n.d.). Thus, the role of women as a worker are eliminated from the public sphere; emphasising state's stand that women's contribution to Singapore's wellbeing is understood 'first and foremost as mothers and wives' (Doran & Jose, 2002).

The guiding Asian values that were often uttered through the mouth of Singaporeans is largely link to its patriarchal nature of the state which includes the respect of authority in particular of paternal figure. The very Asian values that Singapore ascribed to is in fact known by scholars such as Stack (1995) to be ‘a spartan, ritualized and politically differential version of Confucianism’ which is of ‘East Asian’ origins. The role of Asian values in Singapore is often justify by the state to prevent ‘the threat of cosmopolitan values’ such as cohabitation and the celebration of single mothers to seep into the society. Needless to say, one can also see such use of the values as a tool to preserve and maintain patriarchal privileges of the ruling power which are predominantly male. This is reflected through the contradiction of the People’s Action Party (PAP) - the ruling political party on its stand on modernity and the position of women in Singapore. Ex-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong mentioned in his 1999 National Day Speech that ‘Singapore will continue to import whatever it needs- people, capital, businesses, ideas-to enhance its competitive edge’ (“The Economy of Singapore,” n.d.). However, Dosa and Jose (2012: 5) noted that ‘when it comes to dealing with women’s issues, any idea that might threaten men’s power is deemed to be unSingaporean, and the PAP suddenly finds value in the ‘local’ rather than the ‘global’, the ‘authentic’ rather than the ‘imported’, the ‘traditional’ rather than the ‘modern’’. The obsession with Confucius values and the contradiction of the state towards the idea of modernity in comparison to the position of women in Singapore reiterates its position as a patriarchal society.

Moreover, Singapore as a patriarchal society can be seen through the various laws, policies and its representation of politicians along the gender lines. There are in proportionate ratio between males and females. This is coupled with its recent stance of voting against the bill of the ‘protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation, and gender identity (SOGI) (“Personal Protection Orders (PPOs), Expedited Orders (EOs) and Domestic Exclusion Orders (DEOs) in Singapore.”, 2012) which is also known as LAC8. Its vote reflects its disagreement at the bill to ‘help progress protection for people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity’ (“Personal Protection Orders (PPOs), Expedited Orders (EOs) and

Domestic Exclusion Orders (DEOs) in Singapore." (2012). This shows that the state do not identify with the idea of equality for both genders. Instead, the state believed in male being the head of the household and where 'childbirth and care giving are women's domain' (Teo, 2010). An example of this belief is reflected in the concessions and benefits available to employees when they have babies. The benefits are segregated through gender: 'employers of married women are required to provide sixteen weeks of paid maternity leave' (Teo, 2010). In contrast, 'men may- if their employers choose to comply- receive up to three days of paternity leave' (Teo, 2010). This shows the stance of the state in demarcating the role of the women to be mothers and caretakers while that of the men to be the provider.

In addition to the dishing out of policies that clearly demarcates the role and responsibilities of individuals along gender lines, the 'paternalistic' state also tries to meddle into personal affairs of its citizens. This is seen through the 'Romancing Singapore' festival which aims to 'provide a climate for everyone to celebrate and cherish relationships' (Constable, 2003). Such festival shows the nature of the society with its obsession for control which gives evidence of Singapore to be 'obsessed with rules' (K. P. Tan, 2003) and control - a characteristic of a patriarchal society.

Another instance that shows Singapore to be a patriarchal society is the through Singapore's sexuality education programme which is a form of social engineering aimed at educating its young in sexual behaviours in order to inculcate 'positive values and attitudes towards sexuality, in line with the national value of the family as the basic unit of society'(Singapore, 2000) also has a major setback which is the perpetuating the 'taken-for-granted practices that commoditize women, marriage and sexuality' (K. P. Tan, 2003). This is seen through the portrayal of pornographic materials as a boys' issue which should not be touched by girls. The sexuality of females is likened to a 'brand new magazine that hasn't been opened'(Singapore, 2000). This commodification of female sexuality and body parts do not have the same extension for males. In such stance, one can see that Singapore is indeed a patriarchal society which commoditize women as an object for the fascination and pleasure of the male populace.

All in all, one could see that Singapore is indeed a patriarchal state through its obsession with rules and control which is predominantly a male trait. The manipulation of family and population policies to suits the developmental needs deemed by the ruling power-the PAP has led to Singaporean women being 'economically marginalised and remain vulnerable' (Doran & Jose, 2002) in many aspects of society. The policies created by the state in its 'attempts to manipulate family size in order to meet its own economic and social objectives' (Doran & Jose, 2002) impacts women the most as women in the nation state is faced with double responsibilities of being a worker as well as the nurturer of the family.

2.1.3 Thai women in International marriage

Traditionally, the discourse concerning international marriage often 'allude to the image of the Mail-Order Brides (MOB) which typically links these women with notions of women's trafficking, women's subservience and marrying out of economic desperation' (Constable, 2003). However, there is an emerging trend of literature such as the Thesis by Emily Walter (2014) and Jongwilaiwan (2009) that focus on the narrative of these women as active agents to debunk such myths. These literature argue that, women are involved in international marriages for a variety of reasons ranging from economic and social factors such as the search for new adventures.

The reason that motivates Thai women towards international marriage can be studied through the historical and socio-cultural context of the Thai society in relation to the lived experiences of these women themselves. At the micro level, there is the Feminization of Cheap Labour in Thai society. Thailand's 'capitalist development in the post-World War II period began from the policy of encouraging foreign investment, industrialization, and tourism which had effect on social structure, cultural values, and daily life' (Teo, 2010). The capitalist development led to the growing demand for cheap labour in urban areas. The move of rural-urban migration is coupled with unpredictability of farming as a source of income to sustain one's livelihood.

Migrant women who move to Bangkok in search of work usually face marginalization in comparison to their male counterparts due to the patriarchal nature of the Thai society. The patriarchal nature of the Thai society often sees parents investing in their male children. Hence, women migrants in Thai society are more likely to receive lower wages than their male counterparts as they are deemed to be less qualified with lower educational attainment. The lower educational attainment coupled with the patriarchal nature of Thai society which embed the role of women as nurturer and provider led to the women having to engage in pink collar labour jobs such as masseuse or in the service sector jobs to cater to clients in need of these services. These jobs are easily attained by these women due to low entry requirement. In addition, pink collar labour jobs is seen by these women as an 'easy source to meet their potential husband' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009). These women sees pink collar jobs as an opportunity to allow them to 'intrude into personal domain which transcends beyond service provider relationship' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009).

Likewise, Thai women opt for international marriage to 'escape from poverty, to upgrade their economic status' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009). Thai migrant women chose to marry men from Singapore as they believed that it is a way of escaping their current circumstances and is a 'ticket' to a good life. Therefore, to these women, *'Transnational marriages is used as a livelihood strategy to escape the Thai exploitative economic structure. Marriage migration of Thai rural women is one form of and to shift from prostitution'* (Jongwilaiwan, 2009). The move to marry a foreigner abroad for Thai migrant women is seen to help these women to assume the role of a 'dutiful' daughter who sacrificed herself as a nurturer and caretaker in order to care for her parents by providing money. Likewise, migration scholars such as Brenda Yeoh also observes that 'remittance money carries social meaning of care, emotionality and filial piety' (Yi'En Cheng, 2015) and that, 'female migrants are generally considered to be reliable remitters demonstrating greater emotional ties to 'home' countries and a sense of responsibility towards maintaining and reproducing transnational linkages within the household' (Yi'En Cheng, 2015).

However, there are 'marginality generated by such marriages' (Imamura, 1990). This marginality is seen to have developed when these women are entering into an entirely different society from their own. Scholars such as Imamura (1990) and Hughes (1971) ascribed three determinants to the marginality. Firstly, these women who are deemed to be marginal people in the new society have not undergone the same 'social life cycle' (Imamura, 1990) as the local citizens in that society. Therefore, there are certain forms and aspects of social life which will be different to them in comparison to the local adversaries. Secondly, there are 'intersocietal differences in the relative influence of ascription and achievement on specific roles and types of participation' (Imamura, 1990). This is to say that these women are at a higher risk of discriminations by the locals or that they may find it more difficult to move up the 'social ladder' which usually gives priority to the natives. Thirdly, these women who are active agents may 'retain subjective contradictions to the extent that their new role involves betrayal of norms and expectations stemming from their earlier socialization in their own cultures' (Imamura, 1990). This is to say that there are certain behaviours or ideas which is in disagreement with these women. An example of such is when a Thai Buddhist woman marries a Singaporean groom of a different religion. There are bound to be practices which is in disagreement with the faith of the women which led to marginality.

Hughes (1971) has identified five means that reduce marginality-two of which are related to social change, two are related to specific individual changes and the last one is how individual responses in relation to social changes. The means include the needs for these women to come to terms and accept the norms of adulthood and womanhood in the new society. An example is when an independent Thai woman married to a Singaporean groom now has to 'behave like delicate creatures requiring male protection' (Imamura, 1990) and are asked to be a child-bearing machine by the Singapore state in an attempt to fulfil her duty as a wife of a Singaporean citizen. Likewise, she must deal with existing contradictions and differences in order to accept the new norms. That being said, the range of strategies is determined by socio-demographic factors of the marginals such as 'the length of residence, ethnicity, and occupation' (Imamura, 1990). Moreover, it is also determined by 'both willingness of

the host society to integrate foreigners, and the perpetual marginality that comes from not passing through the normal social life cycle' (Imamura, 1990).

Although scholars in the feminists realm often argue that 'marriage migration of women from developing countries to developed countries necessarily lead to women's exploitation' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009). However as seen through the study 'Thai women and marriage migration in Singapore' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009), it was found that these women are active and not passive agents and are not victim of the circumstance. Instead, they have the ability to circumvent, 'negotiate, maneuver and challenge the legal, economic and socio-cultural structural constraints' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009) with 'varying forms of success or closure of the agency under different structural constraints and circumstances' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009). Therefore, these women are not 'absolutely powerless or totally empowering' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009).

Therefore, this research hopes to study on the lived experiences of the couples involved in international marriage and to elucidate how these couples are active agents who will 'negotiate, maneuver and challenge the legal, economic and socio-cultural structural constraints' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009) in patriarchal Singapore in the bid for blissful marriage.

2.2 Concepts and Theories of the study

2.2.1 Concepts of International Marriage: Hypergamy and Hypogamy

International Marriage is seen to be a 'growing phenomenon' (Cohen, 2003) and is attributed to the process of globalization in which shrink the globe in a figurative sense and in turn facilitate the 'union of couples marked by extreme heterogamy' (Cohen, 2003) such as those of different nationalities. It is also often referred to as 'cross- border marriage' (Wang & Chang, 2002).

Traditionally, international marriages took one of two forms which were ‘arranged marriage and marriage brokered through ethnic ties’ (Wang & Chang, 2002). However, with the process of globalization, one cannot ignore the role of human agency in the decision making process which led to international marriage. This led to scholars paying more attention to the ‘historical and experiential specificities’ (Kim, 2010) of lived experiences of couples involved in international marriage and the ‘diverse and locally grounded meanings of heterosexual marriage and love’ (Kim, 2010).

International marriage, according to Inoue (2010) can be further subdivided into 4 subsets: 1. Marriage between a domestic groom and a foreign bride from a less developed country 2. Marriage between a domestic bride and a foreign groom from a less developed country 3. Marriage between a domestic groom and a foreign bride from a more developed country and 4. Marriage between a domestic bride and a foreign groom from a more developed country as shown in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3: Four types of International Marriages as proposed by Inoue (2010)

Type of international marriage		From the bride's viewpoint	The number of marriages
Type 1	Marriage between a domestic groom and a foreign bride from a less developed country	Hypergamy	The most
Type 2	Marriage between a domestic bride and a foreign groom from a less developed country	Hypogamy	Fewer than type 1
Type 3	Marriage between a domestic groom and a foreign bride from a more developed country	Hypogamy	The fewest
Type 4	Marriage between a domestic bride and a foreign groom from a more developed country	Hypergamy	More than type 3

Table 1.3 shows that Type 1: marriage between a domestic groom and a foreign bride from a less developed country and Type 2: marriage between a domestic bride and a foreign groom from a less developed country typically happened when an individual from a more developed country gets married to an individual from a less developed country and vice versa for Type 3: marriage between a domestic groom and a foreign bride from a more developed country and 4: marriage between a domestic bride and a foreign groom from a more developed country. In contemporary societies, Type 1 and 4 are seen to be more common than Type 2 and 3 which means, there are more occurrences of hypergamy marriages from the bride's viewpoint than there are hypogamy marriages.

Type 1 and 4 are usually associated with hypergamy while Type 2 and 3 are associated with hypogamy from the bride's viewpoint. This is to say, in Type 1 and 3 brides aspire to marry grooms who are better off than them while brides in Type 2 and 3 will marry grooms who are seen to be inferior to them. The superiority and inferiority can be in various aspects be it economically or socially. Economical status between brides and grooms can be measured through home country currency exchange value or family net worth of the bride and groom. Likewise, social status can be measured through the social status of the family or in cases where there is a caste system, the caste of the family.

Most migrant women who are married to Singaporean men belonged to Type 1 which is also known to be hypergamy marriages. This is done through the comparison of the status of development between the Singaporean grooms to that of brides from other Southeast Asian nations. These women typically got involved in such marriages with the hope of finding their 'happily ever after' through the improvement of their economic and social status acquired from finding foreign husbands (saame taang chart) in a relatively wealthier country than their own.

The aspiration of these migrant women in international marriage also come from their disadvantaged position in domestic labour market which sees the lack of opportunities and lesser income earned by these women than their male counterparts. Therefore their inferior positions in the home society in comparison to their male counterparts

led to them venturing out of their home country in search of foreign husbands. Moreover, these women also viewed men from wealthier countries to be more 'sophisticated, civilized, romantic, and open-minded than local ones' (G. Jones & Shen, 2008). Likewise, the men's reason behind seeking foreign wives is due to the 'search for traditional qualities perceived to have been forsaken by local women' (G. Jones & Shen, 2008).

The typical trend among the two gender is that, women are more likely to aspire hypergamy, 'regardless of economic level of their countries, even if their grooms are foreigners or not' (Inoue, 2010). This is due to the 'povertization of women' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009) in contemporary societies which gave woman a disadvantage when compared to their male counterparts.

However, scholars have been slowly move away from economic explanation as they noticed an emerging trends among people who sought to engage in international marriage. These trends include, 'a sense of adventure, a desire to travel abroad and experience a different world, the experience of major failures (in romantic relationships or careers), freedom from hardships and family pressure, and love, among others (Kort & Gharbi, 2013). This trend has shown individual's 'desire to attain a more favorable position in the spatial hierarchy and to benefit from the advantages of a better location' (Kim, 2010). This is due to the analysis of post migration experiences of individuals involved in international marriages. This analysis has shown that individuals involved in international marriages do face 'obstacles and disappointment' that are common to other married women or immigrants crossing border for employment and that these couples are not passive but an active agents who negotiate, challenge and circumvent existing structural constraints that they confront by demonstrating agency through their "choices and independent actions" (Kim, 2010) alone but also that of the communal environment that surround them. This in turn led to a more comprehensive study which focuses on human agency to portray a more 'diverse and complex' (Kim, 2010) picture of lived experiences of couples involved in international marriages.

The shift from economic explanations to focus on human agency as the main motivator behind international marriage helps to reassert the position of Singaporean grooms as the ‘gatekeeper’ of traditional patriarchal values in Singapore in which ‘men are in authority over women’ (Study.com, 2016). This is through their search for brides from developing countries in order to ‘search for traditional qualities perceived to have been forsaken by local women’ (G. Jones & Shen, 2008). Likewise, their switch to search for brides from neighbouring countries also shown their attempt at maintaining ‘patriarchal privilege’ in the city-state.

2.2.2 A Patriarchal society

Patriarchal society refers to a society in which ‘men are in authority over women’ (Study.com, 2016) in the social, political and economic aspects of society. It is a society in which declared the man to be the head of the household and to be the sole decision makers. Patriarchal society is a feature of traditional society. It is a ‘structure of a set of social relations with material base which enables men to dominate women’ (Abidemi, 2005). It is a system that is based on the differentiation of gender which gives material and social advantages to males while ‘simultaneously placing severe constraints on the roles and activities of females’ (Abidemi, 2005). Such society ascribed to a ‘clearly defined’ gender roles (Aina, 1998).

According to McCallister (2016), there are five characteristics of a patriarchal society. These five characteristics are summarised in Table 1.4 below.

Table 1.4: Characteristics of Patriarchal society.

<u>Characteristic of Patriarchal society</u>	<u>Elaboration</u>
1. Male dominance	Men are considered to be superior and are the main decision makers in both society and family unit.
2. Male identification	Society is obsessed with male-related traits such as qualities of control, strength, forcefulness, rationality, strong work ethic, and competitiveness.
3. Male centeredness	The center of activity and progression is on men. Men will be the focus and developer of all events and inventions, the heroes in all situations and will be the center of social engagement, fun, and entertainment.
4. Obsession with control	Men must be in control at all times. They are the main determinant of all social and family situations.
5. Oppression of women	Women are submissive and subservient to men in the society.

Adapted from McCallister, Jessica. "Patriarchal System: Definition & Overview - Video & Lesson Transcript | Study.com." Study.com. Study.com, 2016. Web. 11 Dec. 2016.

The first characteristic of a patriarchal society is that it is a society with an overpowering male presence and dominance. This is to say that men are considered to be superior and are the main decision makers in both society and family unit. It is a society where men are mostly the sole decision makers on laws, policies and social structures that guide the daily functioning of the society. An example of a country which has all male cabinet of ministers is Brazil under the leadership of its interim president Michel Temer. This is due to Brazil's long and traditional culture of treating its woman 'as a second-class citizens' ("The Ten Worst Countries for Women," n.d.).

The second characteristic of a patriarchal society is male identification. It is when a society deemed qualities formally ascribed to males as a desirable traits. These qualities include, 'strength, vigour, virile/powerful, courage, self-confidence' (Abidemi, 2005) and competitiveness among others. An example of such society is Singapore in which 'still places high standards on education, competition and results' (Chiang, 2012). It is a society that places high emphasis on results and success as

opposed to compassion and empathy which is predominantly known to be traits associated to female.

The third characteristic is male-centeredness. It is when a society gives credit to males as the heroes in all situations and proceed on to elevate males as the centre of social engagement, fun, and entertainment. Such society is known to practice Androcentrism; the practice of placing male human beings or a 'masculine point of view at the center of the society' ("The Ten Worst Countries for Women," n.d.). An example of a society which practices Androcentrism is the Thai Buddhist culture and belief system which viewed men to be 'the better gender than woman':

'a man who committed adultery would, after his death, be sent to hell to be severely punished and after the suffering in hell he would have to be born a woman for 500 lives and a transvestite for another 500 lives before being born a man again' ("The Ten Worst Countries for Women," n.d.)'.

This excerpt has shown that women is seen to be inferior to men in the old ancient Buddhist belief in Thai culture which has been carried on till present time. This example has reinstated the Thai society to be an Androcentric society in which males are elevated and deemed to be more important than females.

The fourth characteristic of a patriarchal society is that it is obsessed with control. It is a society in which men must be in control at all times and are usually the main determinant of all social and family situations. An example of a country with such characteristic is Pakistan in which 'women are gang-raped as punishment for men's crimes' ("Women's Charter," n.d.). In such society, women have limited influence on their predicament and under constant subjugation by their male counterpart.

The fifth characteristic is the oppression of women. In a patriarchal society, women are submissive and subservient to men in the society. It is a society in which women are deemed powerless when compared to the males. They are under constant supervision and control of males. An example of a country with the oppression of women is Saudi Arabia. It is a country where women are 'treated as lifelong

dependents, under the guardianship of a male relative' (UNDP Human Development Report, 2016). Moreover, in this society, 'women are almost entirely absent from the public space' (Halliday, 2013) and is the 'only country in the world that does not allow women to drive' (Halliday, 2013).

The term 'patriarchy' was 'originally used to describe the power of the father as head of household' (Abidemi, 2005). Patriarchal society is seen to have risen from Confucius notion where 'women were at the bottom of the Confucian hierarchy' (Abidemi, 2005). It is where 'women were expected to demonstrate obedience before all virtues' (Abidemi, 2005) and at no point is a woman deemed to be an autonomous being that is free of male control. Such view is deemed to emerge from Taoist cosmology during the Han dynasty which sees the dichotomy of men as 'yang (active, powerful, accentuated) and women as yin (passive, weak, diminished)' (Abidemi, 2005).

While patriarchal society is typically linked to traditional societies, there are some characteristics that seemed to have made its way into modern nations in Southeast Asia. Characteristics such as male dominance, male centeredness and male identification are still present in societies such as Singapore. An example of Singapore as a society with male dominance and obsession with control is seen through the political climate of Singapore. There are 'currently 21 elected women parliamentarians out of a total of 89 elected members' ("Women's Charter," n.d.). This shows that women are significantly underrepresented in government and parliament. Another example of male centeredness in Singapore is seen through its law and policies particularly through the quota placed on medical students in Singapore. More quotas are given to male students in medical schools in Singapore as the government deemed that such job is more suitable for male and that the role of females is restricted to be in the domestic domain. This is with the view that males are the head of the household and that their main responsibility is to work and earn an income for the family while the female should be at home to nurture the family.

Singapore as a patriarchal society is seen through the analysis of various laws and policies in the nation-state, which shows the society to be a society that is centered on male and their ethics. An example of a patriarchal society is seen through the bills passed by the state in having more male quotas than female quotas on the intake of medical students annually. This is with the view that the main responsibility of females should be limited to the domestic sphere.

The establishment of a patriarchal society could be explained using the theory of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. A patriarchal society is established due to individual's desire to fulfil their needs on each step of the pyramid to reach its highest peak which is the need for self-actualization. The link between patriarchal society and the theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs will be further explained in the next section.

2.2.3 Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory that shows a 'five tiers of model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid' (Study.com, 2016). It is a theory to show that 'people are motivated to achieve certain needs, and that some needs take precedence over others' (Study.com, 2016). The first group of needs to be fulfilled is basic needs, which comprises of physiological needs and safety needs. Upon basic needs being fulfilled, human will then aspire towards fulfilling their Psychological needs, which are the needs for a sense of belonging and love and esteem needs. Finally, human will aspire for self-actualization needs in order to achieve a wholesome experience of being human. The graphic representation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is seen in Chart 1.2 below.

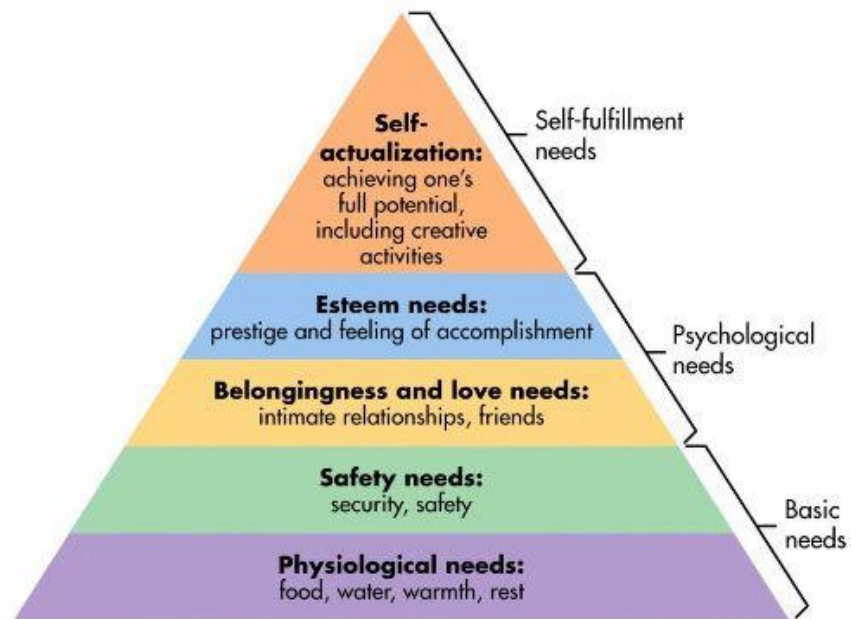


Chart 1.2: Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Source: <http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow-pyramid.jpg>

As mentioned in the theory of international marriage, women are more likely to aspire hypergamy, 'regardless of economic level of their countries, even if their grooms are foreigners or not' (Inoue, 2010). The reasons behind the female inclination towards hypergamy marriages is usually associated with reasons ranging from the fulfilment of basic to psychological needs. This is especially true when females from developing countries are involved in international marriage with grooms from developed countries. Traditionally, females from developing countries aspire to marry grooms from developed countries to escape from the cycle of poverty and to boost their economic standings ("The Economy of Singapore," n.d.). They believed that the only way out from the current predicament is to marry grooms who are better off than them economically.

Likewise, women in developing countries are often faced with marginalisation and discrimination in their home countries. These women are seen to be inferiors and are subservient to their male counterparts in such society. An example of such superiority complex by the male counterparts can be seen in Thailand. In a recent survey conducted by the Women and Men Progressive Movement Foundation, one-third out

of 1,617 men aged between 20-35 in Bangkok and selected provinces believes that 'married women were "owned" by their husbands and they must be responsible for household work and take care of the family' (Bauer & McKercher, 2003) This reflects not only the patriarchal nature of the Thai society but also the dangerous predicament of women living in such society. Therefore, it comes as no surprise of the desire of women to marry foreign grooms in the bid to fulfil not only physiological needs but also the needs for safety and protection. Therefore, it is safe to say that most but not all brides from developing countries aspire to marry grooms from developed countries or those that is of higher status than themselves to fulfil their basic needs as seen through Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid.

This is seen to differ from grooms residing in developed countries. Grooms in developed countries usually aspire to marry brides from developing countries as an attempt to fulfil their sense of nostalgia of maintaining their 'patriarchal privileges' of begetting a wife who is submissive and subservient to them. Moreover, a sense of nostalgia has shown that these grooms are attempting to fulfil their self-fulfilment needs of finding a wife not to economically support them but instead to reinstate their state of being the head of the household (Yi'En Cheng, 2015).

Moreover, as mentioned previously most grooms involved in international marriage with brides from developing countries are older blue collared workers who are unable to find a suitable partner in their home countries. These grooms often are faced with isolation and loneliness as they get older. Therefore, these grooms may aspire to marry women from developing countries to fulfil their psychological needs which include belongingness and love needs and esteem needs. Moreover, these grooms sought wives from developing countries in the Southeast Asian region due to the affordability of the wives. Askew and Cohen (2004) mentioned that Singaporean men sought these women instead of Singaporean women as 'they possess higher purchasing power due to the differentials in foreign exchange rates'.

In developed societies such as Singapore where families are deemed to be the nexus of society, individuals who are single may feel isolated and alienated. These individuals may see marriage as an opportunity for redemption and to feel a sense of

belonging in the society. Therefore, these individuals turned to marrying brides from developing countries to fulfil their needs for love and sense of belonging. Similarly, grooms in developed society are involved in international marriage with the hope of begetting a child.

Many developed societies in contemporary societies are experiencing low fertility rates. There is a dire needs of these societies to try to boost the fertility rates of the population to prevent the annihilation of the society in the future. In such societies, families with children are seemed to be prestigious as the parents of such families have fulfilled their duty as the citizen of the state through child bearing. In such societies, bearing children to bring up the low replacement level is seen to be prestigious. This will therefore boost the Esteem needs of individuals. An example of this is seen in contemporary Singapore. The nation state was reported to have a low replacement level of 1.3 in 2014 (Onlinewomeninpolitics.org, 2016). In the bid to boost fertility, 'baby bonuses, tax incentives and other policies' (Teo, 2010) are devised by the state to encourage marriage and the starting of family. Thus, 'marriage and child bearing are increasingly valorised as ideal behaviours that justify greater rewards as citizens' (Teo, 2010). This in turn led to the state-influenced desire of singles to get married in order to boost their esteem needs in particular the needs for prestige and a sense of accomplishment.

2.2.4 Anthony Gidden's Structuration theory

The main crux of Gidden's structuration theory is that it looks at the society at the micro level and expresses the duality of structure. This means that, 'structural properties are at the same time the result and medium of practices which are organized in a recursive way' (Kort & Gharbi, 2013). The theory allows 'human agency to surface and gives them the power to explain the difference of outcome' (Boudreau & Robey, 2005). The theory emphasizes on individual's agency as the main determinant that comes in contact with social forces to reproduce meanings and structures in society. Gidden explains how individual experiences vary as they are in control of their own experiences and destiny. This means that, 'there is a social

structure - traditions, institutions, moral codes, and established ways of doing things; but it also means that these can be changed when people start to ignore them, replace them, or reproduce them differently' (Kort & Gharbi, 2013). A graphic representation of this is seen in chart 1.3 as follows:

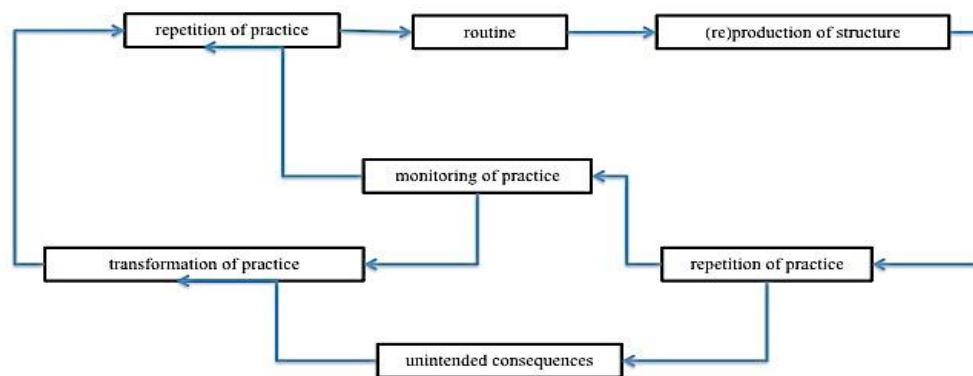


Chart 1.3: Anthony Giddens' structuration theory

Source: <http://www.kjarrett.com/livinginthepast/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/structuration-copy.jpg>

As seen in through the graphic in chart 1.3, the relationship between social structures and human practices is inseparable' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009) and that the living experience of individuals are shaped by the 'structural properties that guide them' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009). This is because, structural properties are created as a mean to control the population into exhibiting desirable behaviours deemed by the state. Therefore, social structures and human practices are interlinked to one another and that a society cannot function effectively without the existence of social structures.

However, given the dynamic nature of any given social structure in that it is always involved in a 'process of reproduction through these human activities which in turn enables opportunities for humans to challenge, circumvent and change an existing structure' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009), individuals are not merely a passive victim of their circumstance. In fact, they are active agents who continuously endeavour to make progress in their lives and social status.

The cycle starts with the monitoring of practices such as the observation of social practices and rules in the society that they are living in. An example of such rule could be the respecting of authority and to conform to codes of conduct as determined by the state. This could be in the form of filial piety or the respect of elders. However, as humans are active agents, their interpretations of practices will differ. The differing interpretations will lead to the transformation of practices by individuals. The transformation of practices is done as individuals will tweak these practices to suit their needs. Subsequently, these practices are repeated in the course of daily lives of individuals and will incidentally led to the (re) production of the structure. Individuals will continue to perform the new practices which coincidentally will have unintended consequences on the social structures of the society.

An example of this is when a Singaporean groom marries a Thai bride in the bid of sustaining his 'patriarchal privilege' in Singapore. His expectation is one which is built from the patriarchal nature of his society in which deemed the man to be the head of the household and dictates that his role is to provide for his family while the role of his wife should be limited in the domestic sphere and that his wife should play the role of a nurturer. However, given the high cost of living in the nation-state, he realises that he is unable to support his family effectively by being the sole provider. In turn, he needs to share the responsibility with his wife and push her status from simply being a nurturer to a co-provider. This would give his wife more responsibilities and allow her to decide on matters regarding the family. The shared responsibility will slowly change the structure of the Singapore patriarchal society to one that allows females to be equal to the males. The changes would slowly change the fabric of the society from a patriarchal society to an egalitarian one.

As shown through the example above, Anthony Giddens's structuration is still highly relevant in the studying of lived experiences of couples involved in international marriage. These couples have to continuously negotiate their identity in order to improve their current circumstance.

This theory; however, is not free of criticisms. For example, 'structure can exist outside agent' (Kort & Gharbi, 2013). However, one cannot simply ignore the fact that structures are created as the means to control agents and to ensure that their behaviours are in line with the expectations of society. Therefore, the power remains with how agents interpret these structures and how they will attempt to negotiate and circumvent these structures to suit their needs. Therefore, 'human agent change their interpretation of rules and resources based on their interaction with others in addition to their interactions with structures' (Kort & Gharbi, 2013). Likewise, the theory focuses on 'unconsciousness rather than on consciousness' (Kort & Gharbi, 2013) which means to say individuals are unconscious 'depending on the routine and lacking emotional reactions' (Kort & Gharbi, 2013) which is considered to be flawed in the eyes of many scholars and academics such as Kort and Ghabi.

That being said, we cannot reject the usefulness of their theory in the relationship between structures and agency in contemporary societies. The acknowledgements of the relationships help us to understand how structural forces can be read and changed through the interpretations of agencies. Therefore, this theory is still highly relevant for studies, which aimed to look at lived experiences of individuals and their participation in different social phenomenon.

2.2.5 The link between the Concepts and Theories to the core of the Study

In this section, I will be explicitly linking the concepts and theories examined above to the main subjects of the study - Thai women and Singaporean men involved in international marriage. The concepts and theories which are employed in this study are: the conception of international marriage with the focus on hypergamy and hypogamy marriages, patriarchal society, influence of Maslow's hierarchy of needs to the decision of couples involved in international marriage, Giddens's 'structuration theory' and how individual agency is the main influence of the lived experiences of couples involved in international marriage.

The theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be used to give an insight into human's desires and motivations that led to the result of certain actions. Maslow's theory will help us in elucidating on factors and motivations as to why people are involved in international marriages in contemporary Southeast Asia specifically in Singapore. Likewise, Giddens's structuration theory can be used to help us understand the micro factor as to how individual human agency can influence the social structures in a society. His theory can be used to provide an insight into how the influence of individual human agency can lead to the change in social structures at the macro level.

All in all, this section has shown that the theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Giddens's structuration theory are indeed relevant and applicable to help explain the phenomenon of International marriage between Thai women and Singaporean men. This is because there are various social factors that determine individual's decision in getting involved in international marriage. Likewise, individuals involved in such marriages are not passive agents but are indeed active agents who will negotiate, challenge and circumvent an existing social structures in an attempt to make progress to their circumstances and lives. Therefore, the examination of these theories and concepts will help in exploring and analyzing the main subject of the study by giving a further explanation to their lived experiences. A graphic illustration in chart 1.4 depicts the conceptual model of the study.

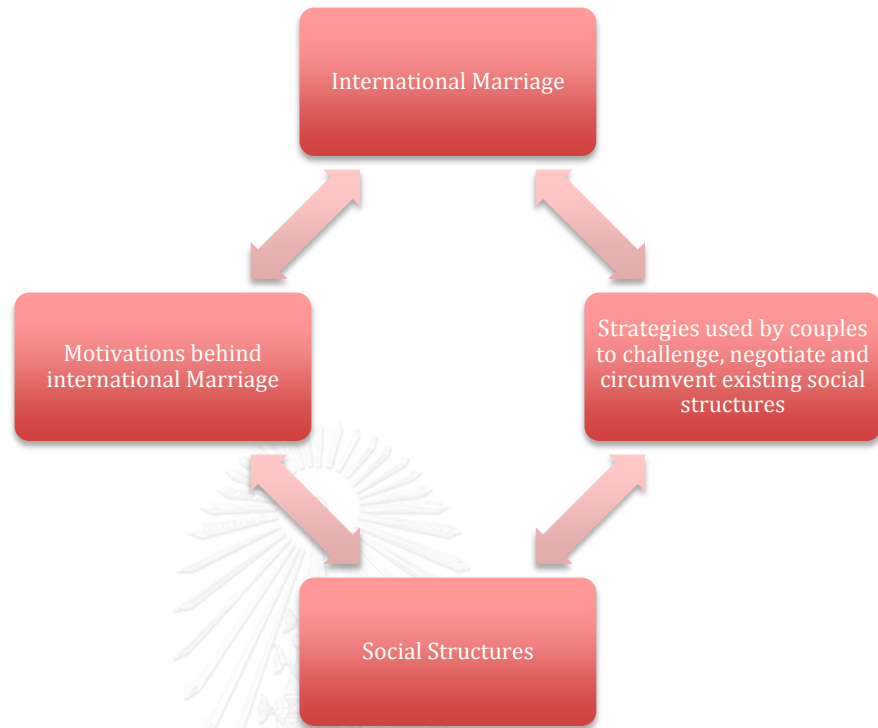


Chart 1.4: Conceptual model of the study.

The conceptual model shows, the woven relationships between international marriage and social structures and the processes that are involved. It starts with individuals' motivation behind international marriage, which could incidentally cause them alter or change social structures in order to suit their needs. Likewise, upon being involved in international marriage, individuals could be bound by social structures, which could limit their ability to live life in a fulfilling manner. The inability to live their marriage life in a fulfilling manner will lead them to come up with strategies to challenge, negotiate and circumvent existing social structures in order to make the best out of their marriage lives. Therefore, the theory of international marriage is interwoven by individual agency in terms of their motivations for international marriage and the strategies used by these agencies to challenge, negotiate and circumvent existing social structures as well as the social structures implicated by law makers or the governing body in that particular society.

That being said, this research is a qualitative study that relies on qualitative research methods such as in-depth interview and participant observation in the bid to study the lived experiences of Thai women and Singaporean involved in international marriage in Singaporean patriarchal society. In the next chapter, I will be elucidating on the methodology used for this study.



CHAPTER III

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, I will be discussing on the qualitative research methods and on the pilot study and its role in ensuring the validity and reliability of this research.

3.1 Methodology of the Study

I employed the qualitative approach in this study in order to investigate the phenomenon of international marriage between Thai women and Singaporean men. I used the technique of in-depth and semi open ended-recorded interview as well as participant observation in order to investigate this phenomenon. Likewise, this approach is also used to study how Thai wives adapt themselves to Singaporean patriarchal society.

The methodology used in this paper is conducted in three tiers. The first tier will be through literature review of secondary sources such as journal articles and newspaper reports. This is done to enhance my understanding of the phenomenon of 'international marriage' and the issues surrounding it. The second tier will be through the use of qualitative research methods. I have conducted an informal and semi-structured interview with research participants to get a grasp of the phenomenon. As most of the Thai women have limited knowledge of English and most of the Singaporean men have limited knowledge of Thai, I have conducted the interview in a mix of English and Thai and subsequently translated the data to English to the best of my ability. In addition, I have also participated in participant observation with the informants during the various outings. This is done to observe how they negotiate their identity and to observe how Thai women adapt themselves to Singaporean patriarchal society. As an attempt to reduce the observer effect, I have attempted to

minimize my presence as a researcher during the outings by avoiding to take down notes.

Tier 3 is done through the linking of data from tier 2 to the literature review done in tier 1. This is done due to the recognition that the translation process from Thai to English may result in the alteration of certain meanings and expressions and that the minimal note takings during the observation may hinder my ability to maximise the observation. Therefore, tier 3 is done in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected during the fieldwork. A graphic representation of the three tiers is given in chart 1.8.

3.2 Data collection

As this paper is a study of the living experiences of Thai migrant women involved in Transnational marriage with Singaporean men, I intentionally picked my informants who are involved in ‘marriage migration’ which is a strategy used by Thai women in Thailand to find foreign men so they can achieve eventual migration to their potential husbands countries (Jongwilaiwan, 2009). This group is chosen due to their limited experiences of living for a long period outside of Thailand which in turn shows their limited exposure to socio cultural structures and norms outside of their home country prior to their marriage. My choice of Thai women and Singaporean men is due to the emerging phenomena in both Thailand and Singapore. Likewise, the marrying of couples from the two countries also shows how the influence of ‘hypergamy’ and ‘hypogamy’ in the decisions of these couples. This is seen through the fact that Singapore is a developed nation while Thailand is a developing nation. Therefore, the motivation behind international marriage will be different for Thai women and Singaporean men.

3.2.1 Primary Data collection

I gathered 20 couples for the purpose of this research. The strategy employed was 'purposive sampling' which is also known as 'judgmental, selective or subjective sampling' (Lyons & Gomez, 2005). The criteria are that the couples must be Thai women who are married to Singaporean men. Moreover, these couples must have a Singapore marriage certificate. This is to ensure that the informants are legally married under the Singapore law.

Moreover, the research informants are gathered through the use of the snowballing method. The 'gate keeper' for me to gain access to this group of Thai migrant women was Luck, a close acquaintance of my mother - a Thai migrant woman who has been married to a Singaporean for 19 years. The list of research informants is given in Appendix 2. The name of informants are altered to ensure their confidentiality.

Two main venues were used for interviews with the informants. The first is a Salon in Golden Mile complex; a Thai ethnic enclave in Singapore. This venue was selected as many of Thai women came to the salon to beautify themselves and I thus made use of the opportunity to conduct the interview. The second venue is the homes of the informants. I will only accept invitation to the homes of the informants when there is a need for me to interview both couples. Moreover, I am cautious when visiting the homes of the informants, as I would like to remain objective through the course of my research and to have a clear demarcation into my role as a researcher.

The field research on primary data collection took place from October- December 2016. Prior to data collection, I have drafted ten interview questions as a guide during the course of the interview. The questions are translated into Thai to ensure that the informants are able to get the grasp of the questions. In addition, I have conducted a pilot study with five couples to give me a guide and direction of the research.

3.2.1.1 Pilot Study

The pilot study was done to ensure the feasibility of the study. In addition, it is also used to determine the functionality and validity of the research instrument in which are the interview questions. It is also used as an important marker to see if the interview questions drafted help to response to the research objectives mentioned in the first chapter. Likewise, it is also used as a pre-testing tool to counter-check the hypotheses for this study.

Through the pilot study, I was able to tweak the questions to make it more comprehensible to the informants. Likewise, I was also able to brainstorm on the lead questions that could be used should the interview starts to veer off-course. Finally, I was able to identify practical problems for the research procedures such as overly relying on one language during the course of the interview and altered the research procedures effectively. The final interview questions are given in appendix 3.

3.2.2 Secondary Data collection

Secondary data are derived from libraries, internet websites, journals, newspapers, online videos, documentaries and books. The data is used to fully the understand the phenomenon of ‘international marriages’. The secondary data collection is done through literature review and the analysis of various laws and policies in Singapore to determine that it is a patriarchal society. Moreover, several journals articles and books concerning the issue of international marriage and patriarchal society around the world were studied and used as reference. In addition, I used secondary sources to determine the theoretical frameworks and concepts to be used in this research. Moreover, secondary data sources are used to outline the diverse lived experiences and issues of couples involved in international marriage. It also provides an outlook to the attempts of these individuals at tackling these issues. Lastly, I was able to gain an insight into the lives of individuals in a patriarchal society and various coping mechanism and strategies employed by individuals in such a society.

Furthermore, I also conducted a literature review and comparative study of the socio-cultural structures of both Singapore and Thai society to create a basis of understanding of both cultures and societies. The literature review and comparative study was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected during the fieldwork.

3.3 Linking of Primary and Secondary data

In order to fully grasp the phenomenon of ‘international marriage’ and the issues surrounding it, I linked the data collected from fieldwork to Journals and books on ‘International marriage’ and 'Patriarchal society'. The main aim of this process is to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected during the fieldwork. This process is also used to identify the theoretical framework and concepts that can be used to help aid our understanding of the phenomenon.

That being said, this study relies heavily on qualitative research methods and it is important that we pay close attention to the data collected from the fieldwork. In addition, there should also be an analysis of the data collected from the fieldwork so as to allow us to link it to the conceptual models and theoretical frameworks as outlined in chapter 2. The analysis of the research findings will be done in the next chapter.

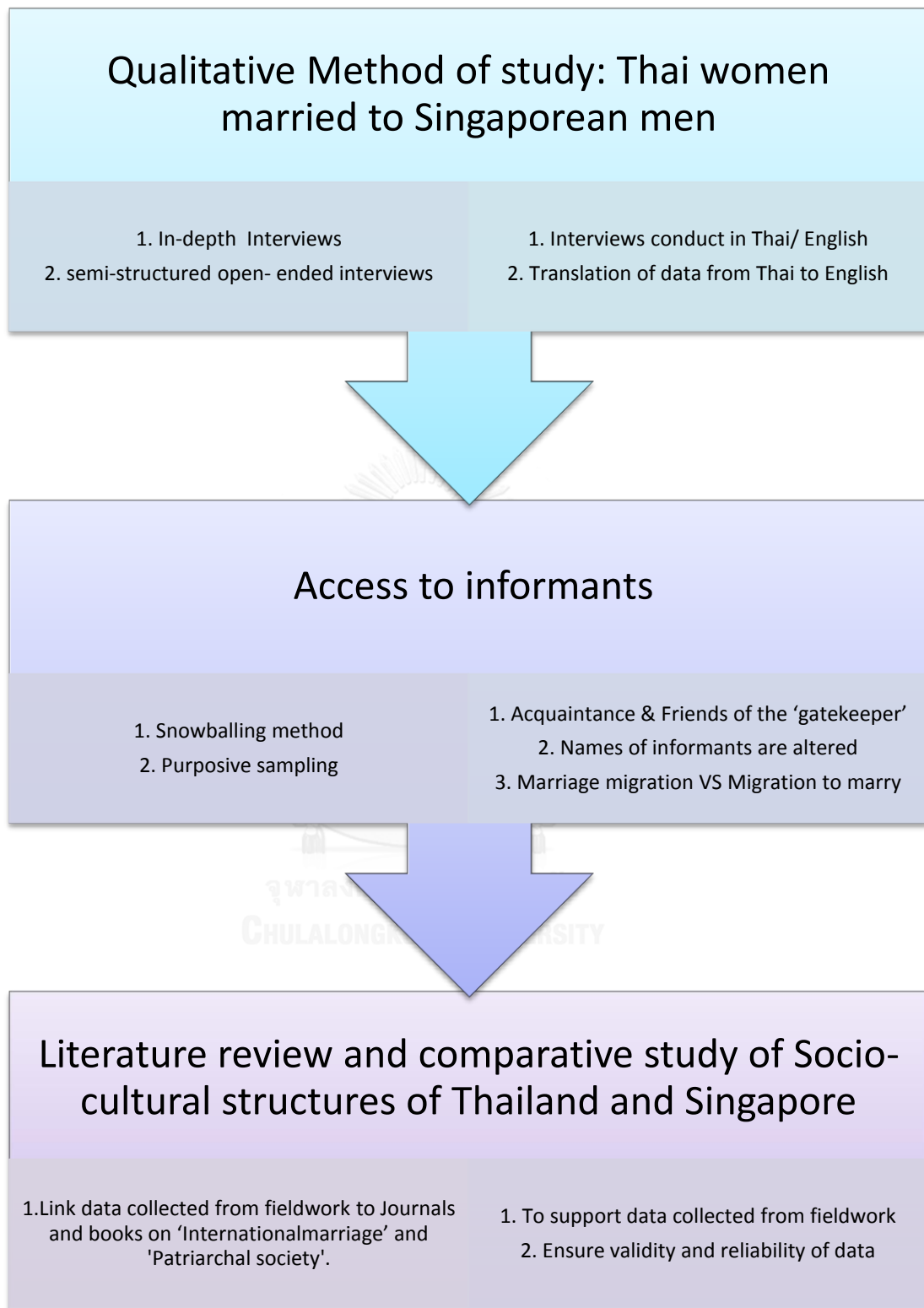


Chart 1.5: A graphic representation of the methodology

CHAPTER IV

Issues surrounding international marriage between Thai women and Singaporean men

The phenomenon of international marriage is attributed to the process of globalization in which shrink the globe in a figurative sense and in turn facilitate the ‘union of couples marked by extreme heterogamy’ (Cohen, 2003) such as those of different nationalities. It is also often referred to as ‘cross- border marriage’(Wang & Chang, 2002). This is seen to be a growing phenomenon in Singapore as seen through the increase in international marriages with ‘a 40 per cent jump from 3,988 in 2002 to 5,599 in 2013 in the number of Singaporean men taking foreign brides specifically from countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand’ (T. Tan, 2013).

This chapter outlines the research findings from data collection using the qualitative research methods. The findings are presented in response to investigate the phenomenon of international marriage between Thai women and Singaporean men. This chapter can be divided into three main points which are the reasons behind the choice of life partner, the preference for Singaporean grooms and Thai brides, and the aversion towards marrying people from their own country. These three points are relevant to the first objective as it helps to explain the reasons and motivation for the union of couples across borders.

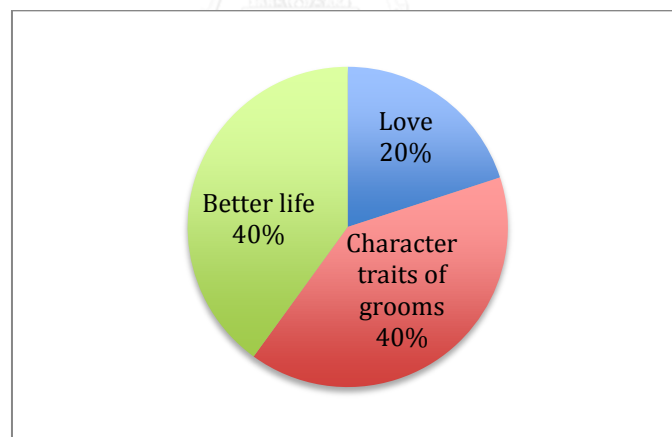
There were a total of three questions which were used in the bid to gather data in response for the first objective. The questions were, why did you choose to marry a Non Thai/Singaporean? This question was asked to find out couples’ motivation behind international marriage. Similarly, couples were asked the question of what motivates you to marry someone from a different county. This question was used in

response to finding the motivation behind the choice of a foreign partner over local ones. Lastly, the question of why did you not want to marry people from your own country? It was asked in response to finding the reason for the choice of partner. All in all, these questions were asked in response to investigate the phenomenon of international marriage between Thai women and Singaporean men.

4.1 Research findings

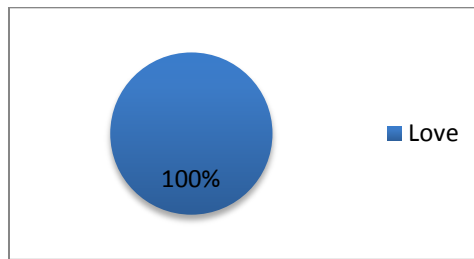
4.1.1 Reasons behind the choice of life partner.

In order to find out the reason behind couples' motivation behind international marriage, Thai brides were asked the question of why they chose to marry a Non Thai The Singaporean grooms, on the other hand, answered the question why they chose to marry a non-Singaporean. Pie chart 1 reflects the response of the Thai brides and Pie chart 2 reflects the response of the Singaporean grooms.



Pie chart 1: The Response of the Thai Brides to show motivation behind international marriage.

40 per cent of the brides chose to marry a non-Thai groom with the hope for a better life such as the ability to work in the nation- state with the respondents citing that Singaporean grooms will not 'verbally or physically abuse them'. The other 40 per cent of the bride decide to marry a non-Thai based on the character traits of the groom with them citing character traits such as 'responsible' and 'understanding' as the main reason while 20 per cent of the bride got married to a non-Thai because of love.



Pie chart 2: the Response of the Singaporean Grooms to show motivation behind international marriage.

Likewise, 100 per cent of the grooms chose to marry a non-Singaporean with the underlying belief that their choice is not based on the nationality and ethnicity of their partner. Instead, it is based on emotional attraction to the person. This emotional attraction is love.

As seen through the response, there is a consistency to the fact that majority of Thai women are involved in international marriage with Singaporean men as they aspire to achieve a higher economic and social status and to have an expectation of leading a comfortable life after marriage. Kae stated,

"I want to have a new life. New beginning... Example, in Thailand, how to explain... like, we look for new things, new opportunities. Living in Thailand is so... so..."

As seen through Kae, she believes that, being married to a Singaporean husband will give her a 'new life and new opportunities' that is unattainable in Thailand. Such statement is emphasised by Luck who stated,

"I used to have a Thai boyfriend and when I looked at my future, it seems like I cannot be successful. Foreigners have better sense of responsibility."

The view that getting married to a foreigner such as Singaporean men is a ticket for these women to achieve upward economic and social mobility shows that majority of Thai women involved in international marriage with Singaporean men aspire 'hypergamy' marriage as outlined by Inoue in his theory of international marriage (Inoue, 2010). Therefore, there is a consistency in the motivation of brides in their

choice of marrying someone from a different country. The motivation is for social and economic mobility.

Furthermore, Thai women believe that there are more economic opportunities outside of Thailand (Jongwilaiwan, 2009). These women deemed foreign countries to be a 'gold mine' that will help them earn a substantial amount of money and provide better economic opportunities as opposed to them remaining in Thailand. This is emphasised by Na, who deemed economic independence to be the main factor why she chose to marry a non-Thai groom. She states that the fact that she is able to work and enjoy a shared responsibility with her husband is what led her to choose a Singaporean husband over a Thai one: "*We help each other to earn a living*". As seen through the excerpt by Na, the main reason behind her choice of choosing a Singaporean husband over a Thai one is due to the ability for economic independence which will incidentally lead to her being able to lead a better life.

In addition, 80 per cent of Thai wives interviewed believed that Thai men tend to be more abusive physically and emotionally. Such incidence of physical and emotional abuse is seen to be limited in Singaporean men. This view is emphasised by Angela who states, "*They will not abuse me verbally and physically.*" As seen through the excerpt given by Angela, they believed that they are more sheltered with a Singaporean man as opposed to a Thai man. Many of the female informants also deemed the addiction to vices such as alcohol is the main catalyst that led to Thai men being more abusive to their wives. This is reinstated by Na who states that the main deciding factor that led to her opting for Singaporean groom is the fact that they do not drink alcohol: "*Because they do not drink alcohol*".

Therefore, these women feel that they are at a higher risk of being a victim of abuse both physically and emotionally when married to a Thai man. Arguably, this could be due to the weak law and social enforcement towards the perpetrators of domestic violence in Thailand. It is a known fact that domestic violence in Thailand is viewed as a 'compoundable offense'; meaning to say that the offenders will go unpunished should the offender and victim are able to 'compromise' and come to an agreement of

terms' (Sornumpol, 2015). The complexity of procedures and the complicated amount of paperwork required prior to putting an offender to task could be off-putting for many of the victims especially those with limited level of education. The weak law and social enforcement towards domestic violence in Thailand is well supported by statistics provided by Assavarak in her study on domestic violence in Thailand (Sornumpol, 2015). In her study, Assavarak has shown that, in the year 2003, there were 272 domestic violence cases involving physical, sexual and psychological violence in Thailand alone. This figure is seen to be 'on the rise in Thailand despite government efforts to protect women' (Corbin, 2013). This alarming figure is seen in a 2012 survey conducted by Mahidol University's National Institute for Child and Family Development in which showed that domestic violence in Thailand increased with 30.8 per cent of households reporting abuse (Corbin, 2013). This also has a positive correlation with the rising rates of divorce from '10.8 per cent in 2009 to 33 per cent in 2012' (Corbin, 2013).

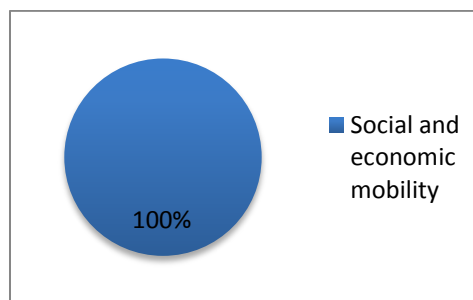
This is in contrast to the strict regulations and law and enforcement order in Singapore. It is a fact that individuals facing domestic violence in Singapore are eligible to apply for a 'Personal protection order' (PPO); which is a court order that provides 'statutory protection orders against family violence' ("Personal Protection Orders (PPOs), Expedited Orders (EOs) and Domestic Exclusion Orders (DEOs) in Singapore.", 2012). The ease of getting a PPO in the republic and harsh punishments meted out towards individuals could be a reason that prevents individuals from committing such crimes and in turn led to the belief that Singaporean men are less likely to abuse their wives physically and emotionally. This is reflected in the low rate of physical violence reported by women in Singapore. The low rates of physical violence are reflected in the international violence against women survey: Final report on Singapore; a survey conducted by United Nations in 2013. In this survey, a total of 1603 interviews were conducted. It was reported that, only 5.7 per cent of women in Singapore experienced at least one form of physical violence in this lifetime (Bouhours, CHAN, Bong, & Anderson, 2013). In addition, it was reported that only 1.2 per cent of the interviewees experienced at least one form of sexual violence in the life time (Bouhours et al., 2013)

Lastly, there is a small fragment of Thai wives who states that love was the reason why they opt for a non-Thai husband. This group of women states that they did not have a preference over the nationality of their husband in mind but that, love was the reason why they got married to a non-Thai. The idea of marrying for love is in line with the reasons of Singaporean men for choosing Thai wives. 100 per cent of Singaporean men interviewed in this study cite love to be the main reason as to why they opt for a non-Singaporean wife. To these men, nationality and ethnicity of the bride is not the main factor or consideration when they chose their life partner. It is factors such as ability to understand and communicate with one another that helps in their choice of a life partner. Such sentiment is reflected by Jimmy who stated: '*As long as can communicate. It is good enough*'. The example given by Jimmy reflects the sentiments of all male informants interviewed in this study.

In conclusion, 100 per cent of male informants and 20 per cent of female informants in this study deemed love, ability to communicate and understand one another to be the determining factors behind their choice of a life partner. Similarly, the other two broad reasons of choice of a life partner for Thai women are, the ability for social and economic mobility and to choose a man who they deemed to be of good characters and who will not abuse them physically and emotionally. This is represented by 40 per cent of the informants citing the first reason and the other 40 per cent citing the latter.

4.1.2 The preference for Singaporean grooms and Thai brides.

In the bid to find out the motivation of the Singaporean grooms and Thai brides to marry someone from a different country, the informants were asked the question, ‘what motivates you to marry someone from a different country?’ Pie charts 3 and 4 show the response of the Thai brides and Singaporean grooms respectively.



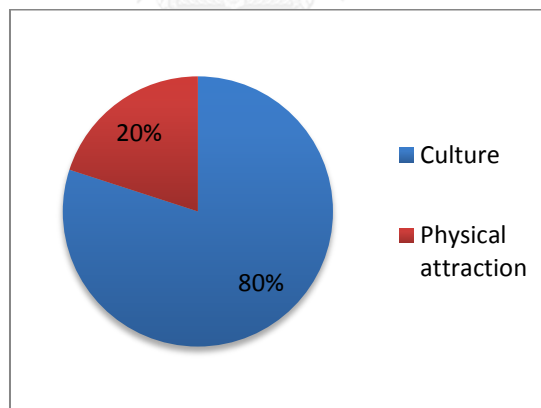
Pie chart 3: The response of the Thai brides to show motivation behind the choice of a foreign partner.

As mentioned, the choice of partner of Thai women can be categorised into three broad groups with 40 per cent citing social and economic mobility, 40 per cent citing character traits of partner and 20 per cent citing love. However, when asked why did they chose a Singaporean man in particular; all agreed in unison that Singaporean men will help them to achieve social and economic mobility and that they are certain that Singaporean men will look after them indefinitely.

The idea of motivation for Thai women in getting married to a Singaporean man is due to the belief that Singapore is more progressive than Thailand economically. Therefore, getting into a union with a Singaporean will help them both economically and socially. The idea of progressiveness is derived from the strong currency value and world-class infrastructures and facilities. The idea of Singapore being more progressive than Thailand is reinstated by Angela who stated,

“Singapore has such world class facilities- top universities, good airport. The currency value is also much higher than Thailand. Who will not want to move to Singapore?”

As seen from the excerpt given by Angela, Singapore is deemed to be a ‘gold mine’ in the eyes of Thai women. Therefore, to her, getting married to a Singaporean man and moving to Singapore is a practical choice which will help her to achieve social and economic mobility. This sentiment is also shared by Luck who states, *“With such good education system in Singapore, who would not want their children to study there”*. Therefore, to Thai women, getting married to a Singaporean men is a practical choice as it will create a path to help them economically and socially for them and their children in the future. This is further emphasised by Na who stated, *‘Very happy. When I am here, I can work. I get better income than living in Thailand’*. To Thai women such as Na, economic independence reflects her satisfaction at getting involved in international marriage. Her ability to work and earn money in Singapore dollars led to the belief that Singapore is better than Thailand for her to live in. *‘I think being here is better than in Thailand. Even though in my heart, I love Thailand. It is because I can work and earn a living better than Thailand.’*



Pie chart 4: the response of the Singaporean grooms to show motivation behind the choice of a foreign partner.

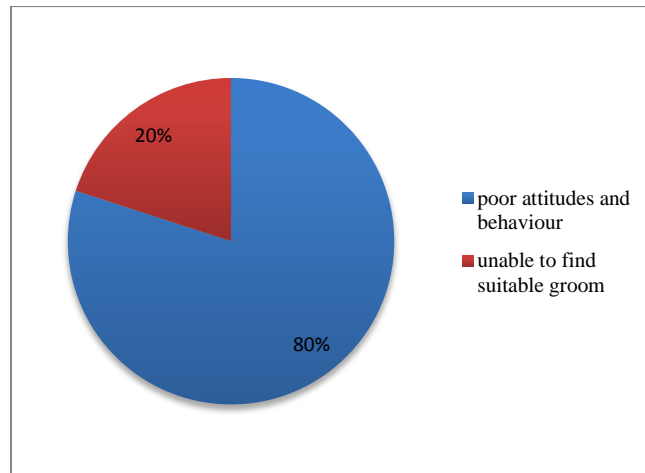
In contrast, the underlying motivation for Singaporean men in marrying Thai women is more related to personal motives such as the fulfilment of innate desire to marry someone who is physically attractive or to be with someone due to their interest of that particular culture. Such view is reflected by Yong who stated: *‘The Thai culture is something that is... I have an interest in the Thai culture. It is an interesting culture’*. As seen through the excerpt above, Yong chose to marry a Thai woman due

to his interest in the Thai culture. He did not take into consideration her social or economic positions as determining factors prior to the marriage. When enquired about the culture, he states that it is the friendliness and easy going nature of the culture of Thai people that attract him to his wife. It is the way she communicates and her friendliness that made him to fall in love with her. This point was reiterated by Jimmy that *'As long as can communicate. It is good enough'*. Singaporean men such as Yong and Jimmy sees the self-fulfilment needs as determinants of their choice in marrying Thai women.

The different expectation between Singaporean men and Thai women towards international marriage is also observed in the course of this study. This is seen through the idea of Thai women sorting for a foreign husband to look after them and to help them economically. This is different from the expectations of Singaporean men whose motivation behind sorting for a foreign bride is for companionship and to be able to start a family and build a home together. Therefore, there is a conflicting reasons as to the motivations behind selecting a Singaporean husband and a Thai wife. This differing expectations and conflict of interest would have an effect on how the couples lead their lives together as a single unit.

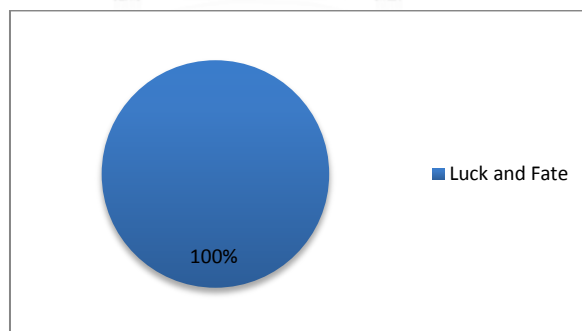
4.1.3 The aversion towards marrying people from their own country.

The couples were asked the question of 'why did you not want to marry people from your own country?' in order to find out the reason the factors and reasons as to why Thai brides and grooms are not keen in marrying people from their own country as well as to look at the deciding factors behind their choice of partners. The response of the brides and grooms are seen in pie chart 5 and 6 below.



Pie chart 5: The response of the brides to the choice of partners

As seen previously, majority of Thai women married to Singaporean men cited poor attitudes and behaviour of the Thai males to be the main reason as to why they would not want to be in a union with their fellow countrymen. This consideration is also taken based on the fact that 80 per cent of these women have been married before. These women hence agreed in unison that Singaporean men are more responsible than Thai men and that the negative character traits of Thai men are the very reason that cause the disintegration of the marriage in the first place.



Pie chart 6: The response of the grooms to the choice of partners

In contrast, 100 per cent of Singaporean grooms interviewed deemed luck and fate to be the main reason as to why they did not marry Singaporean women. Furthermore, 40 per cent of the grooms also qualified that Singaporean women are much more difficult to woo as opposed to Thai women. These grooms also blamed the high

expectations of Singaporean women with regards to choosing a life partner as another factor as to why they would rather marry a Thai woman.

The high expectations of Singaporean women comes as a result of economic progress and modernity of the Singapore society. These grooms believed that Singaporean women are more interested in going after career aspirations rather than to be a housewife. Moreover, these grooms also believed that Singaporean women are more interested in men who are very much well to do than they are and thus they have little luck with Singaporean women.

4.2 Analysis of research findings

As seen through the data above, the motivation as to why Thai women are involved in international marriage with Singaporean men is to be able to live a better life with a husband that is 'responsible' and 'understanding'. This motivation is outlined in both the pilot and the actual study. Therefore it is safe to assume that Thai women who are involved in international marriage with Singaporean men aspire 'hypergamy' marriage as laid out by (Inoue, 2010) in his theory of international marriage.

I propose linking the aspiration for 'hypergamy' marriage to Maslow's hierarchy of needs in which sees the fulfilment of basic needs being done. Women aspire to marry someone from a different country so as to be able to fulfil their basic physiological and safety needs. This is with the firm belief that Singaporean men have higher status economically and socially as opposed to Thai men and will thus be able to lift the women out of the predicament that they are in. The evidence of this belief is seen in the earlier accounts and excerpts given by the interviewees.

In addition to such belief, there is also the feminization of Cheap Labour in Thai society (Imamura, 1990) which causes the marginalization of Thai women in comparison to their male counterparts in terms of economic opportunities. This is because, in the past, parents in the agrarian Thai society often see advantages in investing in their male children while preferring to keep their female children at home

to help out with the chores (Imamura, 1990). Thus, with limited education, Thai women are more likely to receive lower wages than their male counterparts during employment as they are deemed to be less qualified with lower educational attainment (Imamura, 1990).

Likewise, the preference of keeping the female children at home and confining them to the domestic sphere could be explained through Theravada Buddhism concept of 'Bhun Khun' which binds the role of women as a nurturing and dutiful daughter (Phromphakphing, 1996). In contemporary patriarchal society, although there are more opportunities for women to advance economically due to the equal access of education. However, women in Thai society are still expected to support their parents as a form of merit as they are unable to conscript into the military or be ordained as a monk like their male counterpart.

The feminization of cheap labour coupled with the lack of opportunities for Thai women in Thailand led to many of them aspiring for International marriage as an 'alternative livelihood strategies to escape from poverty, to upgrade their economic status' (Lapanum, 2007). Thai migrant women choose to marry men from Singapore as they believed that it is a way of escaping their current circumstances and is a 'ticket' to a good life. It is also an attempt for them to assume the role of a 'dutiful' daughter who sacrificed herself as a nurturer and caretaker in order to care for her parents by providing money. Likewise, migration scholars such as Cheng, Yeoh and Zhang also observe that 'remittance money carries social meaning of care, emotionality and filial piety' (Yi'En Cheng, 2015) and that, 'female migrants are generally considered to be reliable remitters demonstrating greater emotional ties to 'home' countries and a sense of responsibility towards maintaining and reproducing transnational linkages within the household' (Yi'En Cheng, 2015). Therefore, to these women, international marriages is used as a 'livelihood strategy to escape the Thai exploitative economic structure. Marriage migration of Thai rural women is one form of and to shift from prostitution (Jongwilaiwan, 2009). It is also to escape from living in poverty which is estimated to be at '10.9 per cent in 2013, with number of poor at approximately 7.3 million persons' ("The Economy of Singapore," n.d.). However,

this differs from the grooms who see the marrying of Thai brides as an attempt to fulfil their self-actualization needs which is the highest peak on the Maslow's hierarchy of needs triangle as seen in chart 1.6 below.

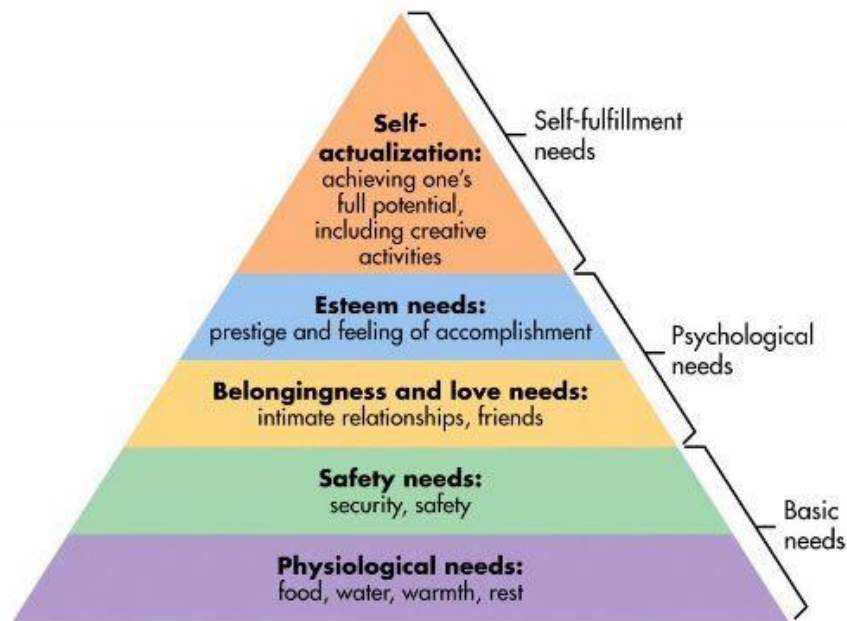


Chart 1.6: Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Source: <http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow-pyramid.jpg>

Self-actualization is seen to be important in one's life as it 'represents growth of an individual toward fulfilment of the highest needs; those for meaning in life, in particular (Dissertation, 2012). Therefore Thai brides aimed to achieve basic needs while Singaporean grooms aimed to achieve the psychological and self-fulfilment needs as seen through Maslow's Hierarchy of needs triangle above.

To these grooms, the search for foreign wives has nothing to do with her economic or social status. Instead Singaporean men search for wives to whom they are attracted to-culturally or physically as seen through the majority of the answers during the data collection. This shows the self-fulfilment needs of the grooms being done as they aspire to marry brides according to their interest.

In addition, a bulk of the grooms who were interviewed also claimed that they chose to marry Thai brides instead of Singaporean ones as they deemed Thai women to be hardworking who can be good wives and good mothers. This is in contrast to Singaporean women who are seen to be more career minded and career oriented and who refuses to fulfil their roles as a mother and a nurturer but instead opt for an alternative 'equally gendered- care giving arrangements' (Teo, 2010) through the hiring of female domestic helpers.

The desire of begetting a wife who can fulfil both the role of a good worker and a nurturer shows that Singaporean men interviewed are demanding and seek to 'kill two birds with one stone' in which is to seek a partner who will help them to bring in income into the family while at the same time to take care and look after them. This shows the desire of Singaporean men in wanting to sustain their patriarchal privileges in Singapore.

Their decision to marry foreign wives is due to the fact that local Singaporean women 'do not want to fulfil traditional women role' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009) as the society progressed. The lack of local women who want to fulfil the role of traditional women led to an 'escalated sense of 'masculine anxiety' on the part of Singaporean men which forced these men 'to seek wives in the international marriage scene and restore their sense of masculine self within the domains of marriage and family'(Yi'En Cheng, 2015). Moreover the decision to marry someone based on their attractions or self-interest pursuits show the self- actualization process, which is the highest apex in Maslow's hierarchy of needs triangle being fulfilled. The self-actualization process is through choosing and marrying a bride for their own benefits and happiness.

In conclusion, the main issue that surround the phenomenon of international marriage between Singaporean and Thai women is the varying expectations between the couples. The different expectations between Singaporean grooms and Thai brides as to their choice of a life partner and in the deciding factor of the nationality of their spouse. These differing expectations and viewpoints provide the point of contention in their marriage. This caused the marriage to not be as rosy as what some of them

hoped prior to the marriage. Therefore, such points of contention coupled with societal expectations of the clearly demarcated roles of each gender led to many of these marriage being an unhappy one. The institutional factors and roles of gender will be further discussed in the next chapter.



CHAPTER V

The adaptation of Thai Wives to Singaporean Patriarchal Society

The term ‘patriarchy’ was ‘originally used to describe ‘the power of the father as head of household’ (Abidemi, 2005). Patriarchal society is seen to have risen from Confucius notion where ‘women were at the bottom of the Confucian hierarchy’ (Abidemi, 2005). It is where ‘women were expected to demonstrate obedience before all virtues’ (Abidemi, 2005) and at no point is a woman deemed to be an autonomous being that is free of male control. Such view is deemed to emerge from Taoist cosmology during the Han dynasty which sees the dichotomy of men as ‘yang (active, powerful, accentuated) and women as yin (passive, weak, diminished)’ (Abidemi, 2005). While patriarchal society is typically linked to traditional societies, there are some characteristics that seemed to have made its way into modern nations in Southeast Asia such as those in Singapore.

Singapore as a nation attribute the rise from “Third World to First” (Moyer, 2015) through its strong belief and influence of Confucius notion in which, family and social relations play an important role in bringing order to the society and that the government should not have a say in the context of the family. This is evidenced in the excerpt given by Lee Kuan Yew (2000) in his book with the title, ‘Third World to First’ in which he mentioned, ‘individual exists in the context of the family, extended family, friends and wider society, and that the government cannot and should not take over the role of the family’.

In addition, Lee also attributed the productive economic growth of Singapore to the strict abiding of its citizens to the Confucius ethos. This is seen in Lee’s further comment in his book in the year 2000,

“Singapore depends on the strength and influence of the family to keep society orderly and maintain a culture of thrift, hard work, filial piety, and respect for elders and for scholarship and for learning”.

Coincidentally, the ethos of Confucianism also believe that ‘women were at the bottom of the Confucius hierarchy’(McCallister, 2016) and that ‘exemplary behaviour and uncomplaining obedience’(McCallister, 2016) were expected of them. Hence, it comes as no surprise that while Singapore project itself as a modernised society, there are still the remnants of patriarchal characteristics in the society.

Singapore as a patriarchal society is seen through the analysis of various laws and policies in the nation-state, which show that the society is centered on male and their ethics. An example of a patriarchal society is seen through the bills passed by the state in having more male quotas than female quotas on the intake of medical students annually. This is with the view that the main responsibility of females should be limited to the domestic sphere.

This chapter outlines the research findings from data collection using the qualitative research methods. The findings are presented in response to study how Thai wives adapt themselves to Singaporean patriarchal society. This chapter ultimately aims to observe whether the interviewees are aware that they are indeed living in a patriarchal society and the various avenues used to adapt themselves to living in such society. The main annex of this chapter questions the lived experiences of the informants on the topic of ‘gender equality’ and the various social constraints that result in gender inequality. Furthermore, it also gives an insight to how informants adapt and manage their lives in living in such society. This is due to the acknowledgement that these informants are not victims of their circumstance but are active agents who continuously endeavour to make progress in their lives.

This chapter can be divided into three main points: 1. the establishment of the informants worldview as to whether Singapore is a patriarchal society, 2. the factors that shaped their experiences of living in such a society and 3. how they overcome the challenges of living in such society. These three points are relevant to the second objective as it helps to explain how Thai wives adapt themselves to Singaporean patriarchal society.

There were a total of six questions which were used to gather data in response for the second objective. The questions were as follows: What is your understanding of the word patriarchal society? This question was asked to get a grasp of the informants understanding of the meaning of a patriarchal society as well as to garner informant's knowledge of such a concept. Likewise, informants were asked as to whether they agree with the statement of 'Singapore is a patriarchal society? What make you think like that? This question was asked to see if the informants think that they are living in a society that explicate patriarchal values.

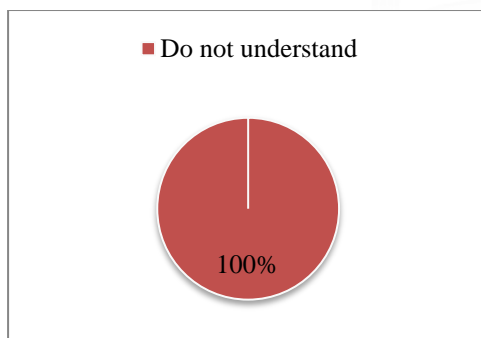
Moreover, informants were asked, 'do you think Singapore society is different from Thai society in terms of gender equality? How and why?' This question is used as a guided question into helping informants make comparisons between their lives in Thailand versus their lives in Singapore. The question aims to help informants to be able to make comparison between the state of society and to reflect to see if there are any differences accordingly. Furthermore, the informants were asked the question, 'do you see yourself as equal to your husband/wife? How and why?' This question was asked due to the acknowledgement that while the society is a patriarchal one, it might not be at the micro level. Therefore, this question was used to find out if the tone of patriarchy do affect the sphere of the family in the Singapore society. In addition, informants were asked, 'are there any instances where you feel you are not equal to your husband/wife? When are these instances?' This question to garner the reliability and validity to the earlier set of question. Likewise, it is also used to bring out the instances of inequality between the couples.

Finally, the informants were asked, ‘when you feel that you are not equal to your husband, are there any attempts by you to try and achieve equality? How?’ This question was asked in an attempt to gather the actions and coping mechanisms of the informants in dealing with instances of when they feel unequal in their marriage lives. Furthermore, it is also used to observe how informants adapt to living their lives in a patriarchal society such as Singapore. All these questions were asked in response to investigate the worldview of informants with regards to Singapore as a patriarchal society as well as to study how Thai women adapt themselves to Singaporean patriarchal society.

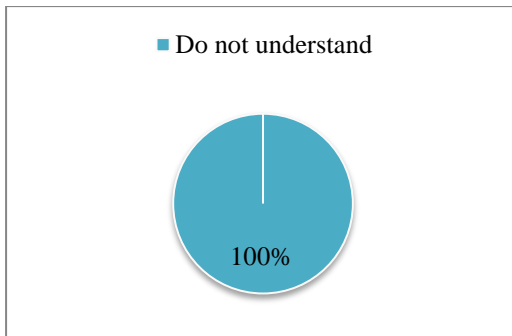
5.1 Research findings

5.1.1 Informants world view of Singapore as a patriarchal society

In order to sieve out the informants’ world views of Singapore as a patriarchal society, Thai brides and Singaporean grooms were asked: what is your understanding of the word patriarchal society? Pie chart 7 reflects the response of the Thai brides and pie chart 8 displays the response of the Singaporean grooms.



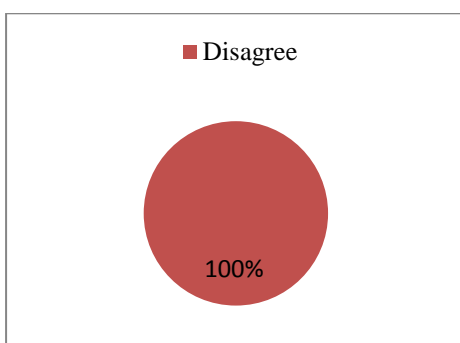
Pie chart 7: The response of the Thai brides to the question of ‘What is your understanding of the phrase ‘patriarchal society?’



Pie chart 8: The response of Singaporean grooms to the question of 'What is your understanding of the phrase 'patriarchal society'?

As seen through the response, all informants were clueless to the term 'patriarchal society'. They were unable to provide a description or define the term and need the researcher to explain the term and give examples of situations of a patriarchal society. Many of the informants state that '*I do not understand*'. Hence, the term 'patriarchal society' were defined in both English and Thai and examples were provided to the informants accordingly.

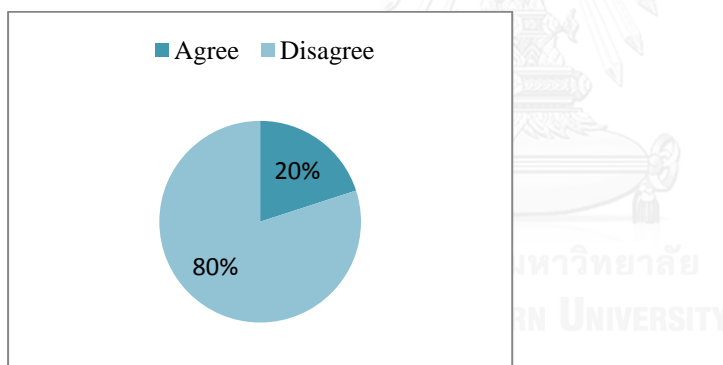
The informants were subsequently asked the statement, 'Singapore is a patriarchal society? Do you agree with the statement? What make you think like that?' This question was asked to analyse if the informants were aware that Singapore society explicate patriarchal values as mentioned in chapter 2. Pie charts 9 and 10 show the response of the Thai brides and Singaporean grooms respectively.



Pie chart 9: The response of the Thai brides in response to show their awareness as to whether Singapore society is explicating patriarchal values.

As seen in pie chart 9, 100 per cent of Thai brides disagree with the statement that Singapore society explicates patriarchal values to its citizens. Thai brides deemed the Singapore society to be equal and that there seems to be no instances where one gender is more superior to the other. This is mentioned by Na who stated, *'I anti such society. No. I disagree. Men and women are both equal in whatever they do'*.

Thai brides such as Na, Luck and Angela, said they have never thought that Singapore possess such traits and the equality between the two genders motivated them to move to Singapore in the first place. This is echoed by Angela who mentioned, *'No. I disagree. In Singapore, both genders are equal. Both men and women worked in harmony. They help and assist one another'*. Thai brides in general, deemed Singapore society to be equal with equally shared responsibilities between male and female.



Pie chart 10: The response of the Singaporean grooms in response to show their awareness as to whether Singapore society is explicating patriarchal values.

In contrast, as seen in pie chart 10, 80 per cent of the grooms disagree with this statement and 20 per cent of the grooms think that Singapore is indeed a patriarchal one. They qualify this belief with the statement that even today men should have more say than women as they are still *'responsible'* in earning for the family while the brides' responsibilities largely remain in the domestic sphere. That being said, 40 per cent of the grooms think that Singapore was a patriarchal society in the past. However to these grooms, it is not because men are more superior to the women. Instead, it is

based on the function and role that both gender have to play in the society. In the past, men were considered to be the main *'breadwinner'* in the society while women played the role of *'mothers and wives'* and that their role remained mostly in the domestic sphere. This belief is mentioned by Yogi who stated,

'I think the patriarchal society applies to a different era in time. Maybe 50-60 years ago where men basically went to work and women stayed home. But in my view, I would not call it where women were inferior and men were superior. I don't think it meant that way. It was just men were the breadwinners of the family and now if you look at Singapore, basically in a society like Singapore, both men and women are working. Both husbands and wives are working so it does not apply anymore'.

As seen through the excerpt given by Yogi, Singapore used to explicate patriarchal values in the past while in contemporary society things are changing. Grooms such as Yogi attributed the change to the changing economic landscape of Singapore where both genders now need to work to support the family. The changing economic landscapes of contemporary Singapore led to the change in the mindset of the government and its people. This in turn, led to equality between both genders in contemporary Singapore.

All brides and majority of grooms in this study; therefore, see contemporary Singapore as a society where there is equality between men and women. However, all grooms stated that Singapore had not always been equal and that in the past, Singapore could be considered to be a patriarchal society. This is because of societal perception and expectations which see men to be the sole breadwinners of the family while women's roles remained as wives or mothers. All of the brides and most grooms stated that in contemporary Singapore, such mind set could not thrive. This is due to the high cost of living in Singapore. Therefore, both grooms and brides will need to work in order to make ends meet and support the family. This is hence the

reason why there is a shift in mind set which leads to equality between both sexes in contemporary Singapore.

5.1.2 The Comparison of Thailand and Singapore in terms of Gender Equality

Gender equality refers to ‘the state in which there is equal access to rights or opportunity to both males and females in a society. This includes, ‘economic participation and decision-making’ (Sarel, 1996). It implies that ‘the interests, needs and priorities of both, women and men are taken into considerations’ (Sarel, 1996). This is relevant to my study as the observation of policies relating to gender equalities would help the informants to be more aware of their circumstances and to prepare them in participating in this research study effectively.

In order to help informants see the difference in their living conditions between Singapore and Thailand, the informants were asked the question, ‘do you think Singapore society is different from Thai society in terms of gender equality? How and why?’ This question is also used as a guided question to help sieve out data that might help the researcher to be able to compare and contrast the state of both societies in terms of gender equality accordingly. The response of the brides and grooms are seen in pie chart 11 and 12 respectively.



Pie chart 11: The Response of the Thai brides as to whether Singapore Society is Different from Thai Society in terms of Gender Equality?

100 per cent of all Thai brides in this study deemed Singapore society to be different from Thailand in terms of gender equality. This is mentioned by Thai brides such as Luck and Dao who stated, *'based on my personal opinion, in Singapore, both male and female are equal'*.

Thai brides such as Na and Angela see 'equal opportunity' being ascribed for both gender as long as they are 'capable' and is 'talented'. Moreover, some brides also see the availability of laws and policies to protect females as a way to measure equality between men and women in Singapore. This is mentioned by Dao, *'Yes. Singapore has law and policies that look after its female citizens. Here is better than Thailand'*.

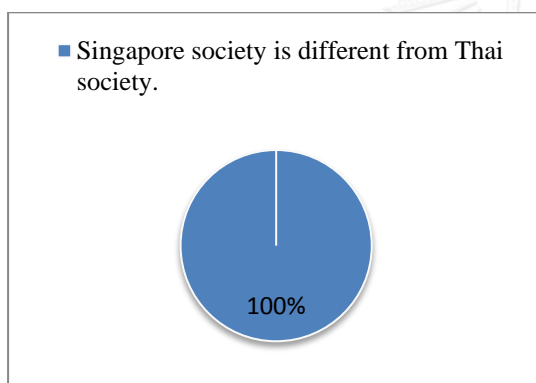
40 per cent of the brides have similar beliefs. They believed that Thailand is less equal due to the lack of policies available to protect women. Moreover, they also believed that women in Thailand have less decision making process in all aspects of society which caused the inequality between both genders. Angela mentioned, *'Yes. Mostly it is like that. Decision making process is the same. Mostly opinions are shared'*.

As seen through the excerpt given by Angela, Singapore society is seen to be more equal as opposed to Thai society due to equal decision making process between both males and females in the society. Females are deemed to be equal to the males as there are opportunities for shared opinions.

Finally, 20 per cent of brides believe that Singapore is more equal due to the character trait of the men which has more respect for the female counterpart. This is mentioned by Angela, *'Not like Thai men where they consider themselves to be greater, bigger, better. They are the sole decision maker'*. Such mind set is seen to be echoed by others such as Luck and Nancy who believed that Thai men are irresponsible and suffered from superior complex. This led them to not respect women and in some instances, led to the Thai men abusing women physically. This belief is seen below:

'Yes. It is different. Singaporean men are more responsible. They are more respectable towards women and few of them will abuse their partners physically. Unlike Thai men'.

Therefore, to Thai brides, the superior complex of Thai men towards their female counterparts and the inability to share decision making process led to their internalisation. Singapore society is much more equal in terms of gender than Thailand. Likewise, all of them believe that the state has a large role to play in promoting gender equality in a society. To these women, the availability of laws and policies sanctioned by the state has enabled the society to be more equal in terms of gender. This to them is what caused Singapore to differ from Thai society in terms of gender equality. The opinion of the brides is similar to that of the grooms in which they believed that Singapore society is different from Thai Society in terms of Gender Equality. The response of the Singaporean grooms can be seen below.



Pie chart 12: The Response of the Singaporean Grooms as to whether Singapore Society is Different from Thai Society in terms of Gender Equality?

Likewise, 100 per cent of grooms viewed Singapore to have more gender equality as opposed to Thailand. They believed that gender equality comes as a result of the equal educational opportunities for both men and women in particular. This is mentioned by Yogi who said,

'There is gender equality in Singapore. Most Singaporean women go to school. They study. They graduate. So in terms of working and all, I don't think there is any inequality in Singapore society as it is unless people did not go through education'.

As seen through the excerpt given by Yogi, Singaporean grooms internalised that the equal access to education is the determining factor to how equal the society is in terms

of gender. Education led to gender equality as women are given the same opportunity as men and are able to subsequently go out and work. This leads them to be equal to men.

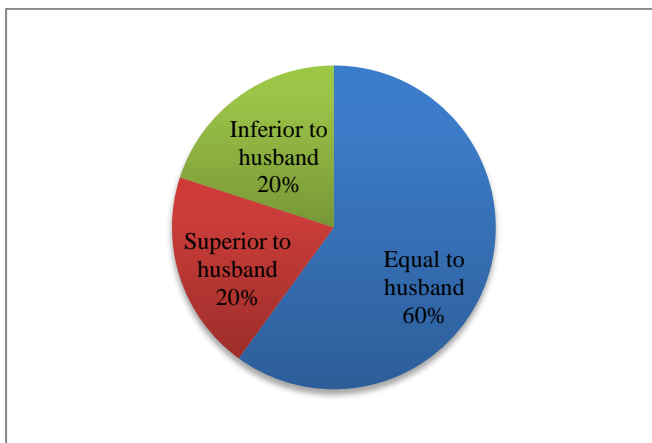
Similarly, grooms in this study also believed that Singapore is considered to be equal due to the fact that it is a city-state. This is in contrast to Thai society where there is both city and rural areas which shaped and influenced the mindset of its people. This is mentioned by Jimmy who said, '*Gender equality in Thai society also depends on where you are. If you are in the city, presently, women are also working...*' Therefore, gender equality is also due to the fact that the country is more of a rural or urban society. In a society that is largely urban, the mindset of the people are more modern as opposed to those living in a rural area. As such, there are more instances of gender equality.

In conclusion, all informants in this study believed that Singapore is different from Thai society in which it has more gender equality than the latter. This is because Singapore is a small city-state which will require all its human capital to work in order to ensure its survival (Lee, 2010). This is because of the lack of natural resources other than people in the context of Singapore. Therefore, both men and women are given equal access to education and opportunities. This is different from the Thai society where the existence of both the city and rural areas help to maintain a strong cultural bond and to shape and influence the mindset of its people which in turn could lead to a smaller incidence of gender equality.

5.1.3 Analysing International Marriage at the Micro Level

International marriage refers to the union of two couples of different nationalities as recognised by the state. International marriage at the micro level in this study refers to the lived experiences of a couple in the context of the homes. It refers to the lived experiences of the couples with limited involvements and sanctioned by the state. In this section, I aim to find out and analyse international marriage at the micro level; meaning to say the lived experiences of the couples in the domestic sphere.

To find out whether the couples believe that they are equal in their family unit, the couples were asked the question ‘Do you see yourself as equal to your husband/wife? How and why?’ Pie charts 13 and 14 show the response of the Thai brides and Singaporean grooms respectively.



Pie chart 13: The response of the Thai brides as to whether they see themselves as equal to their Singaporean husband.

As seen through the results, 60 per cent of Thai brides think they are equal to the husband. These 60 per cent believed that they are equal to their husbands based on their husbands giving them the opportunity to give input during decision making process. This was mentioned by Na that, ‘*Yes. I am equal to him in every way. No one is less equal than one another*’. This is also echoed by Luck who mentioned that, ‘*Yes. During decision making process. I will give my input. We will both share inputs with one another and make a joint decision*’.

As seen through inputs by Luck and Na, their ability to voice out their opinions and ability for joint decision makings seem to be the reason why they believed that they are equal to their husbands. Moreover, 60 per cent of the brides also have the opportunity to go out, work and earn a living similar to the husband. Therefore, they feel that they are equal to the husband. This is echoed by Dao who mentioned,

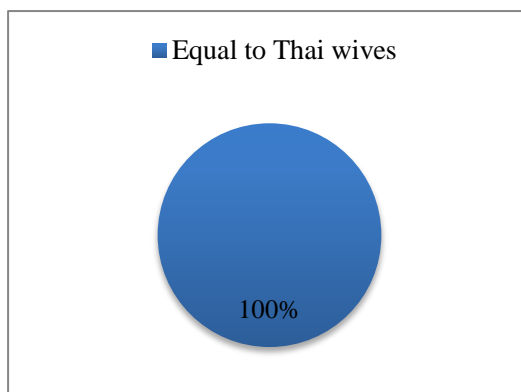
'As for me, I think I am equal. Because we are able to do whatever they do. But not equal in the sense that we go out and have another husband. But based on our own thinking, our feeling, where we want to go. Whatever we feel like doing we can'.

As seen through the excerpt given by Dao, the freedom of being able to do whatever she wants without having to consult her husband led her to internalise that she is equal to her husband. That being said, 20 per cent of the brides feel that they are superior to their husbands. The reason cited for this is based on the fact that their husbands often allow them to be the sole decision maker on matters relating to children and the family. Moreover, they feel that they are more superior as they are more talented to their husbands. This is mentioned by Laek, *'...for sure sometimes my husband is seemed to be inferior to me... there are many instances in his abilities that he is not able to showcase although he is very talented'*. As seen through the excerpt by Laek, there are some aspects of life that she is savvier than her husband. Thus, through these instances, she feels that she is superior to her husband.

Lastly, 20 per cent of the brides feel that they are inferior to the husband. To these group of the brides their limited knowledge of English led them to feel more inferior to their husbands. Thus, they greatly rely on the husband for support to help them in various matters in daily living in contemporary Singapore. This is mentioned by Angela who stated, *'I feel unequal because my husband is more intelligent than I am. It is also because of language that I feel I am unequal. He speaks and knows English more than I do'*. Brides such as Angela and Dao believed that their inability to use English in a communicative sense led them to be unequal to their husband. This is because, they greatly rely on their husbands to help in their everyday living in contemporary Singapore. Therefore, Thai brides see their ability to give inputs and feedback on matters relating to the marriage as a measure of equality between them and their spouse in the marriage.

Moreover, some brides believed that their ability to earn a living has also allowed them to be placed on the same pedestal as the grooms. Brides who believe they are

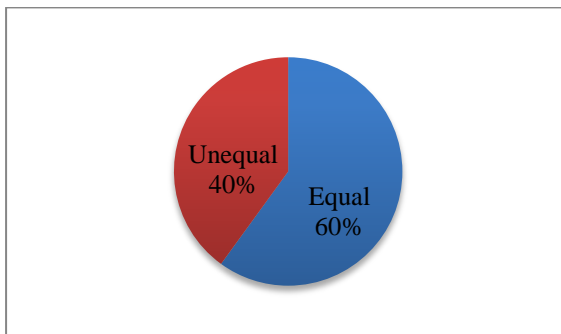
inferior is because of having obtained a lower educational qualification than the grooms. This is also based on their inability to communicate proficiently using the universal English language. Brides who believe that they are more superior to the grooms qualify that this belief comes from the fact that they are the sole decision makers on matters relating to the marriage and family. In addition, their husbands will often listen to them on matters in this arena and therefore they see themselves to be superior to their husbands.



Pie chart 14: The response of the Singaporean Grooms as to whether they see themselves as equal to their Thai wives.

100 per cent of the grooms in this study feel that their wives are equal to them. This is based on the decision making process on matters relating to the marriage. All grooms in this study claimed that they will consult the brides on matters relating to the marriage such as groceries shopping and the schools that their children should be enrolled in. They will take the comments of their spouse into consideration when making decisions. This is echoed by Jimmy who stated, '*Of course... We love each other. We are equal*'. To grooms such as Jimmy and Yogi, they believed that their wives are equal to them due to love. Love is seen to be the driving force for equality to the grooms. Moreover, they admit that some matters such as groceries shopping and the well-being of the children, their wives have an equal say as they are more apt in such matter as opposed to the grooms. To these grooms; therefore, their wives are equal to them.

In an attempt to find out if there are instances where the couples do not feel that they are equal to each other, informants were asked, ‘Are there instances where you feel you are not equal to your husband/wife? When are these instances?’ Pie chart 15 and 16 reflect the response of the Thai brides and Singaporean grooms accordingly.



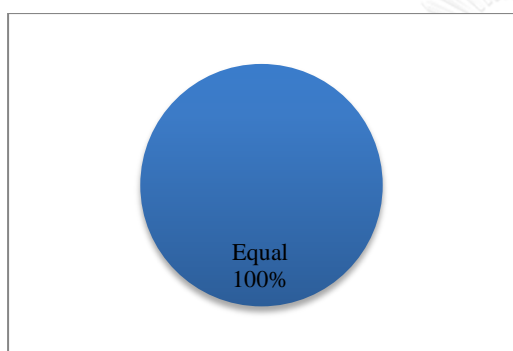
Pie chart 15: The response of the Thai brides to the question ‘Are there instances where you feel you are not equal to your husband? When are these instances?’

40 per cent of brides in this study stated that there are instances in which they feel that they are unequal to the husband. These instances occurred as a result of having obtained lower educational qualifications and the lack of knowledge on laws and policies in Singapore. These instances caused the brides to feel inferior in comparison to the grooms. This is reflected by Angela who stated, ‘*I feel unequal because my husband is more intelligent than I am. It is also because of language that I feel I am unequal. He speaks and knows English more than I do*’. As seen from the excerpt, Thai brides such as Angela and Dao saw their low educational qualifications and poor command of language as factors of inequality. Furthermore, some brides see the low knowledge of laws and policies to be the reason why they are unequal to their husband. This was mentioned by Na:

‘I think... I can’t think of any specific incident... just give me a moment.... I think during discussion about laws and policies of Singapore. Because in Singapore, the citizens are very afraid of issues regarding laws. But this is not applicable to Thai men. In Thailand, they are very blasé with regards to law. Anything regarding law in Singapore, they are the sole decision makers’.

Therefore, the brides view limited knowledge of laws and policies of Singapore to be a factor of inequality between them and their Singaporean husbands. They; hence, need to consult with their husbands on such knowledge and issues. It is the process of having to consult that caused them to feel unequal to their husbands.

In contrast, 60 per cent of the brides feel that they are equal to the grooms and have no instances where they feel superior or inferior in comparison to the grooms. The reason cited for such feelings is that they treat each other as friends and live their lives in partnership.

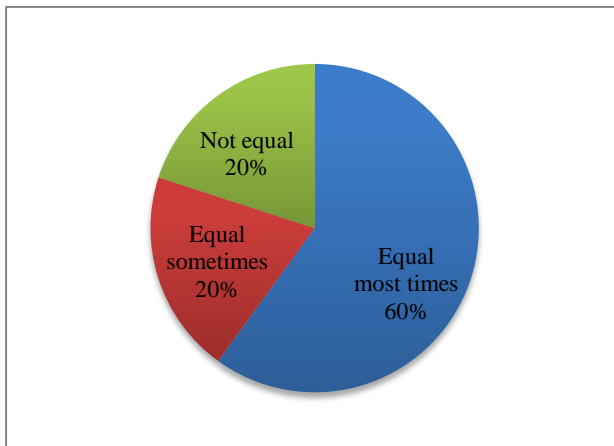


Pie chart 16: The response of the Singaporean grooms to the question ‘Are there instances where you feel you are not equal to your wife? When are these instances?’

100 per cent of the Singaporean grooms in this study feel that they are equal to their wives. However, all of the grooms simply said that they could not think of such instances but they feel that they are equal to their wives in every way. Therefore, the brides in this study see social constraints such as educational qualification and lack of knowledge relating to laws and policies as factors that led to them feeling inferior. This is in contrast to the grooms who feel that there is no inequality between them and their wives.

In an attempt to probe further into strategies used by Thai brides and Singaporean grooms to try and achieve equality when they feel that they are not equal, informants were asked, ‘When you feel that you are not equal to your husband/wife, are there any

attempts by you to try and achieve equality? How?’ Pie chart 17 and 18 reflect the response of the brides and grooms respectively.



Pie chart 17: Thai brides response to the question ‘When you feel that you are not equal to your husband, are there any attempts by you to try and achieve equality? How?’

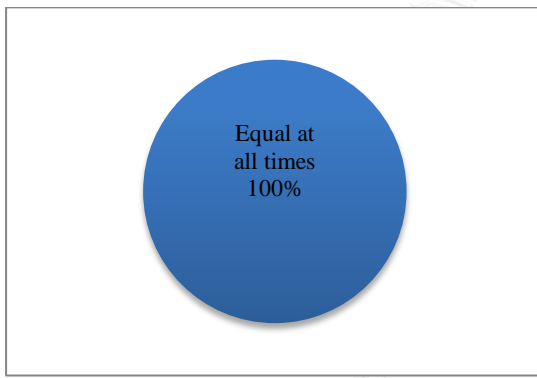
As seen through the pie chart, 60 per cent of the brides feel that they are equal to their husbands most of the times and that there is no need for them to try and achieve equality. This was cited by Luck that, ‘*That instance is rare. So no attempts.*’ Interestingly, brides who feel that they are equal to their husbands most of the times did not make any attempt to try and achieve equality. These brides do not see the need to and thus did not make any attempt to try and achieve equality.

20 per cent of the brides feel that it solely depends on situations and that only when the matter is too serious. Then they should make an attempt to try and achieve equality. An example of an attempt made is to voice out their concern and plea to their husband to take their reasoning into consideration. This was mentioned by Na who stated, ‘*Must see the situation. If the situation or matter is too serious, we will need to give our inputs.*’

Brides such as Na and Luck, weigh in on matters before making an attempt to try and achieve equalities. These brides will only attempt to achieve equality when they feel

that their husbands have gone overboard. The attempt by the brides in achieving equality is through giving their input or to have a talk with their husbands.

Finally, 20 per cent of the brides believed that they are inferior to their husbands and that they have no rights to question their husbands in any matters. This was reflected by Angela who said, *'I will not dare to question him or raise my voice. I will always listen to him and keep quiet when he scolds me. After all, he is the breadwinner of the family'*. To this group of the brides, they feel that since the husbands are the breadwinners of the family, they have no rights to question their husbands and should remain in silence.



Pie chart 18: Singaporean grooms response to the question: 'When you feel that you are not equal to your wife, are there any attempts by you to try and achieve equality? How?'

In contrast, 100 per cent of the grooms believed that their wives are equal to them and that there are no instances in which they need to try and achieve equality. Therefore, Majority of brides and grooms believe they are equal to their partners and do not see the need to make an attempt to try and achieve equality. However, there is a small group of brides who sees their husbands as sole breadwinners and allow their husbands to exert authority over them. Likewise, another small group of brides believe that it depends on situations and that attempts should only be made when the matter is too serious and require input from both the brides and the grooms. This is in contrast to the grooms who believed that their wives are equal to them and that no changes to the current arrangement is needed. This could be due to them being

comfortable in the current marriage arrangement and are happy with their power position in the marriage. This thus reinstates their patriarchal privilege in the society.

5.1.4 Overcoming the challenges of living in a patriarchal society

This section analysed the strategies used by Thai brides in their attempt of overcoming adversity in living in a Singaporean patriarchal society. The informants were asked a total of two questions which were, ‘Were you satisfied with your life after getting married with a Singaporean man/Thai woman? ‘Why? Or Why not? Please give some examples’ and ‘Have you ever faced any problems in your married life? How did you solve those problems?’ The first question was asked as an attempt to observe if the informants are happy with their respective partner while the second question was asked in an attempt to look at strategies used by the couples in overcoming adversities in international marriage. Pie chart 19 and 20 reflect the sentiments of the brides and grooms respectively.



Pie chart 19: Thai brides response to ‘Were you satisfied with your life after getting married with a Singaporean man? Why? Or Why not? Please give some examples’

As seen through the response, 100 per cent of the brides said that they are satisfied with their lives in general after getting married with a Singaporean man. 40 per cent of the brides see having a responsible husband as the reason behind their satisfaction. 40 per cent of the brides see their ability to go out to work and earn an income as a reason behind their satisfaction. This is cited by Luck who stated, ‘*Yes. Very happy. When I am here, I can work. I get better income than living in Thailand*’. Brides such

as Luck and Na, cited their freedom of being able to work and earn and income as the main reason why they are satisfied after being married with a Singaporean men.

Likewise, 20 per cent of the brides based their satisfaction to the safety of the country and the availability of public utility. These brides also deemed citizenship rights as another reason why they are satisfied with being married to Singaporean men. This is stated by Na, 'In the beginning, I was not very satisfied. Because I was on a Long term social visit pass. But now that I am a permanent resident, I am ok. I am very satisfied and there is no existing problem'.

To this group of Thai brides, the efficiency and accessibility of the country as well as their citizenship rights are what caused them to be extremely satisfied with their lives after being married to Singaporean men.

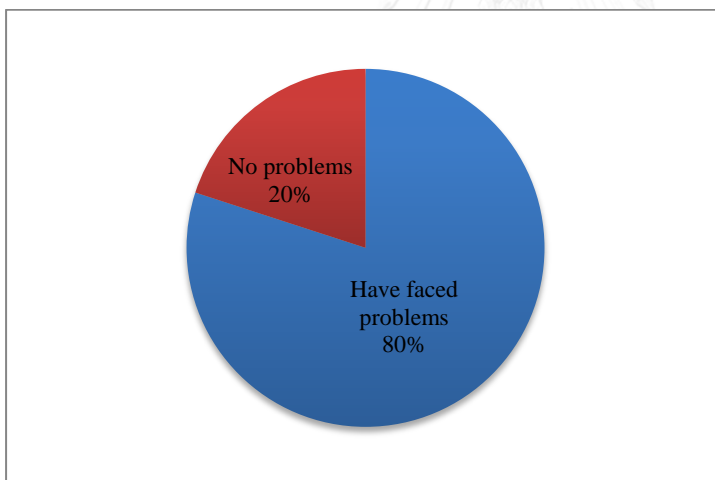


Pie chart 20: Singaporean grooms response to 'Were you satisfied with your life after getting married with a Thai woman? Why? Or Why not? Please give some examples'

Likewise, 100 per cent of the grooms are satisfied with lives after being married to a Thai woman. To them, they see Thai women as hardworking and loving and that these women are very family-oriented which make the grooms very satisfied with their marriage lives. This was emphasised by Jimmy who stated, '*Ok lor. Yes. Nothing unusual. Thailand people are generally more friendly. So I am satisfied*' .

Singaporean grooms such as Jimmy and Ken stated that the characteristics of Thai women in their ability to work hard as well as friendly and caring demeanour are what made them satisfied to be married to a Thai woman. Therefore, all brides and grooms are satisfied with their life after marriage. This is due to having a responsible partner and living in a country which is both efficient and easily accessible. Moreover, brides also attribute their satisfaction to the fact that they are able to work and earn an income. The grooms in this study mostly based their satisfaction to the character traits of these Thai women.

In an attempt to find out the various coping strategies of their married lives in Singaporean patriarchal society, the informants were asked, ‘Have you ever faced any problems in your married life? How did you solve those problems?’ Pie charts 21 and 22 reflect the responses of the Brides and Grooms respectively.



Pie chart 21: Thai brides response to ‘Have you ever faced any problems in your married life? How did you solve those problems?’

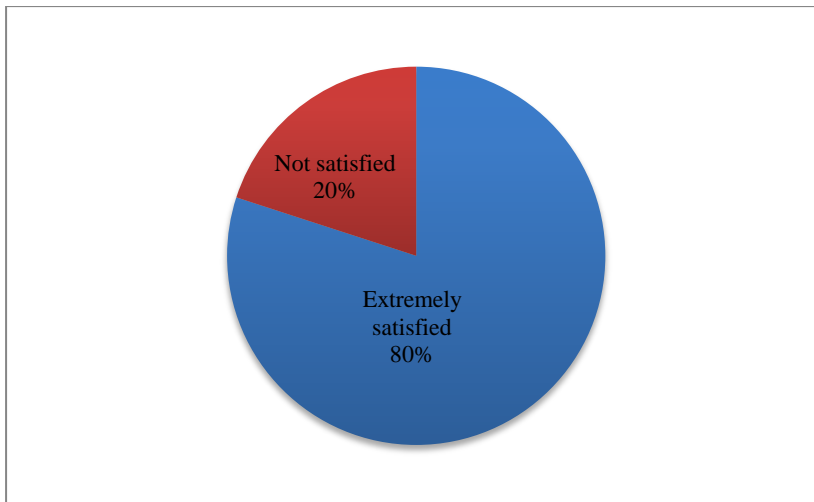
80 per cent of brides faced a problem in their married lives while 20 percent of the brides did not face any problems at all. They think marriage is happy and problem-free. Moreover, the brides in this group believed that the problem in their marriage comes from the husband’s family. They need to look after the husband’s parents and hence there are many unhappiness and disagreements. Likewise, a minority group of the brides stated that the major problem in their marriage lie with the fact that their

husbands are addicted to gambling while some blamed it on the cultural differences between them and their husbands. Thai brides with problems attempt to solve the problems through having a discussion with their husbands with threatening to leave as last resort. The other bulk of the brides made no attempt to solve these problems and continue living in silence. This is cited by Angela who mentioned, *'To take care of my husband's family. To cook and clean and stay home to take care of my in-laws. I see this as a problem'*. Such issue is also emphasised by Na who stated, *'All Thai women will experience this problem if they do not have their own house. The problem lies with husband's family'*.

As seen through the excerpt given by Angela and Na, the problems lie mainly with having to live with the extended family of their husbands. This is seen to what caused the tension in their marriage. Furthermore, when asked for coping strategies, these women stated that, they would threaten to leave as one of the coping strategies. This was mentioned by Kae:

'Singaporean men are addicted to gambling. Buying Lottery. We cannot stop them. They will gamble till they forget sky and earth. In 1 week, how many times are there. Tell me. In Singapore, there are 5 times. There is never enough money because all of it is spent on gambling... Men are usually over- confident. When we speak, they will not listen. They must be the one with the upper hand'.

Thus, as seen through the excerpt, Thai women are not passive victims of circumstance and there are coping strategies employed by them should the need arise. Therefore, it is crucial to note that although there are problems in their marriage, however, these problems are seen to be minor by Thai women and thus has little or no weigh in their overall satisfaction to their marriage lives to Singaporean men.



Pie chart 22: Singaporean grooms response to ‘Have you ever faced any problems in your married life? How did you solve those problems?’

As seen through the response of the Singaporean grooms, 80 per cent of the grooms interviewed stated that they are extremely happy with the marriage with no problems. This was mentioned by Ong, ‘*Yes. This one is true. Very Happy*’. In contrast, 20 per cent stated that there are many problems ranging from financial to disagreement. Their attempt at solving the problems is to have a discussion with their partners. This was mentioned by Ken,

‘In the past, no problem but presently we do have some problem. The problem is due to misunderstanding and therefore we quarrel and we discuss and understand each other and hence the issue is solved’.

Therefore, to Singaporean grooms, majority are extremely satisfied in their marriage lives and only a small fractions state that there are problems in their marriage which led to them being unsatisfied.

All in all, the fact that majority of the grooms see no problem in their marriage helped to reinstate their privilege position as the head of the household. This is due to the lack of worry in the marriage and their false belief that the marriage is fine. Brides who state that there are problems in their marriage but made no attempt to solve the problems show that they are inferior to the husbands and that keeping quiet is the best

solution to tackle these problems due to their under privileged position in the marriage. Brides who attempt to solve the problems in the marriage employed a mild strategy through discussions.

5.2 Analysis of research findings

It is interesting to note that, even though there are laws and policies in Singapore to show that there are remnants of patriarchal mind set such as the reserved quota for male students in medical schools, however, all of the informants believe the society to be equal in terms of gender. The informants would hence need further guided question to be able to see the state of society in which they are living in. This hence led me to create guided questions to analyse the relationship between Thai brides and Singaporean grooms at the micro level.

Furthermore, there are varying expectations between the brides and grooms in their marriage lives. Thai women married to Singaporean men expect their husbands to look after them and to provide them with economical and social assistance. Thai women are involved in international marriage with Singaporean men with the expectation of being looked after by the husband and did not foresee the added responsibility of having to look after the husband's family. This in turn, led them to finding the added responsibility to be a problem in the marriage. Such expectation is seen to differ from Singaporean grooms. Singaporean men are involved in international marriage with Thai women as they look for a wife not only to look after them but also to share economic responsibilities and to help lighten their burden. In contemporary Singapore, the cost of living is seen to be on the rise with 'the dominant sentiment that pay increases have not kept up with rising expenses'(TODAYOnline, 2015). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Singaporean men would seek partners to help offset the high cost of living in Singapore.

Besides the differing expectation in terms of roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives, some Thai women in this study also viewed that the characteristics of their Singaporean husbands are not congruent to their expectations of the ideal husbands

prior to the marriage. This is reflected by Angela, '*...In reality they are the same. But then again, not all men are the same. Some of them are terrible. Nevertheless, they are still better than Thai men*'. Her reason as to her choice of being married to a Singaporean as opposed to Thai men reflects that the reality of international marriage is not in line with the expectations that she has set out prior to the marriage. To Thai women such as Angela and Luck, cited that there are flaws in their Singaporean husbands. However, they are willing to look past these flaws as they deemed having Singaporean husbands to be better off than getting married to Thai men. This hence attributed to them agreeing in unison that they were satisfied with their lives after being married to Singaporean men. Kae emphasized this,

'Singaporean men are addicted to gambling. Buying Lottery. We cannot stop them. They will gamble till they forget sky and earth. In 1 week, how many times are there. Tell me. In Singapore, there are 5 times. There is never enough money because all of it is spent on gambling... Men are usually over- confident. When we speak, they will not listen. They must be the one with the upper hand'.

The excerpt above reflects Kae's frustration towards the character flaws of her Singaporean husband. These flaws include the addiction to gambling and his egoistic nature towards her. Her frustration has emphasised on the reality of the situation in which Singaporean men are not perfect and that there are bound to be flaws that could cause tension and unhappiness in the marriage. As seen through the excerpts, the misalignment of the motivation for international marriage by Singaporean men and Thai women could thus led to unhappiness and frustrations in the daily lives of the couples. Unhappiness and frustrations in such marriages could sometime have a detrimental effect on couples with the possibility of them parting ways. This point is reiterated by Kae, '*If there is no mutual understanding then perhaps the best way is to leave...I tried solving the problem by threatening to leave*'. As seen through the excerpt by Kae, the unhappiness and frustrations inflicted on her through the course of marriage with Singaporean men could lead to the considerations of her to end the marriage.

Therefore, there are differing expectations of Thai women and Singaporean men in international marriage. This differing expectations could lead to unhappiness in the lives of the couples in particular of Thai women. Such unhappiness has a catastrophic effect on the marriage which may lead to the possibility of the dissolution of the marriage. However, all the informants are seemed to be satisfied with their lives after getting involved in international marriage. This is reflected by Angela who stated: *'satisfied. I know that should anything happen to me, he will take responsibility and will not abandon me'*.

Thai women such as Angela, Na, Luck and Dao are willing to look past the flaws of their Singaporean husbands as they believe that Singaporean men are responsible. All of the brides interviewed share similar sentiments with Angela. This sentiment is that, there are flaws in their Singaporean husbands. However, these flaws are traits that they are able to live with and that living with such flaws is still better than being with Thai men. That being said, majority of Thai women and Singaporean men seemed to disregard Singapore as a patriarchal society with many of them citing equal opportunities for both gender as the main reason. Such sentiment is reflected by Na when asked if Singapore is a patriarchal society. *'I anti such society. No. I disagree. Men and women are both equal in whatever they do'*. Such reflection is emphasised by Jimmy who cited the presence of female bosses to be a determinant as to why he disagreed with the statement of 'Singapore as a patriarchal society': *'No. Our country is quite balanced. There is equality. There are a lot of female bosses out there now. Head of company also'*.

The reflections of Jimmy and Na show the sentiments of majority of Thai women and Singaporean men with regards to their opinion on whether Singapore is a patriarchal society. This shows that to the informants, equal opportunities is a major determinant to determine whether the society is a patriarchal one. Likewise, as seen through the reflection by Jimmy, many of them also attribute economic opportunities to be an important reason to determine if the society is a patriarchal one. However, there is a small fraction of people who believed Singapore to be a patriarchal society. To this group of people, the reason that fuelled behind this belief is that, *'Singapore is a*

society where men are given more importance or seen to be more important than the woman' (Lim, 2017).

The most common reason given as to why men are given more importance than the women is because, *'Somebody like the man earn a lot of money to take care of the family'* (Lim, 2017). As seen through the excerpts above, Singapore is seen to be a patriarchal society by a small fraction of the informants as men are given more importance than the women. The importance is given to male due to their underlying belief that men are the provider for the family and that their economic power warrant them the rights to be deemed as more important than women.

Similarly, it can also be argued that the experiences of Thai women living in Singaporean patriarchal society is at the peril of their Singaporean husbands as listed out by immigration policy in the nation-state. This is seen through the fact that these women are seen to be under the care of their husbands and could only continue to live in the nation-state as guaranteed by their husbands. Thai women living in Singapore are to renew their permanent residency every five years depending on good conducts and their husbands' approval. Such policy is hence seen to put Singaporean males in a more advantageous position than these Thai women. The failure of the husbands to guarantee, these women risk the possibility of deportation or cancellation of the renewal of their permanent residence status. Such rule is hence seen to put the women at the hands of their husbands. Therefore one can argue that these women are seen as a form of 'property' by their Singaporean husbands. Thai women living in Singaporean patriarchal society remained fearful of their husbands who are deemed to be their 'guardian' by the state. Such sentiment is reflected by May who stated that she is in a more inferior position as her husband when it comes to the discussion on issues pertaining to laws and policies of Singapore: *'I think during discussion about laws and policies of Singapore. Because in Singapore, the citizens are very afraid of issues regarding laws'*. Through the excerpt by May, Thai women are hence seemed to be the property of their Singaporean husbands and their experiences are shaped and controlled by their husbands as well as the state.

In addition, through this study one can safely assume that Singapore is clearly a hidden ‘patriarchal society’ which is a society with a hidden characteristic of a patriarchal society. This is seen through the explication of laws and policies in contemporary Singapore that showcase its ‘patriarchal nature’. However, it is seen as hidden as majority of informants in this study see Singapore to be an egalitarian society where there is equality in the rights and opportunities for both genders. The jarring difference in the opinions of the informants is that they believed that they are living in an egalitarian society as opposed to living in a society which has laws and policies slanting towards a patriarchal state. Therefore, this shows that Singapore is indeed a ‘patriarchal society’. That being said, the patriarchal nature of Singapore is not obvious and is hidden. This is to allow Singapore to be able to portray itself as a modern and progressive society accordingly (Lee, 2016).

The reason behind the differing opinion could be due to the different measures to determine the nature of the society. Informants in this study seemed to measure the nature of the Singapore state using the economic opportunities and ability of women to work and earn an income to decide if the society is a patriarchal one. This is different from this study which uses the analysis of laws and policies in the state as a determinant to decide if the state is a patriarchal one. In addition, it is worthy to mention that, in a country like Singapore which lacks of ‘natural resources’ (Lee, 2016) relies heavily on its human capital in order to remain competitive and relevant in the contemporary sense. This is seen through the speech by Mr Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister, at the Singapore Human Capital Summit Opening in 2009:

‘For a small country like Singapore, acquiring and nurturing human talent is a matter of survival. Without much of anything else, we rely on human ingenuity and effort to build our economy and society. We have therefore made major investments in education, lifelong learning and talent development. And we are happy to host gatherings like the one today, because they give us new ideas to develop and manage our human capital’.

As seen through the speech, Singapore places high emphasis on developing its only natural resource which is human capital. Therefore, it has no choice but to require most of its population to enter the workforce to ensure its survival. Hence, using economic opportunities of both genders in the nation state that 'can only depend on its human resource' (Lee, 2016) as a measure to see if it is a patriarchal society may not be as precise as the analysis of laws and policies in the city-state. This is because, Singapore would need all of its citizens regardless of gender to help boost its economy.

In addition, the sentiments of the superiority of male over a female is seen at the micro level in Singapore. This is seen through some informants who ascribed a clear demarcated roles for females; identifying them firstly as a mother and wife and that they should only be allowed to venture into the role of a worker should they have excelled in the role of the former. Interestingly, such 'pigeon-holed' is only given to females. There is no attempt by any of the informants to demarcate the role of the males to be a good father or husband. As such, one can see the interplay of patriarchal mind set at work in which Singaporeans males are at the liberty to excel in whichever roles they have decided to explore in their lives while it is given that females should excel in their roles as a nurturer prior to excelling in other roles such as a worker in a market-driven economy. Therefore, such mind sets show the lingering of a patriarchal mind set of individuals in Singapore.

As seen through the data from the research and the analysis of these data, we can observe that indeed, Singapore is still a patriarchal society. It is a society in which centred around males who are given the liberty to fulfil their dreams without any expectations of them being pigeon-holed as a nurturer. This is in contrast to females living in Singapore. These women are first and foremost seen as a nurturer and are expected to excel at being a good mother or a good wife prior to chasing after their career aspirations.

Likewise, one can establish the experiences of Thai women in Singapore to be greatly influenced by the constraints of their husbands' decision as written by immigration

law and policies of Singapore. This; hence, allows us to establish Singapore as patriarchal society where women are still deemed to be inferior to men to some extent. That being said, there are attempts by the state to achieve equality for both genders by the Singaporean government. This is seen through the introduction of the women's charter to the nation state. The women's charter is a legislative act that was introduced in 1961 with the mission to 'protect and advance the rights of women and girls in Singapore' ("Women's Charter," n.d.). Other responsibilities of women's charter is seen below:

'It is a wide-ranging charter that brings together the regulation of the relationship between husband and wife and the relationship between parents and their children, termination of marriages and division of matrimonial assets. Furthermore, it provides protection against family violence and penalty for offences against women and girls'. ("Women's Charter," n.d.)

The women's charter would still have a long way to go to abolish the patriarchal mind set of both the populace and the state in Singapore. This is due to the fact that the patriarchal mind set in Singapore is a coveted one with many individuals not being able to see such interplay.

In the next section, I will be providing further recommendations on how the lives of Thai women in a Singaporean patriarchal society can be improved through mechanism such as the assistance of legislative act of women's charter to ensure that Singaporean society would eventually become an egalitarian one. That being said, all of the informants did not want to live in Singapore permanently. In fact, most of them plan to head to Thailand to retire in their old age. Interestingly, Singaporean men often cite the reasons of the high cost of living and financial insecurity in Singapore to be the reason why they would want to migrate to Thailand when they are older. This is seen by Jimmy who stated: *'Thailand living standard is lower. Thailand is better for retirement'*.

To Singaporean men, the low cost of living and affordability is seen to be the pull-factor that attracts Singaporean men to move out of Singapore and to retire in Thailand. These men also deemed the character traits of Thai people to be another reason as to why they would move to Thailand. This is reflected by Lim, '*Thailand people are generally more friendly*'. As such, the character of the people in the society is also a determinant as to the choice of these Singaporean men in wanting to move to Thailand for retirement. Therefore, to Singaporean men, their aspiration of moving to Thailand when they are older is to fulfil their psychological needs such as intimate relationships and friends as they considered people in Thailand to be friendlier.

Likewise, another explanation for moving to Thailand is for the fulfilment of esteem needs such as prestige and feeling of accomplishment. This is through them taking advantage of the low cost of living in order to ensure that they can retire comfortably and to be able to live in a worthwhile manner. This is in contrast to the reasons given by Thai women who are married to Singaporean men. To these women, their reason for the return to Thailand range from nationalistic sentiments to living close to their family. This is reflected by Angela who stated, '*It is because I was born there, so I must die there. No other country is better than Thailand*'. To Angela, there is a nationalistic sentiments of being born a Thai that fuelled her desire to return to Thailand when she is old. She stated that '*No one would want to spend their lives in Singapore till they die. Everyone would want to go back to their birthplace but for now I would want to stay here*'. Such sentiment is also observed with the majority of the Thai women who are married to Singaporean men. The same recurring theme of the love for one's own country is reflected in the response of most Thai women informants in this study with the overarching saying, '*ultimately we are Thais so we have to love Thailand*'.

However, there is also a small proportion of women who has no intention of moving back to Thailand after having married to Singaporean men and living in the country for numeral numbers of years. To these women, Singapore is seen to be a safe haven for them to continue living their lives and that moving back to Thailand might disrupt

what they have created for themselves in Singapore. An example of such is seen through Kae who mentioned, *‘Singapore is safer. If you want to live life safely. It is better to live in Singapore’*. This is further emphasised by Angela who stated: *‘Singapore is safe. I love Thailand but it is not as safe. The country is full of crooks and thieves. I am afraid. They will murder me. Thailand has too many bad people’*.

As seen through the excerpt, there is a minority of Thai women who deemed Thailand to be a country that is unsafe for them with some of them fearing for their lives if they move to Thailand. Therefore, these women pride Singapore to be a safe country that is good for them to lead their lives and do not have plans to return back to Thailand. Through this study, one can further deduce that Thai women who moved to Singapore, are here to fulfil their basic needs in particular security and safety as outlined through the theory of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. This is because, Singapore provides a safe place for them where their basic needs are fulfilled. Hence, they will not move back to Thailand because it will not help them to fulfil their safety needs.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

All in all, there are two main objectives for this study which are firstly to investigate the phenomenon of international marriage between Thai women and Singaporean men and secondly to study how Thai wives adapt themselves to Singaporean patriarchal society. There are two guiding questions used in answering these two objectives. The guiding questions are: what motivates Thai women and Singaporean men to get married to each other? and how do Thai wives live their lives and negotiate their identity as female Thai migrants in Singaporean patriarchal society? The first guiding question is used to answer the first objective and the second question is used to answer the second objective accordingly.

These information are gathered through the use of qualitative methods such as in-depth and open-ended interviews and thus extensive knowledge on this matter was able to be accumulated. In addition, participation observation was also employed to observe how Thai women negotiated their identity when living in a Singaporean patriarchal society. There were a total of 20 couples gathered for this research. The strategy employed was 'purposive sampling' also known as 'judgmental, selective or subjective sampling' (Dissertation, 2012). The criteria are that the couples must be Thai women who are married to Singaporean men. Moreover, these couples must have a Singapore marriage certificate. Moreover, the research informants were gathered through the use of the snowballing method. The 'gate keeper' for me to gain access to this group of Thai migrant women was Luck, a close acquaintance of my mother - a Thai migrant woman who has been married to a Singaporean for 19 years.

In conclusion, this study has inquired on the lived experiences of Singaporean men and Thai women involved in international marriages in patriarchal Singapore. This study has shown that there are different reasons as to why these couples marry one another. Likewise, it has shown that Inoue's theory of international marriage (2014) and Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (1968) are still relevant and can be used to understand the phenomenon of international marriage effectively. Moreover, these theories have shown that there are different expectations of these couples. The varying reasons and expectations provide points of contention for these couples in their marriage which led them to feel unsatisfied in their marriage. Moreover, the strains are coupled with structural forces of patriarchy in the Singapore society. Some examples of structural forces include strict immigration laws and laws that inhibit gender equality such as the gender quotas imposed on youths entering medical schools in Singapore. These structural forces have caused a strain into the marriage and unions of such couples.

6.2 Discussion

As seen in this study, women aspire to marry someone from a different country in order to fulfil their basic physiological and safety needs. This differs from the grooms who see the marrying of Thai brides as an attempt to fulfil their self-actualization needs. These data correspond to the theory of hierarchy of needs as outlined by Abraham Maslow in his paper of 'A theory in human motivation' (1943) where people who have yet to achieve physiological and safety needs will work towards achieving that before moving on to try and achieve their self-actualization needs. In addition, the data also correspond to Inoue's theory of 'international marriage' (2004) in which women will usually aspire hypergamy marriages which refer to the marriage to individuals of higher social and economical status. In contrast, men rarely aspire such marriages and will usually involve themselves in hypogamy marriages or the marriage to individuals of lower social and economical status. In fact, men usually involved in a marriage to fulfil their self-actualization needs. The aspirations to get

involved in international marriage is at a different points on Maslow's hierarchy of needs triangle.

This differing motivations towards marriage between the two genders resulted in tension between the couples in their marriage lives. Furthermore, couples involved in international marriages are at a higher risk of unhappiness and tensions in a marriage as opposed to other couples due to the interplay of state mechanisms such as laws and policies to control immigration of foreigners as well as to limit the population pool of a country. The double incidence of problems led to these couples facing a higher risk of disintegration of their marriages.

An example of the interplay of state mechanism is outlined in this paper through the use of the case study of Singapore as a patriarchal society to show how the social characteristics and agendas as seen through state policies could have an effect on couples involved in international marriage. Singapore is chosen as it is a centred around males who are given the liberty to fulfil their dreams without any expectations of them being pigeon-holed as a nurturer. This is in contrast to females living in Singapore. These women are first and foremost seen as a nurturer and are expected to excel at being a good mother or a good wife prior to chasing after their career aspirations. This in turn has shown that the experiences of Thai women in Singapore are greatly influenced by the constraints of their husband's decision as written by immigration law and policies of Singapore. Therefore, we were able to establish Singapore as patriarchal society where women are still deemed to be inferior to men to some extent.

That being said, in the course of this paper, there is the acknowledgement that these couples are not passive human beings who will succumb to their predicaments of their circumstance but instead they will reflect and look for opportunities to 'challenge, circumvent and change an existing structure' (Jongwilaiwan, 2009). This is to because these couples are active agents who continuously endeavour to ensure that they make progress in their lives together as couples. The findings from this study has provided a clearer understanding and knowledge of the challenges of international marriage and

help couples to be able to make an informed choice. Moreover, through such awareness, couples will be able to discuss solutions of the challenges and minimise conflicts and misunderstanding in their marriage.

6.3. Recommendations

This research can be used as an entry point and an ‘instrument’ to help various social institutions to understand the challenges experienced by couples involved in international marriage and provide a ‘safety net’ respectively. Finally, this study may subsequently be a ‘blue print’ for researchers interested in studying such phenomenon between couples in within the region, Furthermore, once the study is extensive enough, we can extend the knowledge gathered from this study to understand the phenomenon of brides and grooms from other regions outside of Southeast Asia. This research can be used as a basis of understanding into the phenomenon of international marriage. In addition, researchers can make use of this research to create an understanding behind the motivation as to why couples get involved in such marriages. Likewise, with the understanding of the motivations behind the international marriage, policy makers can use this research to introduce immigration laws to ease the tensions of problems faced by these couples in terms of applying for permanent residence or visa for these Thai wives to be with their Singaporean husbands. This is because they will be allowed to work and earn a living in the nation-state only with this visa and that may help Thai brides feel satisfied in their marriage. Furthermore, it would also allow them to have the privileges and various housing and medical subsidies such as subsidised health care in Singapore.

Additionally, as noted in previous chapters, most Singaporean grooms who are involved in international marriage with Thai brides are blue-collared workers. Therefore, policy makers could perhaps set up a social services such as a one-stop service centre to assist these Singaporean grooms and Thai brides in various structural problems which might cause a tension in their marriages. This one-stop service centre could perhaps be situated in areas where there is a high number of couples involved in international marriages. This would require official statistics and surveys on the

location where there is predominantly high number of couples involved in international marriages to enable assistance to be reached to these couples.

However, this study only provides the worldview of a fragment of couples involved in international marriage in particular of Thai women married with Singaporean men. This is due to the small number of informants used in the study. A larger sample size is needed for future study to be effective and to be able to garner more information of the lived experiences and world view of couples involved in international marriage. Moreover, a professional translator should be engaged to translate the interviews from Thai to English to make a bigger impact in helping to understand this phenomenon effectively. Furthermore, government officials in both Singapore and Thailand should also be interviewed to understand the state's rationale relating to immigration laws which is a factor which caused the strain in the marriages of the couples.

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APPENDIX



จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

Appendix 1: E-mail correspondence with a representative of the registry of Marriage

-----Original Message-----

From: MSF_ROM@msf.gov.sg (mailto:MSF_ROM@msf.gov.sg)
 Sent: Monday, 26 September, 2016 10:07 AM
 To: MSF ROM (MSF) <MSF_ROM@msf.gov.sg>
 Subject: Feedback - Request for statistic on number of singaporean men who are married to thai women

The following feedback was received:

Subject : Request for statistic on number of singaporean men who are married to thai women
 Message :
 Dear Sir/Mdm,

MY NAME IS KAVEE TRIVIVIT AND I AM A MASTERS STUDENT WHO IS WRITING A THESIS ON INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE: A CASE STUDY OF SINGAPOREAN MEN AND THAI WOMEN. I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO LOCATE STATISTICAL DATA ON THE EXACT NUMBER OF MARRIAGES BETWEEN SINGAPOREAN MEN AND THAI WOMEN. Would it be possible for rom to assist with my request or provide an alternative contact to RETRIEVE the information? LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU SOON.

YOURS SINCERELY
 KAVEE TRIVIVIT

Date and Time of Submission: 26 Sep 2016 10:07 AM

Sender's Information

Name : KAVEE TRIVIVIT
 NRIC/Passport No.: AA5781128
 Address : STILLZ RESIDENCE, 21 Lorong 108 CHANGI ROAD,#02-05, Singapore 426411
 Contact No. : 97385180
 Email : kaveetrivivit@gmail.com

kavee trivivit <kaveetrivivit@gmail.com>
 to MSF

9/27/16

Dear Ms Khalijah,

Thank you for your e-mail.
 I am looking for the specific number of registered marriage between Singaporean men and Thai women.
 Is there anyway I could retrieve that information? I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely



Kavee Trivivit
[about.me/kavetrivivit](mailto:kaveetrivivit@gmail.com)

MSF ROM (MSF) <MSF_ROM@msf.gov.sg>
 to me

9/27/16

Dear Kavee Trivivit

Thank you for your email of 27 Sep 2016.

We are sorry that we are unable to assist further in your request. As earlier mentioned, you may wish to refer to the Department of Statistics Singapore website (www.singstat.gov.sg) for statistics on civil marriages in Singapore.

Best Regards



Khalijah Amat (Ms) | Senior Officer
 Registry of Marriages | Family Services Division
 Family Development Group
 Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF)
 ☎: (65) 6338 7808 | 📠: (65) 6339 3328
 Website: www.rom.gov.sg

Appendix 2: List of research informants

Biodatas of Singaporean men informants

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Nationality
Yogi	67	Indian	Singaporean
Ken	54	Chinese	
Jimmy	29	Chinese	
Rama	65	Indian	
Peter	59	Chinese	
Freddy	43	Chinese	
Ah Hor	35	Chinese	
Joey	64	Chinese	
Johnny	43	Chinese	
Lim	56	Chinese	
Ah Gung	73	Chinese	
Tommy	45	Chinese	
Jason	49	Chinese	
Tan	54	Chinese	
Loh		Chinese	
Sahari	36	Malay	
Shafiq	41	Malay	
Jerry	29	Chinese	
Rick	36	Chinese	
Beng	47	Chinese	

Biodatas of Thai women informants

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Province</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>
Angela	62	Nakhon Sri Tammarat	Thai
Dao	47	Pitsanulok	
Na	34	Had Yai	
Luck	49	Had Yai	
Na	52	Roi Et	
Nancy	47	Kon Kaen	
Laek	43	Roi Et	
Rung	37	Kon Kaen	
Poo	33	Chiang Rai	
Rose	43	Buriram	
Jam	48	Nakhon Ratchasima	
Anna	39	Sa Kaeo	
Bua	31	Nakhon Ratchasima	
Jim	47	Kon Kaen	
Kaet	39	Roi Et	
Fai	54	Nong Kai	
Meow	52	Roi Et	
Porn	41	Nakhon Ratchasima	
Dew	56	Chiang Mai	
Fa	42	Chiang Rai	

Appendix 3: Interview Questions for pilot studies

<u>Question</u>	<u>For Thai women</u>	<u>For Singaporean men</u>
1	Why did you choose to marry a non-Singaporean/ Thai?	
2	What motivates you to marry Singaporean groom?	What motivates you to marry Thai woman?
3	Why did not you marry people from your own country?	
4	What is your understanding of the word patriarchal society?	
5	“Singapore is a patriarchal society” Do you agree with this statement or not? What makes you think like that?	
6	Do you think Singapore society is different from Thai society in terms of gender equality? How? Why?	
7	Are there any instances where you feel you are not equal to your husband? When are these instances?	Are there any instances where you feel you are superior to your wife? When are these instances?
8	When you feel that you are not equal to your husband, are there any attempts by you to try and achieve equality? How?	When you feel that you are not equal to your wife, are there any attempts by you to try and achieve equality? How?
9.	Were you satisfied with your life after getting married with a Singaporean man? Why? Or Why not? Please give some examples.	Were you satisfied with your life after getting married with a Thai woman? Why? Or Why not? Please give some examples.
10.	Have you ever faced any problems in your married life? How did you solve those problems?	
11.	Is Singapore better than Thailand for you to live here? Why?	

VITA

Kavee Trivivrit is a graduate student pursuing Masters in Southeast Asian Studies at Chulalongkorn university. He graduated with a degree in Sociology from National university of Singapore prior to his Masters degree programme at Chulalongkorn University. His interest includes gender studies and cultural relations of individuals in Singapore societies.

