

**AFFECTIONATE TOUCH AND EMOTIONAL DISPLAYS IN  
JAPANESE-U.S. AMERICAN INTERCULTURAL ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS**

**A THESIS**

**SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS**

**FOR THE DEGREE**

**MASTER OF ARTS**

**BY**

**MIZUKI HAMAZAWA**

**ADVISOR: DR. LAURA O'HARA**

**BALL STATE UNIVERSITY**

**MUNCIE, INDIANA**

**JULY 2015**

## **Acknowledgement**

As I reflect on the research process of the current study, I could not have completed without support from several amazing individuals since it was one of the most challenging experiences of my life. I would like to take a moment to thank those who helped, supported, and encouraged me throughout this challenging journey.

First, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Laura O'Hara. She challenged me throughout this whole thesis writing process, and I, as a person, student, and researcher, grew up in a lot of ways. She taught me to work smart, manage time, be patient, be organized, and that research is fun. Also, she was very kind, supportive, entertaining, intelligent, and she was always there and encouraged me. As an international student, writing a thesis was very challenging since English is not my first language. However, thanks to Dr. O'Hara, this work became a great piece. I am very proud of myself, and I was very pleased to have gotten the outstanding researcher award with this work. I could not have done anything without her. It was an honor to work with such an amazing professor, researcher, and person.

Second, I would like to thank my committee member and the chair of Department of Communication Studies, Dr. Glen Stamp, and another committee member, Dr. Carrie Shue for their support, knowledge, encouragement, and time. Since the first time I talked to Dr. Stamp, he has been very kind, supportive and caring. I was very pleased that I switched my major to Communication Studies and had a chance to work with such a great professor. I could not have been successful in graduate school without his help. Also, I was very pleased to have gotten some help from Dr. Shue, since she is a very outstanding professor and researcher. Her

sophisticated ideas helped me a lot when I was proposing and finishing up this study.

Third, I would like to thank Dr. Marcy Meyer. She was the first professor from Communication Studies I talked to when I was an undergraduate exchange student at Ball State. She suggested me to take an intercultural communication class at that time, and it helped me adjusting to American culture, and I fell in love with that class. If I had not met her six years ago, I would not have come back to Ball State and decided to study communication.

Next, I would like to thank my very best friend, love, and partner, John, for the biggest support and encouragement. He was always there for me and believed in me throughout my journey as a graduate student. Also, I would like to thank my family and friends back in Japan. Although I did not get to see them often while I was working on my Master's degree, they were always my cheerleaders. Finally, I thank all the professors and colleagues I have met throughout my graduate program. I cannot thank them enough for all the help they have given me. I am very pleased to have met all of them, who have brightened up my experience as a graduate student in the U.S.

## Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Rationale.....	2
Overview.....	5
Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	6
Cultural Dimensions.....	6
High/Low Context.....	6
Individualism-Collectivism.....	7
In-groups.....	8
Face.....	9
Personal Characteristics.....	10
Power Distance.....	11
Touch.....	12
Touch in Romantic Relationships.....	13
Touch in Japan.....	16
Touch in Japanese Families.....	18
Co-bathing and Co-sleeping.....	20
Co-bathing.....	21
Co-sleeping.....	21
Emotional Displays and Display Rules.....	22
Emotional Displays in Romantic Relationships.....	23

Emotional Displays in Japan.....	25
Individualism-Collectivism and In/Out-Groups.....	27
Power Distance.....	29
Intercultural Romantic Relationships.....	30
Challenges Intercultural Couples Encounter.....	30
Linguistic Problems.....	31
Negative Reactions from Others.....	32
Negative Stereotypes and Racial Issues.....	32
Different Communication Styles.....	33
Relational Maintenance Strategies.....	34
Language Ability.....	34
Approval from Others.....	35
Communication, Similarities and Differences.....	36
Humor.....	38
Conflict Management.....	38
Building Relationship Structures.....	39
Benefits of Intercultural Romantic Relationships.....	41
Japanese and U.S. American Romantic Relationships.....	41
Purpose of the Study.....	43
Chapter Three: Method.....	46
Recruitment and Participants.....	46

Data Gathering.....	47
Couples-Directed Critical Incident Story-Telling.....	47
Interviews.....	48
Data Analysis.....	52
Chapter Four: Results.....	54
In Public and in the U.S. and Japan.....	54
In Front of Friends and Families.....	56
Levels of/Adaptation to Affectionate Touch.....	59
Japanese Partners' Adjustment to American Norms for Affectionate Touch	60
Positive Views on Affectionate Touch.....	62
Different Perceptions Between Japanese and U.S. American Partners....	63
Atypical Partners.....	66
Long-Term Relationships/Having Children.....	67
Generational/Regional Differences Related to Affectionate Touch.....	69
Positive and Negative Emotional Displays.....	71
Stereotypical High/Low Context Cultural Patterns.....	74
Perceiving Partners' Emotional Displays.....	75
Positive Views of Emotional Displays.....	76
Personality, Sports, Marriage and Children.....	78
Chapter Five: Discussion.....	81
Research Question 1.....	81

Research Question 2.....	82
Research Question 3.....	83
Research Question 4.....	84
Research Question 5.....	85
Research Question 6.....	87
Implications.....	87
Limitations.....	89
Future Directions.....	90
References.....	95
Appendix A: Recruitment Script.....	108
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form (English).....	109
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form (Japanese).....	113
Appendix D: Demographic Questions.....	117
Appendix E: Interview Script for Couples-Directed Critical Incident Story-Telling	118
Appendix F: Interview Script for Individuals.....	119

## Chapter One: Introduction

*I was shopping for groceries with my partner, John<sup>1</sup> at a supermarket. We were talking about something random, and I got upset with him because he said something that bothered me. So I stopped talking, and started being grumpy. Usually when I am mad at John, he does not understand why I act as I do. In fact, John says that I always have a “poker face” and that I do not show emotion so that he cannot tell what I am feeling or thinking, although I do not think I have a “poker face” all the time. However, in the particular instance at the supermarket, John realized that I was upset with him, and suddenly gave me a huge hug in front of many people. This hug made me feel better, but at the same time, I was very embarrassed because I was not used to hugging a significant other in public. I laughed because I wanted John to stop it and tried to push him away, but he did not stop hugging me. We were hugging in the middle of the supermarket, and people were just passing by. That was a very embarrassing moment, and I remember I was thinking, “Oh my god, he’s so American! Is this what it’s like to date an American?”*

It has taken me a long time to get used to my partner’s touching behavior in public. I still sometimes feel embarrassed when John hugs or kisses me in public. As the story above reveals, I have had a hard time displaying my own emotions. I have experienced much frustration because of the different rules for touching behavior and emotional displays between John and me, and this prompted my interest in studying these particular aspects of Japanese-U.S. American romantic relationships.

---

<sup>1</sup> I have used pseudonyms to ensure the confidentiality of all participants.

## **Rationale**

In this study, I examine how affectionate touch and emotional displays are enacted within Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships. I refer to touching behavior between romantic couples as *affectionate touch*: non-sexual physical contact between couples that signifies affection and intimacy, such as kissing, hugging, holding hands, and putting arms around the partner. I refer to *emotional displays* as the degree to which individuals express emotions given certain display rules, which determine what emotions are acceptable or not acceptable to express in certain circumstances.

This study is important for a number of reasons. First, although there are many studies on intercultural romantic relationships in general (Adams, 2004; Bustamante, Nelson, Henriksen & Monakes, 2011; Cools, 2005; Falicov, 1995; Molina, Estrada & Burnett, 2004; Poulsen, 2003; Reiter & Gee, 2008; Renalds, 2011; Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013; Torigoe & Chen, 2007), there are few studies focused specifically on U.S. American-Japanese romantic relationships and much of this literature is quite dated (e.g., Franklin, 1992; Gudykunst, Gao, Sudweeks, Ting-Toomey & Nishida, 1991). The literature tends to place the U.S. and Japan on opposite sides on a number of key cultural dimensions: The U.S. is categorized as a low context, individualistic, and low power distance culture, whereas Japan is categorized as a high context, collectivistic, and high power distance culture (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Additionally, the literature regarding how Japanese learn to communicate touch and how to communicate display rules, suggests that U.S. American-Japanese romantic couples may encounter tensions as they negotiate shared communication norms in the process of relational

development (Franklin, 1992; Gudykunst et al., 1991; Ting-Toomey, 2009). Given the speed at which the world has changed, this study will extend and update the existing literature on U.S. American-Japanese romantic relationships in the communication discipline.

Moreover, on a practical level, the number of international students and immigrants in the United States is growing (“Open Doors,” 2014; Zong & Batalova, 2015). As more people are moving to the U.S. seeking opportunities to study and work, individuals have more chances to meet, interact, and be in relationships with those from different cultures. This includes Japanese citizens who are studying or working here and who may have higher chances of being in relationships with U.S. Americans. However, in the process of developing their relationships, they may encounter challenges as researchers have revealed (e.g., Cools, 2005; Franklin, 1992; Moriizumi, 2011; Renalds, 2011; Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013; Torigoe & Chen, 2007). Thus, this study may help Japanese-U.S. American intercultural partners understand how emotional displays and affectionate touch are enacted, and thus improve their relationships.

Matsumoto (1990) argues that emotional display rules are more likely to be associated with context and situation. That is, if the context and situation change, emotional displays rules tend to change as well. Although previous studies show the different emotional expressions toward in/out-group members and high/low status people (Matsumoto, 1990), more studies are needed on Japanese emotional displays when they are interacting with people from different cultures. For example, Japanese may show emotions differently when they interact with people from the U.S. in intimate relationships. In addition, they may follow different emotional displays in the U.S. compared to when they are in Japan. Similarly, Japanese usually try to avoid direct

physical contact in public in Japan (Brosnahan, 1990). However, they may follow different touching behavior in different contexts and situations, such as with an American romantic partner in the U.S. Thus, a study examining affectionate touch and display rules with a specific sample in a unique context such as U.S. American-Japanese romantic dyads living in the U.S., may contribute significant knowledge in the scholarly areas of intercultural affectionate touch and emotional displays.

Third, Gudykunst et al. (1991) argue that within U.S. American-Japanese romantic relationships, more U.S. American partners adapt to the Japanese way of emotional displays, and that U.S. American-Japanese couples have less physical contact than U.S. American couples generally do. However, the researchers fail to identify the participants' ages. Barr (1998) argues that touching habits among Japanese youth have been changing so that Japanese perspectives of touching may vary between younger and older generations. Thus, how Japanese negotiate affectionate touch in a romantic relationship with U.S. American partners may also differ among generations. Moreover, although no studies mention that there are age differences in emotional displays except for children (Tamura, 2009), young Japanese may have different norms for emotional displays in romantic relationships compared to older Japanese, due to the spread of Western perspectives of romance. Therefore, there may be not only age differences but also some other factors that contribute to the ways in which affectionate touch and emotional displays are enacted in Japanese-U.S. American romantic couples. This may give new insight into the study of affectionate touch and emotional displays, and intercultural romantic relationships.

## **Overview**

In chapter two, I will review a number of literatures relevant to the study. First, I will provide important cultural context for the reader to understand communication norms in Japan regarding touching, display of emotions, and intercultural romantic relationships by discussing high/low context, individualism/collectivism, and power distance. Second, I will review relevant literature related to touch including touching in romantic relationships, how it is enacted in Japan and within Japanese families. Third, I will review pertinent literature on emotional displays, display rules, emotional displays in romantic relationships and emotional displays in Japan. Fourth, I will review appropriate literature on challenges intercultural couples encounter, relational maintenance strategies for intercultural couples, and benefits of intercultural romantic relationships. Finally I will review the limited literature on Japanese-U.S. American romantic relationships. In chapter three, I will describe the methodology employed to understand how affectionate touch and emotional displays are enacted in Japanese-U.S. American romantic relationships. In chapter four, I will discuss the findings of the current study. In chapter five, I will conclude with discussions that address research questions of the study, implications, limitations and future directions.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Cultural Dimensions

To provide some deeper cultural context for the reader in terms of the specific communication norms in Japan regarding touch, display of emotions, and intercultural romantic relationships, as well as some of the challenges researchers have documented regarding intercultural romantic relationships, I will provide a short review of some well-established cultural dimensions which are directly relevant to these norms. These include high/low context, individualism and collectivism, and power distance.

**High/low context.** One cultural dimension that is extremely prevalent in Japan is high context communication. Hall (1976) defines high context communication as that “in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message” (p. 91) whereas low context communication is the opposite: “the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code” (p. 91). People in high context cultures can generally interpret “messages that are not explicit, minimizing the content of the verbal message, and being sensitive to others,” whereas people in low context culture often use more “direct, precise and open” communication (Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim & Heyman, 1996, p. 516). Although Hall (1976) argues that every culture has both characteristics of high and low context communication, Japan is generally categorized as a high context culture. Japanese usually have “extensive information networks among family, friends, colleagues, and clients” and are “involved in close personal relationships” (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 6). Thus, they “do not require, nor do they expect, much

in-depth, background information” for most interactions in daily life (p. 6).

Silence is one of the characteristics of high context communication. Individuals in high context cultures frequently provide “the least amount of information possible to allow listeners to infer speakers’ intentions, and [use] pauses and silences in everyday conversation” (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997, p. 67). Thus, individuals in high context cultures such as Japan, are typically more comfortable with silence and believe that they can communicate effectively in silence (Kaito & Kaito, 1988). For example, Japanese would prefer silence to saying “no” or “I disagree” (Nakane, 1970), and often use silence when they try to avoid direct answers (Condon, 1984). Moreover, individuals in high context cultures see people who use few words as more trustworthy than people who use many words (Lebra, 1987).

Among the most well-known examples of high context communication in Japan are Zen Buddhist teachings, which rely heavily on high context communication and transmit very few verbal codes. According to Morsbach (1973), in many Zen Buddhist teachings, the essential part is often left unsaid, and “greater importance is attached to the concept of *kan*, which can be translated as ‘perception,’ ‘intuition,’ or ‘the sixth sense.’ Indeed, *satori* (enlightenment) can quite specifically not be attained by talking about it” (p. 262). In other words, the pupil observes and imitates the master; the master gives the pupil no explanation and does not expect any questions. That is, Zen Buddhist teachings rely heavily on high context communication with almost no verbal code transmission.

**Individualism-collectivism.** Another very prominent cultural pattern is the individualism-collectivism dimension. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), individualism is high

in a society where “interests of the individual prevail over the interests of the group” (p. 91), whereas high collectivism is in a society where “the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual” (p. 90). In an individualistic culture, individuals tend to assume responsibility only for themselves and their immediate family members (Gudykunst et al., 1996), while individuals in collectivistic cultures tend to primarily focus on groups to which they belong (Matsumoto et al., 2008). In other words, those in more individualistic cultures tend to emphasize an “I” identity whereas those in more collectivistic cultures tend to emphasize a “we” identity (Gudykunst, 1994; Hofstede et al., 2010). In collectivistic cultures, such as in Japan, social harmony tends to be highly valued (Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake & Morelli, 2000) due to the “we” identity and in order to maintain good relationships with the group to which they belong. Thus, individuals “apply different value standards for members of their in-groups and out-groups” (Gudykunst, 1994, p. 41).

***In-groups.*** The importance of in-groups is one of the characteristics of collectivistic cultures. Individuals learn to be part of a “we” or in-group, starting with family relationships (Hofstede et al., 2010). Immediate family and extended family members, such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and sometimes neighbors and classmates are categorized as in-groups (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1994). Although families are the primary in-group in many collectivistic cultures, companies are often considered to be a primary in-group in Japan (Nakane, 1970). Triandis (1994) argues that age is also an important factor for the creation of in-groups, noting that people often form in-groups based on the similarity of age. In-groups are highly demanding, and people emphasize “a greater cohesion or harmony in their in-groups than do

[those in] individualistic cultures” as well as “greater distinctions toward out-groups” (Matsumoto, 1990, p. 197). According to Nakane (1970), in-group members rarely contact out-group members, which in turn, gives in-group members more interaction, reciprocal obligations, and expectations. The in-group is “the major source of one’s identity and the only secure protection one has against the hardships of life” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 91). Thus, individuals owe “lifelong loyalty to one’s in-group, and breaking this loyalty is one of the worst things a person can do” in collectivistic cultures (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 91).

**Face.** Triandis (1994) argues that saving both one’s own and the other’s face is one of the most important goals in collectivistic cultures. Ting-Toomey (2005) states that the concept of face “is about identity respect and other-identity consideration issues within and beyond the actual encounter episode” and “is tied to the emotional significance and estimate calculations that we attach to our own social self-worth and the social self-worth of others” (p. 73). Similarly, Hofstede (2001) states that “face describes the proper relationships with one’s social environment, which is as essential to a person (and that person’s family) as the front part of his or her head” in collectivistic cultures (p. 230). Face is an important aspect of communication in Japan, and is also a meaningful and powerful symbol of Japanese society. According to Matsumoto (1996), “the face in Japanese society plays an extremely important role as the point of connection between the outer mores of the culture and the private, inner world of the individual” (p. 19). In Japan, the concept of face embodies how one is viewed by others (Matsumoto, 1996). That is, Japanese try to maintain one’s face and image to other group members in order to keep harmony in the group. If one offends or threatens someone else’s face

in the group, that individual will definitely be in danger of losing face (Matsumoto, 1996). This causes disharmony within the group. As Barnlund (1989) argues, “it is almost impossible for Japanese to restore a relationship once [face] is broken” (p. 129). Moreover, collectivistic societies are shame cultures (Hofstede, 2001). Thus, if someone loses face, the experience of shame could follow and the person might not be able to rebuild face for a long time, if ever.

***Personal characteristics.*** Characteristics of people in individualistic and collectivistic cultures tend to be different from one another. Markus and Kitayama (1991) refer to these different self-conceptions as *independent construal of self* and *interdependent construal of self*. Although they do not link these concepts to the individualism-collectivism dimension, Gudykunst and Kim (1997) argue that there is a direct relationship: Individualistic cultures emphasize independent construal of self while collectivistic cultures emphasize interdependent construal of self. Individuals who imagine an independent construal of self see “oneself as an agent, as a producer of one’s actions. One is conscious...of the need to express one’s own thoughts, feelings, and actions to others” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 246). They tend to feel more ego-focused emotions which “have the individuals’ internal attributes as the primary referent,” such as anger and pride (p. 235). In contrast, individuals who imagine interdependent construal of self focus on an “attentiveness and responsiveness to others” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 246). They are more likely to feel other-focused emotions, such as sympathy and shame, which have another person as the primary referent. Thus, social identities in individualistic cultures tend to be based on independent construal of self whereas interdependent construal of self tends to be the characteristic of individuals in collectivistic cultures. Similarly, Triandis

(1994) uses terms *idiocentrism* and *allocentrism* to distinguish personalities in individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Ideocentric individuals in individualistic cultures often see self as an independent entity, personal goals as having primacy over group goals, and confrontation as acceptable. On the other hand, allocentric individuals in collectivistic cultures often see group goals as primary or as overlapping personal goals, self as in-group relationships, and harmony as required (Triandis, 1994).

**Power Distance.** Hofstede et al. (2010) define power distance as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (p. 61). Individuals in high power distance cultures consider power as a basic fact in society, while individuals in low power distance cultures “believe power should be used only when it is legitimate and prefer expert or legitimate power” (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997, p. 72). Japan is not ranked highly in power distance index values (49-50 out of 76 countries) and placed as a lower power distance culture compared to other Asian countries (Hofstede et al., 2010). However, hierarchical differences are emphasized in collectivistic cultures, and “one’s role, status and appropriate behaviors are more clearly defined by position” (Matsumoto, 1990, p. 197). Thus, compared to individualistic cultures, such as the United States, Japan can be characterized as a high power distance culture. For example, in bowing, a Japanese way of greeting, a lower status person usually bows more deeply, and a higher status person decides when to stop bowing. Or, as Morsbach (1973) observes, “reciprocal bowing is largely determined by rank” (p. 268). Thus, hierarchy can be seen in Japan, and status differences play an important role.

Hofstede (2001) argues that hierarchy is an existential inequality, and superiors and subordinates consider each other as essentially different in high power distance cultures. Subordinates usually do not question their superiors' orders (Gudykunst, 1994), and subordinates depend on superiors to a considerable amount (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Also, individuals in high power distance cultures tend to think that older people should be respected and feared (Hofstede, 2001). Individuals respect parents and older relatives through adulthood, and parental authority lasts as long as parents are alive. Children in high power distance cultures are expected to be obedient to their parents, and there is even an order of authority among the children: the older is higher and the younger is lower status in the relationship (Hofstede, 2001). Although both low and high power distance cultures have hierarchy, it is often more obvious in high power distance countries, where inequality is seen as the norm.

### **Touch**

Touch, sometimes referred to as *haptics*, has been studied as an important nonverbal behavior. Indeed, Afifi and Johnson (2005) name touch as “one of the most powerful methods for conveying messages” (p. 189). Brosnahan (1990) argues that touch is the most pervasive and the most intimate form of human communication. Also, Barnlund (1989) states that “[t]ouch is not only a way of conveying affection and love, but a way of expressing hostility; it is a way of comforting and encouraging another person...” (p. 139). Moreover, Burgoon (1991) observes that touch communicates “composure, immediacy, receptivity/trust, affection, similarity/depth/equality, and informality” in relationships (p. 254). Touch is one of the most important forms of non-verbal communication, and can lead to intimacy, comfort,

encouragement, and improved relationships.

One of the most often-studied aspects of touch includes *tie-signs* (Goffman, 1971).

Tie-signs are actions that provide ties or evidence of a personal relationship. Goffman (1971) argues that tie-signs inform relational partners and others that the relationship is anchored. In other words, “tie-signs contain evidence” (p. 195) that the individuals are in some kind of relationship. For example, if male and female adults are holding hands, a third person may infer that they are in a romantic relationship. Also, if a little child and a woman are holding hands, a third person may infer that they are in a mother-child relationship. Goffman (1971) calls this type of function of tie-signs *markers*, which provide information about relationships. Morris (1971) found 457 different forms of touch, which he labeled as tie-signs through observation in public. According to Morris (1971), the 14 tie-signs that occurred most frequently included hand shakes, pats/rubs, shoulder embraces, kisses and body support. He also noted that different levels of intimacy in relationships carry different types of tie-signs. For example, handshakes were seen in less intimate relationships, whereas body support was seen in more intimate relationships.

**Touch in romantic relationships.** Touch is an important intimate behavior for romantic relationships (Guerrero & Andersen, 1991; Johansson, 2013). Afifi and Johnson (2005) argue that *intimacy expression* is the most common function of tie-signs among seven functions outlined by Patterson (1988). An individual may express his/her love to one’s partner through tie-signs such as holding their hand, hugging or kissing. In two studies (Chopik et al., 2014; van Anders, Edelestein, Wade & Samples-Steele, 2013), romantic couples reported that they felt love, intimacy, closeness, and comfort when their partner cuddled them. Or, as Debrot, Schoebi, Perrez,

& Horn (2013) report, “when we are touched by our partner, we experience being closer and more intimate with him or her” (p. 9). Thus, intimacy expression is a very common function of tie-signs in romantic relationships.

Guerrero and Andersen (1991) argue that the stage of romantic relationships affects partners’ touching behavior in public. They examined beginning, intermediate, and stable romantic relationships, and found that partners in the intermediate relationship stage had increasing touch behavior in public. Guerrero and Andersen argue that “intimate communication is necessary in a close, developing relationship” (p. 160). They also observed that in a stable relationship, touch behaviors decreased because “public touch is replaced by increased private touch” (Guerrero & Anderson, 1991, p. 160). Moreover, Guerrero and Andersen (1994) found that partners in serious dating relationships and married couples match their touch behaviors. Specifically, they note that as a relationship develops, the partners’ nonverbal communication becomes synchronized, and their touch behavior becomes more similar or “matches,” although the frequency of touch may decrease. Guerrero and Andersen argue that these partners “may have adapted to one another’s nonverbal communication styles because of the unique combination of stability and intimacy within their relationships” (p. 148). Guerrero and Andersen summarize that “the highest levels of *matching* may be reserved for long-term, committed relationships such as marriage while the highest *frequency* of immediacy cues such as touch may be used in intermediate-level relationships as a way to escalate intimacy and display bondedness” (p. 148).

Gulledge, Gulledge, and Stahmann, (2003) found that touch, which they refer to as

physical affection, is positively correlated with relationship and partner satisfaction. Romantic couples in their study felt satisfied with their relationships and partners when they engaged in backrubs/massages, cuddling/holding, kissing on the face, hugging, and kissing on the lips. Moreover, they found that the more touch was given and received, the easier it was to resolve conflict. Horan and Booth-Butterfield (2013) argue that romantic couples use deceptive affection, incorporating touch into verbal messages. That is, the partners showed fake affection to mask any negative feelings they had, which, in their view, might harm their relationship status. The romantic couples in their study employed deceptive affection to “preserve overall relational stability and satisfaction” (Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2013, p. 210). Thus, touch between romantic couples may play an important role in relational maintenance.

Although touch is an important factor in romantic relationships, the perceptions of touch by males and females may be different. In Emmers and Dindia’s (1995) study, women reported that they were touched more by male partners than men reported they were touched by female partners, even though both male and female partners reported similar amounts of touching their partners. Emmers and Dindia (1995) argue that this finding may be due to women generally desiring to be touched more often than men. In addition, men may fail to report all the touching they received while women report all the touching they received. Also, according to Gullledge et al. (2003), men tend to favor kissing on the lips and giving backrubs/massages, while women tend to prefer cuddling/holding and holding hands.

Another gender difference in touch concerns how men and women initiate touch in romantic relationships. Willis and Dodds (1998) found that women initiated touch more than

men in public settings. In addition, Afifi and Johnson (1999) found that men were more likely to initiate waist embraces whereas women were more likely to initiate pats or rubs. However, how men and women initiate touch depends on their relationship levels. Guerrero and Andersen (1994) found that men initiated touch more often in casual relationships, while women initiated touch more often in married relationships. Hanzal, Segrin and Dorros (2008) argue that marriage essentially affects sex differences in touch behavior between romantic couples. In their study, unmarried men had more positive reactions to touch than unmarried women. However, marriage reversed the sex difference; married women had more positive reactions to touch than did married men. Thus, men and women have different perceptions of touch depending on their relational status.

There are some cultures where touch is very common, such as in the U.S. However, available literature on the topic, although somewhat dated, reveals that Japan is much the opposite, especially in public. The following section will discuss touch in Japan.

**Touch in Japan.** Japanese generally try to avoid direct physical contact with strangers and even with friends, romantic partners, and family members in public (Brosnahan, 1990). Japanese tend to keep physical contact highly private. When Japanese greet, they follow a traditional non-touching form of greeting: they bow. Although the handshake is becoming more common because of the spread of Western perspectives and opportunities to encounter different cultures, on the whole, “Japanese consider non-touching and very light touch polite” (Brosnahan, 1990, p. 19) while the firmness of a good handshake is more aggressive and impolite to them.

Even with close friends in greetings and goodbye settings, less touch is found among

Japanese compared to U.S. Americans (Barnlund, 1989). Japanese employ less intimate forms of physical contact compared to U.S. Americans, such as “putting an arm around” or “kissing” (Barnlund, 1989). It is because traditionally Japanese rarely kiss and hug in public, and they keep these behaviors highly private (Brosnahan, 1990). For example, Japanese public behavior between close family members involves no touching in the airport or train station even though they are intimate and despite the situations being a very significant parting of ways (Brosnahan, 1990). Seki, Matsumoto, and Imahori (2002) investigated the conceptualization and expression of intimacy in Japan and the United States. The results showed that U.S. Americans rated “physical contact” significantly higher than did the Japanese on all four relationship types they examined (same-sex best friend, lover, mother, and father). Japanese, on the other hand, emphasized more emotions and psychological feelings of intimacy rather than physical contact. Thus, U.S. American intimacy is highly associated with physical contact, whereas Japanese intimacy emphasizes psychological feelings (Seki et al., 2002). Physical contact rarely occurs in the expression of intimacy among Japanese.

According to Brosnahan (1990), touch in public becomes more neutral depending on one’s gender in Japan. He argues that same-sex touch is a more common behavior among Japanese, particularly among the young, while opposite-sex touch is traditionally considered taboo except among children and engaged or married couples. Although Japanese maintain some distance, those of the same-sex “tend to maintain a light but constant shoulder contact” (Brosnahan, 1990, p. 24). Also, Japanese women tend to touch another’s hair in admiration, and they touch their friends’ forearms in conversation (Brosnahan, 1990). Thus, while public touch is very limited in

Japan, same-sex touch is more acceptable and common, and women tend to have more physical contact with their friends. However, in contemporary Japan, opposite-sex touch seems to be becoming more acceptable. There are more romantic couples, especially young couples, who hold hands or arms, and put arms around each other in public. As recently as 17 years ago, Barr (1998) argued that couples kissing and hugging in public were becoming popular, especially among youth. One of the clearest reasons for this trend has been the globalization of romance. The Western perspectives of romance have spread widely throughout Japan due to the influence of Hollywood movies and MTV (Barr, 1998). Thus, Japanese traditional views of touching may be changing among the youth in Japan.

**Touch in Japanese families.** In terms of touch among family members, the mother-child relationship has largely been explained in the context of body contact (Caudill & Weinstein, 1969; Tahhan, 2010). Japanese mothers have less vocal interactions with their babies, but have greater bodily contact with them compared to U.S. American mothers (Caudill & Weinstein, 1969). When their children start crying, Japanese mothers tend to pick them up, play with them, and try to make them sleep in their arms, while U.S. American mothers usually play with their children when they are awake, and leave them alone when they want to sleep (Caudill & Weinstein, 1969). Tahhan (2010) also argues that breastfeeding is an important bodily contact between mother and child in Japan. For example, in Tahhan's study, participants described breastfeeding as "the best skinship," which makes breastfeeding "move from a mechanical, mundane caring task, to one that is a sought after intimate experience for both mother and child" (Tahhan, 2010, p. 220). Thus, "Japanese mother-child relationships are grounded in bodily

endearment, prolonged physical proximity and skinship, which is often paraphrased as ‘through touch’” (p. 217). That is, in the relationship between mother and child in Japan, words are not necessary since emotions are exchanged through bodily contact.

However, as children grow up “they become progressively less accessible to touch by others” (Brosnahan, 1990, p. 26), which leads them to rely more heavily on psychological feelings, rather than touch, to share intimacy with family members, friends and lovers (Seki et al., 2002). Tahhan (2008) illustrates this change by describing how Japanese children are weaned from the practice of “*soine*” during their time at day care. The Japanese term *soine* refers to a general co-sleeping pattern, such as two people sleeping together in a same room, but it also “highlights the care-taking element to *soine*, that is, to ‘accompany’ someone to sleep” (Tahhan, 2008, p. 39). Preschool teachers often use *soine*, which “involves certain forms of touch to help soothe and settle the child” (p. 40). In a group of 0-12 month-old babies, the teachers put the children on their backs, while practicing *soine*. This bodily contact was important to help the babies relax and sleep. In a group of one-year-olds, two types of touch were found: *tataku* (to tap) and *naderu* (to caress). Some teachers tapped three children at the same time to help them sleep, while others caressed a child’s hair and face according to the child’s preferred style of sleeping. Teachers performed similar *soine* behaviors for the two and three-year-old groups, while also holding or hugging those children while they tried to fall asleep. Contrary to these classes, four-year-old and six-year-old groups showed less bodily contact but more feelings of “being-together.” These children “shift into a relaxed state in different ways to the younger children who still require bodily forms of touch” (Tahhan, 2008, p. 51). By so doing, children

learn to wean from bodily touch at daycare centers as they grow older (Ben-Ari, 1996).

Takeuchi et al. (2009) investigated the relationship between interpersonal touch by parents during childhood and current depression rates among Japanese undergraduate students. The results showed that bodily touch by parents has a strong influence on the development of a secure other-image when touch is provided to children earlier. That is, parental bodily touch during childhood may “reduce the perceived distance between a child and other people, the significant other in particular, so that the child can develop and maintain a secure image of others” (Takeuchi et al., 2009, p. 113). *Other-image* here refers to the degree to which “others are generally expected to be available and supportive” (Takeuchi et al., 2009, p. 109-110). As parents provide bodily contact to their children in their early ages, the children are more likely to have a positive image toward others later in their adulthood. Furthermore, the lack of parental bodily touch throughout childhood predicted depression to be more likely in adulthood (Takeuchi et al., 2009). Physical touch between parents and children may play an important role in terms of children’s development of images of others and the likelihood of depression when they become adults.

***Co-bathing and co-sleeping.*** Tahhan (2014) argues that “the touching and intimate spaces in the Japanese family are not contained by separate subjects, bodies, or selves, but opens up possibilities for tangible connection that emphasizes feeling” (p. 95). While touch is more emphasized in mother-child relationships, as children grow older, they develop feelings of intimacy rather than physical contact. Tahhan (2014) calls it “touching at depth” (p. 95). It is not all about physical touch, but includes more psychological linkages, and also “the embodied

experience and tangible connection to intimacy” (p. 95). These conceptions of touch and intimate space in the Japanese family can be explained by the familial practices of co-bathing and co-sleeping.

*Co-bathing.* Tahhan (2014) states that skinship can be achieved by co-bathing. Japanese families often bathe together, which helps them become intimate. As Clark (1994) argues, “sharing the same bath and being naked together creates a situation where intimate communication can take place” (p. 111). Clark also notes that co-bathing symbolizes “removal of the social trappings and barriers of normal life” (p. 112) through sharing of the same bath naked. Co-bathing forms “naked association (*hadaka no tsukiai*)” and closeness in the bath where the concept of “privacy” does not exist (Tahhan, 2014). In this way, Japanese families develop intimacy among members as well as family bonds (Tahhan, 2014). Thus, “touch is not just a physical or cutaneous experience but is also affective and felt” in Japan (Tahhan, 2010, p. 219).

*Co-sleeping.* Co-sleeping is also considered to be a cozy and warm bodily experience among Japanese families (Tahhan, 2014). It usually occurs when children are young and they sleep with their parents (Tahhan, 2010). Latz, Wolf, and Lozoff (1999) found that more Japanese children co-slept three or more times per week with their parents than U.S. American children, and most of them had body contact as they slept. Tahhan (2007) explored Japanese families’ purpose of co-sleeping in “*kawa no ji*” (sleeping with the child in between parents). The study showed that co-sleeping was a way of touch and increasing intimacy between parents and children. However, Tahhan discovered that this practice also created marital tension. Japanese married couples are more likely to lose their romantic relationship after they have children, and

especially, women tend to attach more to their children than to their husbands. As a result, the mother-child relationship becomes the center of the family, and the relationship between the husband and wife does not play as key a role in the family (Tahhan, 2007). This tendency affects co-sleeping habits in a Japanese family. For example, one of the participants mentioned that she wanted to feel *ittaikan* [feelings of one body] with her child but not with her husband, stating that even when her husband tried to hold her hand while they were sleeping, she would hold her son's hand instead (Tahhan, 2007). Another husband mentioned that his wife used their child to separate herself from him by placing the child between them while they slept. In this case, such actions were not for the sake of family intimacy, but used as a barrier to separate the married couple. Accounts such as these support Tahhan's claim that mother-child relationships may become more intimate, but that the married couple may become distant from each other through co-sleeping. As Tahhan's study suggests, co-sleeping plays an important role in how children are socialized to understand touch in Japan.

### **Emotional Displays and Display Rules**

Individuals' emotional expressions may vary depending on their personalities. However, they also depend on how a particular culture characterizes acceptable or unacceptable expression of emotion (Matsumoto, Kasri, & Kookan, 1999). Safdar et al. (2009) argue that "culturally shared norms dictate how, when, and to whom people should express their emotional experiences" (p. 1). That is, the expression of emotion is controlled by cultural norms, which are referred to as display rules. Display rules can be defined as the rules that people learn in a particular culture to manage or modify their expression of emotions depending on social circumstances (Matsumoto,

1996). Thus, individuals learn what emotions are acceptable to express under certain circumstances early in their life (Kaito & Kaito 1988).

Andersen and Guerrero (2008) note the six most common emotions typically shared through interpersonal nonverbal communication: happiness/joy, pride, anger, fear/anxiety, sadness/depression, and shame/embarrassment. Although these emotions are typically enacted in interpersonal relationships, display rules influence how individuals express these emotions. In their classic work, Ekman and Friesen (1975) identify five different display rules for how individuals manage emotion: simulation, inhibition, intensification, deintensification, and masking. In simulation, individuals act as if they feel an emotion when no such emotion is present. For example, someone may smile without experiencing happiness, or a young child may pretend to cry when they want attention (Andersen & Guerrero, 2008). In inhibition, individuals behave as if they do not feel any emotion when they actually feel an emotion. For example, someone may conceal anger at their boss, or keep a poker face when they are actually in a funny setting. In intensification, individuals display stronger feelings than they actually are experiencing. For example, one may laugh heavily at their boss's joke when it is not funny (Andersen & Guerrero, 2008). In deintensification, people express their feelings less than they actually feel. For example, someone may try to be humble and not to show pride when they are applauded. Finally, in a masking situation, individuals communicate an emotion that is completely opposite from what they are actually experiencing. In general, these five types of display rules regulate how individuals control emotion (Andersen & Guerrero, 2008).

**Emotional displays in romantic relationships.** As people learn to manage or modify

their emotions in a particular culture depending on social circumstances, individuals in romantic relationships also have unique display rules. Aune, Buller and Aune (1996) argue that romantic partners' emotional expressions are closely tied to their relational levels. In their study, partners in early dating relationships felt that expressing negative emotions were less appropriate than expressing positive emotions, although romantic partners controlled both positive and negative emotions. Aune et al. (1996) explains that "emotion expressions may be considered highly personal information and too risky to share completely with new relational partners" (p. 128). On the other hand, married/cohabiting couples felt that it was more appropriate to disclose negative emotions in their relationships; however, they continued to control negative emotions "even though display rules in developed relationships make negative emotions more acceptable" (Aune, Aune, & Buller, 2001, p. 129). Similarly, Clark and Finkel (2005) reported that participants were more willing to express their emotions in "a relationship in which individuals do care about (and are likely to be responsive to) each other's needs" (p. 170). Thus, it may be more appropriate for committed couples to express their emotions than it is for partners in early stages of their relationships to express their emotions.

Compared to early daters and married/cohabiting couples, couples in the middle stages of their relationships experienced and expressed negative emotions most intensely (Aune et al., 2001). Although positive emotions are more acceptable to express since these emotions are less likely to offend or isolate the partners, negotiation of negative emotions varies across relational development (Aune et al., 2001). Moreover, these authors found some gender differences in controlling emotions. Women controlled negative emotions most often in early dating

relationships, but less so in married/cohabiting relationships. Nonetheless, they expressed positive emotions greatly in all relational stages. Contrary to women, men controlled both positive and negative emotions in less developed relationships, and they were more likely to express positive emotions in developed relationships but continued to conceal negative emotions (Aune et al., 2001).

Although negative emotions are often controlled in romantic relationships, Ivanova and Watson (2010) argue that all types of emotional expressions are positively correlated with the levels of relational satisfaction. Indeed, the more romantic couples express negative emotions, the more satisfaction they feel. Ivanova and Watson (2010) state that it is easier for romantic couples to communicate and resolve problems when they express negative emotions. Similarly, Aune (2006) found that relationship satisfaction is correlated with the willingness to express happiness, jealousy, anger, love, and fear. She argues that partners are more comfortable expressing their feelings when they feel confident that they are involved in relationships. This is consistent with Kashdan, Volkmann, Breen and Han (2007) who state, “a greater willingness to express emotions is healthy and the opposite is unhealthy” (p. 486). Indeed, the more emotions romantic couples express, the more the relationships become healthy and the more relational satisfaction they experience.

In the following section, I will discuss emotional displays in Japan, including how they relate to a number of the cultural dimensions articulated earlier, such as individualism-collectivism (including in-group and out-group dynamics) and power distance.

**Emotional displays in Japan.** There have been many studies on emotional displays and

display rules in Japan. According to Kaito and Kaito (1988), Japanese rarely show their emotions in public and tend to hide negative emotions. Nomura and Yoshikawa (2011) found that Japanese in general maintain positive facial displays as they talk, regardless of sad or happy emotional episodes. Japanese children learn to conceal emotions throughout their childhood. For example, Tamura (2009) found that first and third graders expressed sadness or anger, but fifth graders expressed happy emotional responses, even when they were sad. Smiling is one of the ways to hide emotions in Japan. Interestingly, Japanese often smile to conceal emotions (Ekman, 1972; Kaito & Kaito, 1988) especially when they talk to superiors (Kaito & Kaito, 1988), or when they feel anxiety (Morsbach, 1973).

Safdar et al. (2009) examined different emotional rules of Canadians, U.S. Americans, and Japanese in terms of a specific emotion, the type of interaction partner, and gender. The results showed that Japanese participants believed it was appropriate to show powerful emotions (anger, contempt and disgust) less than Canadians and U.S. Americans, and positive emotions (happiness and surprise) less than Canadians but not U.S. Americans. Also, Japanese participants showed greater differences in display rules between close group members (family members and friends) and distant group members (acquaintances, colleagues, professors etc.). Brosnahan (1990) argues that “[i]n the face of sincere praise by another person, Japanese will predictably deny the justice of the praise by both word and gesture, including face gestures of ‘disbelief,’ ‘denial,’ ‘non-acceptance,’ even ‘sadness.’” (p. 103). Japanese tend not to show positive emotions, and even think that “smiling or acceptance of the praise seems too immodest, proud or boastful” (p. 103). Safdar et al. (2009) also argue that the norms of politeness in Japan influence

emotional display rules and discourage emotional displays in general. Moreover, they state that people tend to “avoid open expression of emotions in collectivistic culture [sic] as it is considered appropriate” (p. 8).

***Individualism-collectivism and in/out-group.*** The concept of individualism and collectivism is an important factor in explaining Japanese emotional displays. According to Miyake and Yamazaki (1995), the expression of anger is less acceptable in collectivistic cultures since such emotion is considered to threaten harmony within relationships. Matsumoto (1990) investigated display rules according to cultural differences between Japanese and U.S. Americans along the dimensions of individualism-collectivism, power distance, and in terms of the social distinctions of in-groups and out-groups and status. The study showed that Japanese considered anger and fear towards out-groups to be more appropriate than did U.S. Americans, and anger as more appropriate to lower-status individuals than did U.S. Americans. This is consistent with other literature (Potter, 1988), which shows the Japanese emphasis on in-group cohesion and harmony and the curtailment of negative emotions, which may threaten harmony within in-group settings (Potter, 1988), while simultaneously displaying a relative “lack of concern for harmony with out-group members” (Safder et al., 2009). By distinguishing between in-groups and out-groups, reinforcement of in-group identity is enabled, which is emphasized in collectivistic cultures (Matsumoto et al., 2008).

In terms of in-group and out-group distinctions, with respect to emotional displays, Patterson et al. (2007) examined the micro-interactions of pedestrians in Japan and the United States as they walked passed a confederate. The results showed a lower responsiveness among

pedestrians in Japan than among pedestrians in the United States. Only 1-2% of the Japanese participants smiled, nodded, and greeted the confederate, whereas 9-25% of the U.S. American participants smiled, nodded, and greeted the confederate. Patterson et al. (2007) argues that there is a clearer distinction between in-group and out-group members in Japan than in the United States, so that the Japanese way of interacting with out-group members limited their interaction with the confederates. Japanese might want to avoid the risk of unwanted exposure to a stranger because in-group and out-group distinction among Japanese plays an important role in Japanese society. In particular, this distinction determines how particular emotional displays are enacted.

There are other traditional Japanese ways to express feelings in this collectivistic society, which are called *honne* and *tatemae* (Condon, 1984). *Honne* refers to “one’s deep motive or intention” and *Tatemae* refers to “motives or intentions that are socially-tuned, those that are shaped, encouraged, or suppressed by majority norms” (Honma & Hoffer, 1986, p. 94). These concepts are taken for granted in Japan, and Japanese use them in daily life because “it is considered a virtue not to directly express one’s real feelings and intentions” (Davies & Ikeno, 2002). According to Davies and Ikeno (2002), Japanese do not express their feelings in a straightforward manner because of the fear that they might hurt other’s feelings, so they are usually careful how they express their feelings; they use *tatemae* in order to get along with others. Japanese do not intend to lie using *tatemae*; rather, it is used to maintain harmony in in-groups (Gudykunst et al., 1996). *Honne* is used in one’s personal space, perhaps between married couples, while *tatemae* is mostly used in business settings (Davies & Ikeno, 2002). Japanese *honne* and *tatemae* culture is closely related to the concept of face. Japanese use *tatemae* to avoid

a straightforward display of emotion so as not to hurt others in the group and to save both one's own and others' face.

Japanese display rules involve the sharing of emotions, or what Matsumoto (1996) calls collective emotions. He states, "the sharing of emotional expression and experiences serves to strengthen bonds among group members, thereby filling an important role in group functioning" (p. 51). For example, if the members of one's group express happiness or joy, one also must express happiness. If they express sadness or anger, one should express the same emotions, no matter what one actually feels. This is what Matsumoto (1996) identifies as collective emotion. In addition, Kimura, Daibo and Yogo (2008) found that Japanese generally expressed and experienced the same emotions their interaction partner had experienced when disclosing emotional episodes. Collective emotion is very similar to the idea of *tatemaie*, which is an individual's socially tuned emotion rather than the individual's true voice. Thus, in Japan, "individual emotional expressions must conform to group emotion. If one's emotions do not conform to group harmony, solidarity is threatened. Social sanctions such as shame, ridicule, or isolation may follow" (Matsumoto, 1996, p. 52). Also, in addition to the sharing of collective emotions, Japanese learn to show positive emotions even when they feel negative ones, in order to stay in the group.

**Power distance.** Matsumoto (1990) argues that it is more acceptable for higher status people to display negative emotions to lower status people because of the maintenance of power distances, which exist within the vertical society in Japan. However, Matsumoto (1996) also states that "the higher status Japanese must also be careful not to show emotions that may be

interpreted as signs of weakness” (p. 58). This may be because if they display emotions, such as sadness or depression, their higher status and the vertical relationships may be threatened since the lower status people may see them as mentally weak. In addition, Matsumoto (1996) argues that the higher status Japanese must be cautious in showing happiness. Thus, there are many Japanese leaders who are absolutely expressionless. Japanese display rules are “the Japanese culture’s way of ensuring that the ‘correct’ emotions serve the ‘appropriate’ social function in maintaining the social and cultural pattern” and “the Japanese culture’s way of providing individual members with guidelines so as to maintain the culture’s and society’s emphasis on groups and status differences” (Matsumoto, 1996, p. 47).

### **Intercultural Romantic Relationships**

Today, there are many opportunities to communicate with people of different races, ethnicities, and nationalities due to advanced technologies and the relatively easy access to international travel in the globalized world (Bustamante et al., 2011). These opportunities inevitably lead some individuals to become involved in intercultural romantic relationships. An intercultural romantic relationship is defined as “an intimate connection existing between people of different cultures that comprise involvement, sharing, disclosure, and/or love” (Docan, 2003, p. 11). In this section, I will discuss challenges intercultural romantic couples encounter, relational maintenance strategies intercultural romantic couples employ, benefits of intercultural romantic relationships, and Japanese-U.S. American romantic relationships.

**Challenges intercultural couples encounter.** Intercultural couples encounter unique challenges that intracultural couples may be less likely to experience (Molina et al., 2004). For

example, they tend to experience linguistic problems, negative reactions from families and communities, negative stereotypes, racial issues, and problems resulting from different communication styles.

*Linguistic problems.* Language plays an important role in intercultural romantic relationships when partners' native languages are different. For example, Cools (2005) argues that the romantic partner who speaks their partner's language, rather than their own, may put him/herself in a weaker position, since "inequality and lack of power are perceived, by those who have to speak a language which is not their native tongue, as disadvantages in a relationship, as well as in the interactions with people from the host-culture" (p. 19). As a couple negotiates what cultural identities they want for the relationship in the early stages, they probably decide (automatically) what language they use to communicate with each other. Those partners who speak a language different from their native tongue often find it difficult to express themselves in their adapted language, seeing it as a "handicap" (Cools, 2005).

In addition to the negotiation over which language they use in their relationship, Adams (2004) argues that for intercultural couples living in the United States, most non-English native speakers struggle with, and are frustrated by, language learning. This language struggle often makes the partners of non-English native speakers want to return to their home country (Adams, 2004). Similar to Cools' (2005) findings, Renalds (2011), who studied Asian and Caucasian married couples living in the U.S., observed that spouses who communicate using primarily their mother tongue seem to have an advantage in the relationship, while spouses who must employ English struggle with using a second language. In addition, in a study of Japanese and U.S.

American intercultural couples, Moriizumi (2011) noted that Japanese wives had uncomfortable experiences because they were not fluent in English, and because of this, thought that people perceived them differently from others.

***Negative reactions from others.*** Intercultural couples also struggle with reactions from others, such as families and their local communities. Married couples in particular, encounter “the potential acceptance or rejection by their family for the one they love” (Renalds, 2011, p. 42). Some couples encounter more conflict when dealing with each other’s family. For example, Bustamante et al. (2011) found that family connections or extended family relationships were one of the primary stressors for intercultural married couples. Partners often felt excluded from their spouse’s family, especially when they were not fluent in the family’s native language. Familial opposition to a marriage to a spouse from another culture is definitely one of the challenges both parties in an intercultural relationship may encounter (Falicov, 1995; Molina et al., 2004). The lack of family support may cause conflict between intercultural married couples (Poulsen, 2003). In addition, communities function more as extended families in some cultures, so that intercultural couples must sometimes deal with the pressure of rejection from partners’ communities as well (Molina et al., 2004).

***Negative stereotypes and racial issues.*** Molina et al. (2004) argue that negative stereotypes challenge intercultural romantic relationships, causing negative reactions from families, communities, and society. Often, such stereotypes are closely related to race. In general, intercultural couples do not see race as a problem *within* the relationship, but it becomes problematic when they interact with others *outside* the relationship, and they are forced to

encounter prejudice or discrimination from others (Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013; Torigoe & Chen, 2007). Henderson (2012) argues that intercultural marital couples are very conscious about the “outside evaluator” who judges the couples’ behaviors. For example, Torigoe and Chen (2007) reported that in interracial relationships in the U.S., partners of color mentioned that they experienced being stereotyped by others. Partners within Japanese and U.S. American relationships also experience negative reactions from society, including immediate families, neighbors, bosses, and communities (Moriizumi, 2011). Although U.S. American husbands had less negative experiences, one common theme was that Japanese wives’ parents expressed negative feelings toward the marriage based on cultural differences, their child living in a foreign country, and negative stereotypes toward U.S. Americans (Moriizumi, 2011).

*Different communication styles.* Renalds (2011) argues that the high context and low context dimension is a struggle for many intercultural couples. As has been reported already in this literature review, many Asian cultures are categorized as high context cultures, and Western cultures such as the United States are categorized as low context cultures (Hall, 1976). Ting-Toomey (1991) argues that individuals from low context cultures self-disclose more of their feelings directly and explicitly, while individuals from high context cultures use more indirect and subtle forms of expression in intimate relationships. Thus, individuals in low context cultures engage in more verbal and direct self-disclosure such as saying “I love you,” and “I miss you,” whereas for individuals in high context cultures, non-verbal caring gestures play a more important role than explicit verbal cues (Ting-Toomey, 2009). Asian and Caucasian married couples recognized their different styles of communication in Renalds’ (2011) study. While

Caucasian spouses wished their Asian spouses would express their opinions more, Asian spouses expected their Caucasian spouses to understand them without having to be more specific about what they were saying. Bello, Brandau-Brown, Zhang, and Ragsdale (2010) found that nonverbal methods for expressing appreciation were more prominent for the Chinese in both friendships and romantic relationships, while verbally direct expression was more prominent for the U.S. Americans in the same types of relationships. Similarly, Caucasian spouses noted that they perceived a small amount of display of appreciation from Japanese spouses (Franklin, 1992).

**Relational maintenance strategies.** As discussed above, intercultural couples tend to encounter challenges more than do intracultural couples, in terms of linguistic problems, negative reactions from families and communities, negative stereotypes, racial issues, and different communication styles. To maintain their relationships in light of these challenges, they need to acquire or establish effective relational maintenance strategies. In the following section, I will discuss various relational maintenance strategies, such as navigating language ability, gaining approval from others, using more open communication, building greater awareness and appreciating similarities and differences between partners, using humor, managing conflict, and building of relationship structures within intercultural romantic couples.

**Language ability.** Intercultural couples need to acquire relational maintenance strategies to better manage their cultural differences. Language fluency is a key factor in maintaining intercultural romantic relationships. In fact, Renalds (2011) argues that “language is crucial to communication as it is the vehicle to developing intimacy and trust in close relationships” (p. 40). As discussed earlier, many individuals struggle with the language barrier with their partners, but

if partners are fluent in the dominant language in the relationship, communication will be smoother. Spouses in intercultural marriages affirmed that knowledge of language played an important role both in early and later marriage (Renalds, 2011). In addition, Ting-Toomey (2009) argues that partners in intercultural intimate relationships need to be proficient in a shared language and the use of everyday slang, noting that it is “critical for the native language speaker to develop cultural sensitivity for his [sic] romantic partner” (p. 39). In their study of U.S. American and Japanese dyads, Gudykunst et al. (1991) found that Japanese partners’ ability to use English influenced their ability to develop their intimate relationships with their U.S. American partners. Franklin (1992) states that higher English-speaking competence among Japanese spouses was associated with higher marital satisfaction in U.S. American-Japanese married couples living in the United States. Moreover, U.S. Americans’ acceptance of their Japanese partners’ inability to speak English and/or the U.S. Americans’ offers to help their Japanese partners improve their English was the major factor in terms of developing the relationships from the acquaintance stage to a deeper stage (Gudykunst et al., 1991). Thus, not only the non-native speakers’ ability to use the shared language, but also the native speakers’ support for the non-native partners, are crucial in developing their relationships.

***Approval from others.*** In terms of familial disapproval or negative reactions from society, Seshadri and Knudson-Martin (2013) argue that family members need to have time and space to accept the partner. Many intercultural couples, especially married couples, are likely to experience negative reactions from families, communities, and society. However, giving some time and space to the families and others helps the family members deal with the negative

reactions and move toward acceptance of the partners (Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013). That way, the families may gradually be able to accept the intercultural couples, and this familial or societal approval may lead to greater marital satisfaction in the relationships (Renalds, 2011).

*Communication, similarities and differences.* Reiter and Gee (2008) argue that open communication is important in relational maintenance between intercultural romantic partners. They found that higher levels of open communication about culture between partners were related to lower levels of relationship distress. That is, if partners in intercultural romantic relationships can communicate widely about cultural differences, they feel less stress about the cultural issues between them. Seshadri and Knudson-Martin (2013) state that part of being open includes one's "willingness to celebrate and appreciate the other partner's culture" (p. 50). Thus, open communication is not only about cultural exchanges, but also about appreciating and accepting cultural differences. In addition, intercultural couples reported that the exchange of cultural values with their partners helped their relationship grow, and higher levels of cultural support were related to higher levels of relational satisfaction (Reiter & Gee, 2008). Therefore, if partners support or respect their partners' culture, the partners, in turn, may feel less distress and more satisfaction. Similarly, racial awareness is also important. In a study of interracial married couples, Leslie & Letiecq (2004) found that the higher the tolerance and appreciation one partner demonstrated to the other regarding the other's race, the higher the couple's marital quality. Thus, showing support or respect in view of cultural differences is important in terms of maintaining intercultural romantic relationships.

Likewise, being open to learning differences and similarities between partners is also

important for maintaining intercultural romantic relationships. As Molina et al. (2004) note, couples may acquire different viewpoints by examining their partner's culture, and similarities such as religion, political views, or favorite leisure activities may help intercultural couples feel togetherness based on the shared values. Gudykunst et al. (1991) found that common attitudes and interests were prevalent in Japanese-U.S. American romantic relationships. Also, cultural differences were evaluated positively, and many similarities were recognized. Falicov (1995) states that to arrive at a balanced and flexible view of cultural differences and similarities is an important task for intercultural couples in the period of relational development. Within the balanced and flexible perspective of differences and similarities, couples may negotiate and integrate cultural preferences, or remain parallel in the relationship (Falicov, 1995).

Some couples make an effort to stress cultural similarities (Bustamante et al., 2011). These couples transcend their differences by creating a "we" concept (Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013). This gives couples shared meanings, including similar goals, common ground and a sense of working together, all of which help couples to have shared values in their relationships. Similar to the "we" concept, Casimir (1993) argues that intercultural couples build a "third culture" by "developing their own frameworks, value systems, and communication systems for purposes of survival, mutual growth, and enjoyment of the life experience" (p. 420). Creating a "we" also leads to a relational commitment (Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013). Couples' shared values help them increase intimacy and commitment in the relationship. Reiter and Gee (2008) found that relational commitment and satisfaction were highly related. The more committed intercultural couples are, the more relational satisfaction they experience. Thus, a "we"

concept in the relationship helps the couples have similarities, and leads them to more committed relationships.

***Humor.*** The use of humor about cultural differences between partners is also one of the keys to negotiating their differences. Bustamante et al. (2011) found that most intercultural couples recognized their use of humor to de-emphasize or “lighten up” differences and to reduce stressful situations in regards to cultural differences. By using humor, couples’ tensions about cultural differences may be relieved, although it may take time to get to the point where couples can use humor to deal with their differences. According to Bustamante et al., couples also found that culture-related humor from extended families or others were not meant to hurt them. This behavior from others outside the relationship may be a sign that they are accepting the partners from different cultures.

***Conflict management.*** Intercultural romantic couples need to handle conflicts in the process of relational development. Ting-Toomey (2009) defines intercultural intimate conflict as “any antagonistic friction or disagreement between two romantic partners due, in part, to cultural or ethnic group membership differences” (p. 31). She believes it is difficult to pursue all “your needs” and all “my needs” to solve the conflict in the relationship, and a mindful approach is one key to handling conflicts over cultural issues. A mindful approach means to listen carefully to one’s own voice, understand one’s own cultural and personal values, and take time to sit with one’s partner with a non-judgmental posture or an “empty mindset” (Ting-Toomey, 2009).

Ting-Toomey (2009) also explains the important factors for resolving conflicts: knowledge, motivation, and constructive conflict style. Knowledge of the partner’s cultural value patterns,

identity issues, and conflict styles can “help us to be more mindful in dealing with our partner’s anger, jealousies, resentments, or hurts in times of conflict crisis” (Ting-Toomey, 2009, p. 34). For Japanese-U.S. American romantic couples, the U.S. Americans’ knowledge of Japan played an important role in the relationship (Gudykunst et al., 1991). Motivation refers to “the emotional energy and commitment that a person has and his or her readiness to integrate newfound intercultural conflict knowledge with culture-sensitive practice” (Ting-Toomey, 2009, p. 34). Partners in intercultural romantic relationships need energy to understand their partner’s different cultural values, handle the differences, and the conflict.

Constructive conflict refers to “the managing of conflict in such a way that both parties find fulfillment in the resolution and can continue to derive . . . satisfaction from the relationship even though compromise and differences exist” (Renalds, 2011, p. 48). Ting-Toomey (2009) argues that couples who are engaged in constructive conflict styles can cultivate multiple cultural paths, and be satisfied with the mutually understood common ground. These couples are usually committed to understanding the partner’s cultural perspectives, and these committed couples can mindfully listen to “their partners’ viewpoints with patience and with cultural openness and sensitivity” (Ting-Toomey, 2009, p. 32). To mindfully deal with cultural differences, partners need to learn unfamiliar behavior with nonjudgmental attitudes, and knowledge, motivation, skills and constructive conflict styles are also important.

***Building relationship structures.*** Through these negotiations of cultural differences, Seshadri and Knudson-Martin (2013) argue that intercultural couples, especially married couples, organize their cultural differences according to four distinct relationship structures: integrated,

co-existing, singularly assimilated, and unresolved. The integrated couples tend to organize the cultural differences by integrating each other's culture together. In this relationship structure, partners are willing to engage in the other's culture. These couples may ask each other how to celebrate a holiday, and they may merge the tradition from both of the cultures, such as making traditional food from each culture and celebrating together. They also may create new frameworks by blending cultures, in what Bustamante et al. (2011) call cultural reframing. These couples tend to create shared values, rules and customs, and maintain relational satisfaction. In the co-existing relationship structure, partners are likely to retain their separate cultures, but rarely integrate them. These couples see cultural differences as positive and even attractive, so that they retain two ways of doing many things in their lives (e.g., practicing religious tradition, sharing household responsibilities). However, when the couples have their own children, these retained cultural differences can be problematic. For example, if partners practice different religions, they may have conflict over which religion they wish their children to follow.

In singularly assimilated relationships, one partner tends to be more assimilated to the other partner's culture (Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013). For these couples, cultural differences are not highlighted because one culture dominates the relationship. One partner may join the other partner's culture, such as celebrating holidays or following gender roles as the partner's culture usually does. Bustamante et al. (2011) also argue that the tendency that one partner in the relationship defer to the other person's culture is a key to reconciling cultural differences. These individuals usually liked or respected the partner's culture, and chose to acculturate accordingly. The last structure is an unresolved relationship where couples do not

typically know what to do with cultural differences or have conflict over the differences. This tendency causes tensions within the couple, and often leads to insecurities in the relationship.

**Benefits of intercultural romantic relationships.** Although intercultural romantic couples encounter many challenges, which intracultural romantic couples are less likely to experience, intercultural romantic couples recognize benefits of the relationship. Some partners report great individual growth through the intercultural relationship (Renalds, 2011). In general, partners in intercultural romantic relationships are interested in other cultures, and they think that being able to learn the partner's culture is advantageous (Bustamante et al., 2011). By learning the partner's culture, they can acquire different cultural values, practices, and perspectives, which, in turn, may influence them to think differently about the world and their own life.

**Japanese and U.S. American romantic relationships.** There are studies on Japanese-U.S. American romantic couples, and the different relational communication styles between Japanese and U.S. Americans. For example, Gudykunst et al. (1991) showed that Japanese partners were attracted to "atypical" U.S. Americans who adopted some Japanese communication characteristics, while U.S. Americans saw both the Japanese "atypical" and "typical" communication characteristics as attractive. In addition, partners in these relationships were able to understand the nonverbal codes and emotional aspects of each other's behavior by looking at their partners' faces. In terms of emotional displays between these partners, the U.S. Americans largely adapted to the Japanese way of emotional displays. Many of these couples reported that they did not touch each other as U.S. Americans generally do (e.g., hugging and sitting close to each other) although some couples had more physical contact compared to other Japanese in

general (Gudykunst et al., 1991). A similar study (Franklin, 1992) revealed that some Japanese spouses felt uncomfortable engaging in some types of physical contact (e.g., kissing and hugging) with their U.S. American spouse. However, these reports about displays of emotion came only from the Japanese partners. Gudykunst et al. (1991) argue that this is because Japanese usually have less physical contact than U.S. Americans, so that they noticed the frequency of physical contact when it occurred.

Rothbaum, Rosen, Ujiie, and Uchida (2002) observe that Japanese place less emphasis on romantic relationships after they are married and have children, while U.S. Americans continue to maintain romantic relationships. Dion and Dion (1993) argue that romantic love and personal fulfillment are emphasized in marriage in more individualistic societies, whereas intimacy across family networks is emphasized in more collectivistic societies. Rothbaum et al.'s (2002) study supports Dion and Dions' arguments, given their finding that many Japanese married couples stay together primarily for the sake of children, and mother-child relationships are centered so that the distance between spouses is common in Japan. Moreover, Ting-Toomey (2009) argues that for many collectivists, such as Japanese, "the meaning of being 'in love' takes long-term commitment and time to develop," although for U.S. Americans "while intimate partners desire to 'lose' themselves in a romantic love-fused relationship, many also struggle with their desires for independence and personal freedom" (p. 38). These different characteristics of relationships may affect Japanese-U.S. American intercultural couples in how they perceive their relationships, and romantic partners in such relationships may need to negotiate their relational characteristics and their relational maintenance strategies.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine how affectionate touch is enacted in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic couples, as well as how these couples engage in emotional displays with each other. In this chapter, I have discussed important cultural dimensions in Japan and the United States, which are apropos to the current study. These include high/low context, individualism/collectivism, and power distance. I have also reviewed literature on how touch is enacted in romantic relationships, touch in Japan, and how touch norms in Japan are formed in Japanese families. In addition, I have discussed how emotional displays are enacted in romantic relationships, including how they are enacted in Japan. Finally, I have discussed intercultural romantic relationships including challenges intercultural romantic couples encounter, relational maintenance strategies, benefits of the relationships, and Japanese-U.S. American romantic relationships.

As discussed in the literature review, touch is an important intimate behavior for romantic relationships (Guerrero & Andersen, 1991; Johansson, 2013). However, touch is not commonly enacted in public in Japan compared to the U.S., and Japanese employ less intimate forms of touch, such as “putting an arm around” or “kissing” in public and tend to keep these behaviors highly private (Barnlund, 1989). In other words, touch rarely occurs in the expression of intimacy among Japanese. Moreover, Japanese and U.S. American partners may perceive affectionate touch behavior differently. Once a Japanese partner and a U.S. American partner are in a romantic relationship, they may need to negotiate their touch behaviors. These observations in the literature lead to the first and second research questions:

RQ1: How is affectionate touch enacted between partners in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships?

RQ2: How is affectionate touch perceived between partners in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships?

Compared to a number of studies on Japanese touch behaviors, Barr (1998) argued 17 years ago that touch in public among romantic couples was becoming a more common social practice in Japan. I also argue that Japanese traditional ideas of touch may be changing among young Japanese. Therefore, the third research question is:

RQ3: What are some factors contributing to the ways in which affectionate touch is enacted between partners in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships?

The literature reveals that the ways individuals express emotions depends on how a particular culture characterizes acceptable or unacceptable expression of emotion (Matsumoto et al., 1999). In a collectivistic culture, such as Japan, control of emotion has high priority (Potter, 1988), and people generally conceal emotion in order not to hurt anyone within one's in-group, and display less emotion than do U.S. Americans (Matsumoto, 1990). Thus, Japanese partners may also need to negotiate how they express emotions in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships. From this perspective, the fourth and fifth research questions are:

RQ4: How are emotional displays enacted between partners in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships?

RQ5: How are emotional displays perceived between partners in Japanese-U.S. American

intercultural romantic relationships?

Finally, I could locate no literature discussing how Japanese norms regarding emotional displays have changed in the past 17 years. Thus, it is reasonable to conjecture that many of the same cultural influences driving changes in touch behavior among Japanese (Barr, 1998) may also drive emotional displays. This leads to the sixth research question:

RQ6: What are some factors contributing to the ways in which emotional displays are enacted between partners in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships?

## Chapter Three: Method

### Recruitment and Participants

Lindlof and Taylor (2011) state that researchers “recruit particular persons for interviews because they have had experiences that are vital to our research questions, or because they possess specific kinds of knowledge, or because of the stories they have to tell” (p. 111). To recruit particular persons for this study, I employed the criterion sampling technique. In criterion sampling, researchers select persons who meet the criterion the researchers provide (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). In order to meet the criteria for this study, participants had to: 1) be in a Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationship; 2) be at least 21 years old; and 3) be living in the United States.

I recruited participants for this study by contacting individuals who were in a Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationship [see Appendix A]. Since there were a limited number of such couples in the Midwest area of the United States, I also used a snowball technique (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), contacting people I knew and asking them if they knew other couples who were in a Japanese-U.S. American romantic relationship. Once these couples agreed to participate in this study, I scheduled the interview dates for each participant and the place where we were going to meet. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) argue that researchers can get the best results in interviews when participants are relaxed, and when interviews occur in a comfortable and protected location. In all cases, interviews took place at the participants' houses.

I recruited three couples, each of whom was in a Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationship (U.S. American male and Japanese female). The first couple, Matthew and

Rie, have been together for 14 years and have been married for 10 years. They have no children. Matthew, 50 years old, works as a professor at a Midwestern university, and Rie, 47 years old, works as an instructor of English and Japanese at a Midwestern university and at a high school in the same city. Rie has been in the U.S. for 14 years in total. Matthew and Rie have visited Japan every summer since 2005, with an average stay of three to four weeks during each visit. The next couple, Aaron and Kaori, have been together for 13 years and have been married for 12 years. They have two children. Aaron, 44 years old, works as a high school teacher while Kaori, 39 years old, is a housewife. Aaron has lived in Japan for about four and a half years in total. He has been back to visit Japan with Kaori several times with an average stay of one month during each visit. The last couple, Kevin and Yukari, have been together for a year and a few months. They are engaged and cohabitating. They do not have children. Kevin, 26 years old, works as an IT analyst at a bank in a Midwestern city, and Yukari, 24 years old, is a graduate student pursuing a Master's degree at a Midwestern university. Yukari has been in the U.S. for a year and half, and she visited Japan with Kevin one time to see her family. The primary language used between Matthew and Rie, and Kevin and Yukari is English. The primary language used between Aaron and Kaori is Japanese.

## **Data Gathering**

**Couples-Directed Critical Incident Story-Telling.** After signing a consent form in English and Japanese and completing a demographic questionnaire [see Appendices B, C, and D], I first conducted “couples-directed critical incident story-telling.” This technique is derived from Critical Incident Technique, a well-known qualitative method, which focuses on “real-life human

experiences” (Hughes, 2007, p. 3) and allows the participants “to tell a story and explain why it is significant for a given context” (Kain, 2004, p. 74). The advantage of critical incident technique is that it helps researchers understand a phenomenon deeply, and from the perspectives of participants in the early stages of research. By employing this technique, researchers “can identify issues that may deserve further attention and research” (Kain, 2004, p. 78). Moreover, Hughes (2007) argues that critical incident technique can help researchers to develop the research questions. Although I had developed the research questions before conducting couples-directed critical incident story-telling, I used this technique mostly to identify issues couples had experienced and to develop further interview questions based on the conversations they recorded.

To facilitate the couples-directed critical incident story-telling, I gave each couple a digital recording device, as well as a list of questions about affectionate touch and emotional displays that I wanted them to discuss [see Appendix E], and asked them to record the conversation without my presence. The critical incident story-telling technique yielded three interviews, which were 33 minutes long, 28 minutes long, and 12 minutes long, respectively. By asking couples to talk about certain experiences they had in their relationships, I was able to identify much more explicitly how and why they were engaged in these activities. Also, by asking the participants to record their conversations without my presence, I was able to gather natural conversations that took place between partners. After I listened to the conversations each couple recorded, I noted some of the issues or experiences that stood out, and created more insightful questions to ask during the individual interviews.

**Interviews.** Next, I conducted interviews. Tracy (2013) argues that “interviews are guided question–answer conversations” (p. 131). Kvale and Brinkmann, (2009) also define interviews as an “inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (p. 2). Lindlof and Taylor (2011) argue that interviews are “well suited *to understanding the social actor’s experience, knowledge, and worldviews*” (p. 173). In other words, researchers seek “the nature of a person’s experience to result in words that can only be uttered by someone who has ‘been there’ (or ‘is there’)” (p. 173). Interviews were appropriate for the goal of my study, which was to seek out how Japanese and U.S. Americans, who were involved in intercultural romantic relationships, enacted affectionate touch and emotional displays with each other. In short, interviews helped me understand in depth, participants’ experiences and how *they* see the experiences.

Specifically, I employed *respondent interviews* with each partner separately “to elicit [each partner’s] open-ended responses” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 179) and “to find out how [my participants] express their views, how they construe their actions, [and] how they conceptualize their life world” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 179). Tracy (2013) states that such interviews encourage respondents to speak “primarily of and about themselves – about their own motivations, experiences, and behaviors” (p. 141). Thus, my interview questions were mostly open-ended, which allowed me, as an interviewer, to stay open and flexible to the stories the interviewees told me (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006), so that the interviewees could talk about their experiences more freely.

Generally, interviews have been widely employed in the study of intercultural romantic

relationships (Adams, 2004; Bustamante, et al., 2011; Cools, 2006; Gudykunst, et al., 1991; Moriizumi, 2012; Renalds, 2011; Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013). Niehuis, Huston, and Rosenband (2006) argue that “with only one side of the relationship story, accuracy might be undermined and findings might be limited in what they can teach...” (p. 35). To counter this problem, I conducted interviews with both partners in a Japanese-U.S. American romantic relationship. Although Cools (2006) states that it is important to conduct interviews with both partners present in the study to hear the voices of both partners, I conducted interviews of both partners separately. As discussed in the literature review, Japanese people tend to show less emotion, and many of their displayed emotions are “socially tuned” (Honna & Hoffer, 1986). Thus, even though the interviewees were couples who were considered in very intimate relationships, some participants (in particular the Japanese) might not have felt comfortable describing what they had really experienced if their partners would have been present when they were being interviewed, given the nature of some of the questions. Therefore, I interviewed both partners separately in order to prevent the interviewees from experiencing discomfort or conflict during the interview process.

The questions for both the couples-directed critical incident story-telling and for the individual interviews were designed based on previous studies (Aune et al., 2001; Clark & Finkel, 2005; Gudykunst et al., 1991; van Anders et al., 2013), which have focused on touch and emotional displays. In much of the literature on touch, researchers observed how individuals engaged in touch behavior (Guerrero & Andersen, 1994), or used questionnaires or scales (Afifi & Johnson, 1999; Gullede, et al., 2003; Gullede, Stahmann, & Wilson, 2004) to address what

types of touch romantic couples displayed (e.g., kissing, hugging, patting) or exactly when romantic couples were engaged in affectionate touch (e.g., “I kiss my partner when I go to work”). However, I modeled my study on the work of Gudykunst et al. (1991) and van Anders et al. (2013), both of whom asked open-ended questions to investigate interactions and touch behaviors between romantic couples. The work of van Anders et al. (2013) was particularly instructive, because it *modeled* open-ended questions that invited detailed description, such as “How would you describe your feelings during cuddling?” I composed similar types of questions, which allowed participants in my study to describe their affectionate touch with their partners in detail and in their precise words. My questions for the couples-directed critical incident story-telling and individual interviews were also based on the literature I reviewed in the previous chapter, such as different touch behaviors in Japan and in the U.S., and in different contexts (e.g., with families, friends, or in public spaces in Japan and in the U.S.).

Similar to touch, many studies on emotional displays in romantic couples have employed questionnaires or surveys (Aune, et al., 2001; Clark & Finkel, 2005; Hayes & Metts, 2008; Ivanova & Watson, 2010; Le & Agnew, 2001; Rauer & Volling, 2005). In particular, Aune et al. (2001) used surveys to investigate emotional experiences and expression in romantic relationships by asking participants to identify emotions they had experienced and expressed, as well as the appropriateness of certain types of emotional expressions. Some of the questions asked included, “Identify the degree to which you felt the emotion,” and “To what degree did you express or show the emotion?” Similarly, Clark and Finkel (2005) asked the extent to which participants expressed emotions within close relationships, using questions such as, “When you

feel emotion, to what extent do you express it?” Since I was asking how Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic couples express emotions to each other, I followed the lead of Aune et al. (2001) and Clark and Finkel (2005) in terms of the topic area. However, consistent with my study design, I composed open-ended questions designed to encourage participants’ deep descriptions about the emotions they have experienced, and how they express emotions, such as “when your partner is feeling positive or negative emotions, how does he/she show that emotion to you?” (See Appendices E and F).

For all questions, I included probes such as “can you tell me some specific examples?” or “Can you give me examples/stories?” in case the participants answered questions only briefly, and I needed more details. The interviews were recorded with the participants’ permission in order for me to “engage more fully in the conversation” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 192) instead of being busy taking notes on all of what the participants were saying. However, at the same time, I took some notes during the interviews in order to follow up on questions and to record non-verbal communication such as facial expressions, voice tones and body language, which provided extra information in addition to the verbal answers of the interviewees (Opdenakker, 2006). There were six interviews in total. The longest was an hour and 19 minutes. The shortest was 33 minutes. The average length was 47 minutes.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is an important process because it “provide[s] focus and shape to the body of material gathered during a project” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 244). The first step of data analysis was transcribing. Tracy (2013) states that transcribing is an essential factor in the

process of data analysis because it allows researchers the “close examination of data, which is so imperative for interpretation” (p. 178). Transcribing interviews is arduous, yet it is also advantageous because “the participants are already known to you, making it easier to recognize speech patterns, references to people and places...” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 212). After the interviews were recorded, I created a total of 93 pages of typewritten transcripts from the audio-recorded data.

Next, I coded the interview transcriptions. According to Charmaz (2006), coding refers to “naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data” (p. 43). In other words, “coding is the active process of identifying data as belonging to, or representing, some type of phenomenon” (Tracy, 2013, p. 189). By coding, researchers can find what is happening in the data (Charmaz, 2006). I conducted an initial round of open coding, a process through which I was able to build and name categories referring to general phenomena. For example, my initial coding notations, such as “Yukari would practice affectionate touch in public in Japan,” “ Japanese partner initiated affectionate touch,” and “Partner isn’t a typical American,” eventually developed into a category entitled “atypical partners.” In this way, I created several themes, such as “positive views on affectionate touch,” “different perceptions between Japanese and U.S. American partners,” and “stereotypical high/low context cultural patterns.” Once this initial process was complete, I compared these codes to my research questions, determining the ways in which and the extent to which these data addressed these questions.

## **Chapter Four: Results**

The purpose of the study was to examine how affectionate touch and emotional displays were enacted in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships. In this chapter, I will discuss findings that emerged in the analysis, many of which were consistent with existing intercultural and interpersonal communication theories. I arranged these findings in themes based on the research questions.

RQ1: How is affectionate touch enacted between partners in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships?

### **In Public in the U.S. and Japan**

I found variations among the three couples in terms of how each enacted affectionate touch in public in the U.S. versus how they did it in Japan. Kevin and Yukari, who are in their 20s and have been in a relationship for a little more than a year, usually enact affectionate touch in public when nobody is around or looking at them in public in the U.S. For example, Kevin mentioned, “you can get a feeling... kind of being like... alone even in public. Like if you are grocery shopping, and nobody else is in the aisle.” Yukari added that she and Kevin usually hold hands or put arms around each other when in public in the U.S., but rarely hug or kiss. Interestingly, Yukari and Kevin do not change the way they enact affectionate touch in public when visiting Japan. Kevin even mentioned that Yukari hugs him in public in Japan. Yukari’s touch behavior can be explained by Barr (1998), who argued 17 years ago, that affectionate touch was becoming a more socially accepted practice among youth in Japan. In other words, she does not seem to

follow the traditional Japanese norm of refraining from “public touch behavior” among romantic partners.

Aaron and Kaori, who are in their early 40s and late 30s, respectively, both asserted that they enact very little affectionate touch in public in the U.S. With regard to the amount of affectionate touch she displayed in public in the U.S., Kaori noted, “I think it’s very little.” Likewise, Aaron stated that “I’m not into, myself, PDA.” Nor did Aaron initiate affectionate touch in public in the U.S., with one interesting exception—when he and Kaori are on vacation and thus far away from their everyday lives. As Aaron noted, “Ah...if we are on vacation somewhere, I guess we might hold hands or something like that, you know.” Aaron and Kaori observed that they do not touch each other in public in Japan, which Kaori indicated was the cultural norm there.

Matthew and Rie, who are in their early 50s and late 40s, respectively, mentioned during the critical incident story-telling that they do hold hands when they go shopping together in the U.S. However, Rie mentioned that she does not touch Matthew in public when they are in Japan, explaining that:

I think it’s because people don’t touch in Japan, and that’s the culture. Hmm, like, maybe because when I do affectionate touch, people will pick on me, saying like, “oh yea, you guys are so in love” or things like that. And, when people say that to me, I get embarrassed.

Um, you know, touch is not Japanese culture. You don’t really touch people.

As Rie’s comment suggests, there exists in Japan a clearly defined norm about appropriate touch behaviors between romantic couples in public, which is consistent with Barnlund’s (1989)

argument that traditionally, Japanese employ less intimate forms of touch in public. Although two of the couples followed this norm, it is not surprising that the younger couple in my sample, Kevin and Yukari, are breaking with traditional expectations for public touching behavior among romantic partners, as Barr (1998) pointed out 17 years ago, such rigid expectations are diminishing among younger generations in Japan.

### **In front of friends and families**

Each of the three couples enact affectionate touch differently when they are with friends and families. Kevin and Yukari mentioned during the critical incident story-telling that they had more formal communication in front of their families, especially parents. For example, although Kevin acknowledged that “[m]aybe sometimes, like, we put arms around each other, or something like that,” he stated that on the whole they enact less affectionate touch in front of their families. Yukari affirmed this observation noting that:

It doesn't mean that I don't want to [show more affection], but I don't think it's appropriate.

And if I am with, for example, Kevin's family, we play games, talk with them, and we don't really have time to stick together.

Also, Yukari mentioned that she could be more relaxed when she was with friends because she does not feel as if she must behave so properly with friends as she does with family. As Yukari noted, “[b]ecause [families] are not friends, I try not to show affection. If we are drinking with friends at a bar, I can just relax and be more open to touch...” However, even the comfort of displaying affectionate touch with friends has its limits. For example, Yukari suggested that she and Kevin are more likely to touch each other when they are with friends who are *themselves*

romantic couples than with friends who are unattached because they do not want the unattached friends to feel uncomfortable witnessing their affectionate displays.

In the case of Matthew and Rie, there was a clear difference in how they enacted affectionate touch depending on whether they were with her Japanese family or with his U.S. American family. Specifically, Rie mentioned that they displayed less affectionate touch in front of her family than they did in front of Matthew's family. As she noted;

[W]e don't kiss in front of my family. And, probably we don't have affectionate touch that much in front of my family.... In front of his family, hmm, yea I think he doesn't hesitate to enact affectionate touch in front of his family.

Rie explained the reason why she has more affectionate touch in front of Matthew's family, noting that he initiates and enacts affectionate touch in front of them, and she simply follows his lead.

For example, in front of TV, when everybody is sitting on the couch and if we don't have seats, we sit on the floor. Then, he sits right next to me, and sticks to me, and he doesn't hesitate to do that in front of his parents.

Not only would Matthew show Rie affection touch in front of his own parents, but in clear contrast to Rie, he would feel comfortable showing affectionate touch to Rie in front of *her* parents. As he stated:

I've been with her family enough that I don't really feel self-conscious.... if we want to lay down on a sofa together...and ah that's very intimate.... We don't do that in public, but around her family, I would.

When Matthew and Rie were with friends, both of them mentioned that Matthew would be more likely to initiate affectionate touch, such as rubbing her back at dinner. He stated, “[M]aybe if [we] have dinner [with friends], I touch my wife’s back.”

Aaron and Kaori generally enact less affection in this context than do the other couples. They both mentioned that they did not enact affectionate touch in front of friends or families. For example, Kaori noted that “it’s normal for me to not enact affectionate touch.” Similarly, Aaron mentioned that he did not enact affectionate touch in front of friends or families, partly because he felt that doing so was uncomfortable and inappropriate, but also because people around him did not enact affectionate touch.

Although I could find no literature on how romantic couples enact affectionate touch in front of friends and families, given my own experience, I argue that Japanese partners are not used to enacting affectionate touch, especially in front of their families, since Japanese usually do not touch family members, friends or lovers in public, instead placing more emphasis on psychological intimacy (Seki et al., 2002). In this small sample, all of the Japanese partners accounts support my supposition regarding affectionate touch, certainly in front of *Japanese* families, and primarily in front of U.S. American families. The one exception was Matthew, who is not shy about communicating his affection for his partner Rie in front of his family, and hypothesizes that he would also feel comfortable doing so around her family. On the other hand, two of the couples felt fairly comfortable about communicating their affectionate displays in front of friendship groups.

RQ2: How is affectionate touch perceived between partners in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships?

### **Levels of /Adaptation to Affectionate Touch**

Partners within each couple differed in their perceptions of their respective partner's levels of affectionate touch. In Kevin and Yukari's relationship, Yukari mentioned that their levels of affectionate touch were the same (e.g., she believed that both of them were more likely to initiate touch in public). On the other hand, although Kevin mentioned that their levels of affectionate touch were *close* to the same, he said Yukari was more affectionate than he was. As he noted, "Yukari is very affectionate...So she might've been a little bit more." Although how Kevin and Yukari perceive their levels of affectionate touch differed slightly, both indicated that they had adapted to each other's level of affectionate touch, asserting that their levels for affectionate touch had increased after being in the relationship. This is consistent with Guerrero and Andersen's (1994) finding that partners' nonverbal communication would be synchronized as the relationship develops, and that their touch behaviors become similar or "matches." Although Kevin and Yukari have been together for only a year and a few months, I argue that they have adapted to each other's touch behavior, or they may be in the process of *matching* their touch behavior.

Matthew and Rie also experienced different perceptions of each other's levels of affectionate touch. Matthew mentioned that their levels of affectionate touch were the same, specifically that both he and Rie were likely to initiate touch. He even mentioned that Rie might

have initiated touch when they started dating. However, Rie's perception differed markedly. As she noted, "[o]h yea, he definitely does.... Yea, he enacts affectionate touch way more than me." This may be explained by Emmers and Dindia's (1995) suggestion that female partners reported that they were touched more by male partners while male partners reported that they were touched more by female partners. As Emmers and Dindia suggest, this is because women generally desire to be touched more often than do men. Due to the different perceptions between males and females, Matthew and Rie might perceive their levels of affectionate touch differently. Contrary to Kevin and Yukari, both Matthew and Rie mentioned that they had not adapted to each other's levels of affectionate touch. As Rie stated, "I don't think I have adapted to his level of affectionate touch." Additionally, their levels of affectionate touch had not changed after being in the relationship. Although Guerrero and Andersen (1994) argued that couples in long-term relationships would often match their touching behaviors, Matthew and Rie did not necessarily follow this tendency. Finally, both Aaron and Kaori mentioned that their levels of affectionate touch had remained much the same throughout the duration of the relationship, a phenomenon that Aaron attributes to his "cultural upbringing" as well as to being "married with children," both of which I will address in upcoming sections. In short, Aaron and Kaori are less affectionate in public, and they do not enact affectionate touch except during intimate family situations, such as when Aaron goes to work in the morning, at which time Aaron, Kaori, and their daughter engage in a group hug.

### **Japanese Partners' Adjustment to U.S. American Norms for Affectionate Touch**

The findings revealed that the Japanese partners had adapted to U.S. American norms for

affectionate touch, and that they felt more comfortable when enacting affectionate touch in the U.S., regardless of the fact that touch behavior in public was still not the norm in Japan. For example, Yukari mentioned that she felt comfortable enacting affectionate touch in public – both in Japan and the U.S. – and she remembered the time when she enacted affectionate touch in public in Japan, noting that “I was like ‘I don’t really care.’” Similarly, Rie acknowledged that affectionate touch is normal for her, a development not lost on Matthew. “[Rie] doesn’t seem too self-conscious about touching. So I don’t think [there is] any discomfort there.” Further, Matthew explained that even when he touched Rie in Japan, she did not stop him, which leads him to believe that Rie does not feel uncomfortable with affectionate touch in public, even in Japan.

Kaori mentioned that when she started dating Aaron, she was a little bit confused by the affectionate touch he enacted, such as holding hands and putting his arms around her, since such forms of touch were not normal in her generation in Japan. As she noted, “I think I hesitated to do that at first because it was in Japan, and I thought we stood out, you know?” However, Kaori talked at length about the importance of adjusting to the U.S. cultural norms surrounding affectionate touch, recalling:

[W]hen you get used to seeing affectionate touch in public, it’s going to be just a normal thing. You can accept it easily, so you may not feel anything about that....And, if you are here, like, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do” right? You have to get used to it at some point.

After all, it seems that Japanese partners have adjusted to the U.S. American culture in the sense that they feel comfortable with affectionate touch in public. In 1991, Gudykunst et al. argued that

U.S. Americans accommodated their Japanese partners' way of nonverbal communication in many cases. However, in this small sample at least, adjustments to their Japanese partners' cultural performances for affectionate touch was not the case.

### **Positive Views on Affectionate Touch**

The results showed that, for the most part, the partners see affectionate touch positively. Both Kevin and Yukari stated the importance of touch. As Yukari noted, "I can feel the sense of togetherness, like we are doing something together...I can feel that I am with him by putting arms around each other or holding hands...Yea, I feel relieved." This is consistent with Chopik et al. (2014) and van Anders et al. (2013), who argued that romantic couples felt love, intimacy, closeness and comfort by cuddling. Although the form of touch Yukari mentioned was putting arms around each other, rather than "cuddling," I argue that affectionate touch in general gives couples closeness and comfort. Yukari's partner, Kevin, also mentioned that:

Um, it's almost like another form of communication for us, between us...And, English is her second language, and I don't speak Japanese at all. Her English is a lot better than my Japanese, haha, but there's some kind of, um especially early in our relationship, there were cultural differences, so physical touch kind of helped to cross some of the bridges that we couldn't quite communicate verbally.

Touch behavior was one of the communication tools for Kevin and Yukari, especially when they started dating, and still it is a form of communication that creates a sense of togetherness.

Similarly, Matthew acknowledged that in the early stage of their relationship, affectionate touch helped he and his partner, Rie, get closer since they were in a long distance relationship

between the U.S. and Japan. As Matthew recalled:

I think [affectionate touch] is important too, because of the fact that when we, we didn't have a long time to get comfortable with each other because of the way we got together. It was very unusual story. And so, um, when she came to visit me, you know, we didn't get close to one another, and I don't know, we wouldn't have gotten married.

Kaori mentioned that, although she and Aaron had not enacted much affectionate touch recently, she felt that affectionate touch is an important way to express love for one's partner. "Yea I think affectionate touch is one of the ways to express love...Like, one hug can express more love than telling by talking to each other."

### **Different Perceptions between Japanese and U.S. American Partners**

The results showed an interesting finding regarding how differently Japanese and U.S. American partners perceive particular events. Both Yukari and Rie have experienced embarrassment surrounding affectionate touch in front of their friends when they visited Japan with their partners. For example, when Kevin and Yukari socialized with Yukari's friends in Japan, Kevin kissed her on her cheek. Then, her friends got excited saying "Wooooow," and teased her. Similarly, when Matthew rubbed his partner, Rie's back in front of her friends in Japan, they teased her saying "Ohh, you guys are still in love!" Both Yukari and Rie mentioned that the affectionate touch their partners enacted in front of friends caused them embarrassment. Despite earlier literature (e.g., Barr, 1989), affectionate touch is still not ubiquitous in Japan. Although some forms of affectionate touch (e.g. holding hands) may be more normal, other forms of affectionate touch (e.g. rubbing a partner's back or hugging a partner) are still relatively

rare, even among friends. Thus, as seen in Yukari and Rie's Japanese friends, many people in Japan, even those of younger generations may not be completely comfortable seeing couples enacting certain forms of affectionate touch. Therefore, they might feel compelled to comment on it.

Also, I argue that these friends might have gotten embarrassed by witnessing affectionate touch enacted between the couples, and they might have commented on it to hide *their own* embarrassment. Researchers have shown that there are some certain coping strategies individuals generally use as a response to embarrassment, such as apology, excuse, justification, humor, remediation, avoidance, escape and aggression (Metts & Cupach, 1989). Sharkey and Stafford (1990) found that a "violation of privacy" situation, such as an intimate act (e.g., touch), can lead the embarrassed person and others present to respond with actions, such as laughing, smiling, blushing and screaming. Therefore, I can imagine that Yukari and Rie's friends were laughing or at least smiling when they made comments such as "Wooooow" and "Ohh, you guys are still in love!"

On the other hand, the ways that Kevin and Matthew perceived the events were different from their partners, Yukari and Rie, and I argue that they failed to pick up on the "embarrassment cues" their partners and their Japanese friends communicated. For example, Kevin observed the event Yukari also mentioned earlier. However, his interpretation was quite different. As he recalled, "So, I think, like, Yukari's family and friends are not as conservative as other Japanese people... They are more relaxed, and um, they all have kind of a good sense of humor, so it's easy to push boundaries." He realized that Yukari's friends were teasing her, but he did not

perceive that Yukari or her friends were embarrassed; instead, he thought the friends were very friendly and amused because of their reactions. Similarly Matthew remembered the time when Rie's friends teased her:

...maybe if I have dinner, I touch my wife's back, and I think we mentioned that her friends sometimes tease her a little bit, because their husbands don't do that to them...And, ah, but ah, they think it's funny, I don't think they mind, I don't think they get offended by that. I think it's just, they think, "oh well, he's American" right? "he's gaijin (outsider in Japanese)" right?

In essence, Matthew enacts affectionate touch in front of Rie's friends, and she gets embarrassed because they tease her; however, Matthew does not pick up on Rie's and her friends' embarrassment. Thus, in these examples, there exists a gap between Japanese and U.S. American partners regarding how each perceived the event.

This can be explained with Hall's (1976) classic work of high/low context cultural patterns. Recall from my review of the literature that Hall defines high context communication as that "in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message" (p. 91) whereas low context communication is the opposite: "the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code" (p. 91). I argue that the U.S. American partners in my sample, who are considered as belonging to a low context culture, did not pick up on the indirect ways of displaying embarrassment enacted by their partners' Japanese friends, who are considered as belonging to a high context culture. In other words, although the Japanese friends used humor and laughs as

indirect ways of showing embarrassment, the U.S. American partners in my sample failed to perceive it correctly.

RQ3: What are some factors contributing to the ways in which affectionate touch is enacted between partners in Japanese-U.S. American romantic relationships?

### **Atypical Partners**

All three couples recognized that one of the partners were either an atypical Japanese or an atypical American. Kevin and Matthew mentioned that their partners, Yukari and Rie were atypical Japanese. Kevin mentioned that, "...actually, I think Yukari is kind of 'atypical,' like not typical...I think Yukari is a pretty, pretty much an exception." He explained that Yukari was more affectionate than him, and this was because of her personality. He also had been exposed to Japanese culture by his friends and by some Japanese exchange students, so he acknowledged that he knew Japanese culture more than an average U.S. American. Based on his knowledge, he thought that Yukari was atypical compared to other Japanese. I argue that her atypical personality may influence her affectionate touch behavior, in that she is very affectionate and enacts more touch than does Kevin.

Similarly, Matthew explained that Rie was an atypical Japanese since she had lived in another U.S. state for a few years and in England before they got married. In addition, she lived in New York City with her family when she was a little girl. Specifically, Matthew noted that:

You know, 'cause I think her parents, they feel more, ah, they identify with American culture. And, while they are very Japanese, still very Japanese, but they feel a connection, you know, to American culture, and that may have influenced how Rie grew up.

Because of her exposure to Western culture and her family's perspective on U.S. American culture, Matthew observed that Rie was atypical, and thus, she would feel quite comfortable with affectionate touch in public. Although he did not identify her levels of affectionate touch as higher than his, he acknowledged that her behavior regarding affectionate touch was likely one big reason that they were married. As he mentioned, "...so the fact that we became close fairly quickly, and it helped us to get married. If...she was uh, very stand off-ish, then we might not have gotten married, I don't know."

Both Aaron and Kaori recognized that Aaron was an atypical American because of his exposure to Japanese culture. Kaori mentioned that: "Aaron is an American, but the half of him is like a Japanese." She added that the way Aaron thinks was similar to how older Japanese thought. This explains, in part, why Aaron viewed affectionate touch in public as inappropriate – older Japanese would likely think the same way. As a result, affectionate touch is not much enacted between Aaron and Kaori. In addition, Aaron recognized that he was like a Japanese, as he noted, "You know, one time, my boss said that [indicating him], you know, you've heard of this term 'Nihonjin yori Nihonjin (More Japanese than the Japanese).'" These findings are consistent with what Gudykunst et al. (1991) found in their study that partners in Japanese-U.S. American romantic relationships reported that their partners were "atypical" or "different" from average Japanese or North Americans. In intercultural romantic relationships, a partner's atypical behavior may be a key to initiating, developing and maintaining the relationship.

### **Long-Term Relationships/Having Children**

The findings showed that being in a long-term relationship and having children would

impact how affectionate touch is enacted between partners. In fact, both Matthew and Rie mentioned that their long-term relationship played a larger role in the level of their affectionate touch than did their cultural differences. Matthew stated:

I think when you are older, you know you've been married for a long time, and you are less affectionate in general...so maybe people, just the relationship changes and they express themselves a little different after they've been together for many years.

Also, Rie mentioned she and Matthew enacted more affectionate touch when they started dating, but it decreased after they got married. As she noted, "I think it's because, you know, like, when you are dating someone, you feel so excited and fun right?... But when you are married, these feelings will be gone....The relationship goes beyond that feeling." As a result, Matthew and Rie experienced decreased affectionate touch in their relationship. This can be explained by Guerrero and Andersen (1991), who suggested that while intimate touch was necessary in a developing relationship, touch behavior decreased in a stable relationship. I also argue that psychological intimacy is increased in a developed and stable relationship so that touch is not as necessary as it might be in a developing relationship.

As for Aaron and Kaori, they acknowledged that having children played a role in how affectionate touch was enacted between them. Aaron stated that, "Yea, you know, I mean that's ah, now you walk down the street, and holding your children, when you walk around with your children, that's both affection and safety." Aaron holds his children's hands to make sure that they are safe and also for affection, rather than holding Kaori's hands. Similarly, Kaori stated how affectionate touch with Aaron was different since having children:

When we didn't have kids, just being with two of us, we had been together with two of us for about eight years since we got married, so thinking about the times, I think we used to hold hands....But after we got children, affection goes to them instead, and we don't really have time with just two of us.

Kaori also added that she held her children's hands and did not hold Aaron's hands at all. Having children definitely has changed their affectionate touch in the relationship. This is consistent with Tahhan's (2007) observation that Japanese mothers tended to attach more to their children than to their husbands, and that Japanese married couples were more likely to lose their romantic relationships after they have children. I argue that Aaron and Kaori are following a pattern similar to what Tahhan discussed, which led them to experience decreased affectionate touch between them.

### **Generational/Regional Differences Related to Affectionate Touch**

Most of the partners mentioned that there were generational differences regarding affectionate touch in Japan, which may influence how affectionate touch is enacted between couples. Yukari, Rie and Kaori all stated that it was more common for young people in Japan to enact affectionate touch in public while they rarely see older people doing that. Kaori mentioned that:

Yes, so I wouldn't be surprised if I see old couples holding hands [in the U.S.], but if it's in Japan, and if I see couples in my parents' generation holding hands, I will be like, "wow".... For young people, like I said, holding hands is just normal, so as an extension, it may not be strange if they hug in public.

This may explain why Yukari is more affectionate in general than Kaori and Rie. As mentioned earlier, Yukari is 23, Kaori is 39, and Rie is 47 years old. Both Kaori and Rie revealed that affectionate touch in public was not common for their generations (generation X or older) but more common among younger generations. Thus, affectionate touch in public is more common for Yukari, and she does not hesitate to enact such behavior.

Similarly, Matthew mentioned that generational differences influenced affectionate touch norms. However, he stated that generational differences in affectionate touch norms can be seen both in Japan and the U.S. As he noted,

Maybe one reason would be that young people are less inhibited. I think they are less concerned about what people think of them... When you are young, you are very self-centered. And then, you think differently as you get mature. And, so young people, they just don't care, you know.

While generational differences play an important role in how affectionate touch is enacted, Kevin and Aaron brought up regional differences both in Japan and the U.S. They stated that people in a bigger city are more likely to enact affectionate touch in public than those living in smaller towns. Kevin explained that, "Especially, like, more heavily populated parts of Tokyo, there are people from all over the world, so it's not as conservative I think." Also, Aaron mentioned that the regional differences can be seen in the U.S. "You might see, I mean coming from a small town and Northern Minnesota, you know, I think the tendency is maybe just not, you just don't wanna be talked about.... I'm not really inclined to [engage in affectionate touch]." Aaron explained that in a small town in general, it engenders gossip if someone enacts

affectionate touch in public, and that most people would want to avoid that situation. This regional difference influenced Aaron's view regarding affectionate touch in public, such that he does not generally enact affectionate touch with Kaori in public.

Halbrook and Duplechin (1994) argued, from the therapist's standpoint, that touch generally decreases as people get older, and also that perception on appropriateness of touch may differ depending on geography. These insights are consistent with Matthew's explanation that young people tend to be self-centered and less concerned about what other people think about them, while older people tend to think differently regardless of the cultures to which they belong. Thus, although young people are more likely to enact affectionate touch in general, older people are less likely to do so since they tend to care more about how others look at them. In addition, as Kevin and Aaron observed, regional/geographical factors may play a role on what is perceived as appropriate touch. For example, when comparing people in New York City to those living in a small town in the Midwestern U.S., or people in Tokyo to those in a small town in rural Japan, different touch norms can be seen. This can explain Yukari's higher levels of affectionate touch. She is from Tokyo, which following Halbrook and Duplechin's reasoning, is less likely to be as conservative as a smaller Japanese community. Likewise, Aaron, who is from a small town in Minnesota, enacts less affectionate touch in general.

RQ4: How are emotional displays enacted between partners in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships?

### **Positive and Negative Emotional Displays**

The findings showed that participants in this study tended to display positive emotions and

hide negative emotions regardless of their cultural differences. Kevin and Yukari mentioned that they tended to hide negative emotions. As Kevin noted, “I kind of tend to just sort of shut down.” Yukari confirmed the reasons she did not show negative emotions. “I want to understand what’s going on by keeping quiet when I’m feeling mad or sad, and I tend to keep negative emotions inside. I don’t want to show these emotions externally.” Also, Kevin explained Yukari’s tendency to hide her negative emotions when she is with friends. She does not want anybody else to notice her negative emotions so that she tends to hide such emotions when she is with others. As Kevin mentioned, “she doesn’t want the attention to be brought on her by other people if she is upset.”

In Aaron and Kaori’s case, Aaron revealed that he was not good at showing emotions in general, “...sometimes I keep myself shut... You know, if that’s not a big deal, I won’t say anything.” Also, Kaori stated that she preferred not to show negative emotions. “I don’t want to say anything when I’m mad, I feel like it’s better not to say anything.” Kaori added that if the issue in contention was something that bothered her too much, she would express her emotions to Aaron. However, she sometimes goes off topic when she argues with him, so she tries not to say anything when she gets upset to avoid further conflict. Similar to Yukari’s case, Kaori mentioned that she tries not to show negative emotions when she was with others. This phenomenon can be explained with the concept of saving face. Matsumoto (1996) argued that the concept of face in Japan embodies how one is viewed by others, and people try to maintain one’s face and image to others. Yukari and Kaori may unconsciously try not to show negative emotions when they are with others since it may harm the overall image that they have of themselves and that others have of them.

Matthew and Rie's case contrasted somewhat with the other two couples. While Matthew tended to hide negative emotions, Rie was more likely to display such emotions. Matthew explained that he did not show emotions in general, and provided the reasons why he did not display negative emotions in particular. "Um, yea I would say, if I'm angry, um, I kinda think, maybe, 'this is my problem.... I don't want Rie to think that's her problem.'" Matthew tended to hide negative emotions in order not to involve his partner, Rie, or make her uncomfortable. On the other hand, Rie observed that she would express her negative emotions to Matthew, "Yea, I think I show negative emotions. I don't hide it." She further explained that it was because of her personality, and suggested that she would express negative emotions to even her family in Japan. While most of the partners tended to hide negative emotions, Rie was the only one who was likely to display such emotions, regardless of the Japanese cultural norm of subdued emotional displays.

Although some studies have shown that Japanese are more likely to hide emotions, especially negative emotions, compared to U.S. Americans (Kaito & Kaito, 1988; Safdar et al., 2009), this study revealed that both Japanese and U.S. American partners tended to hide negative emotions. This is supported with the study of Aune et al. (2001), who argue that couples in developed relationships (e.g., married or cohabiting couples) continued to control negative emotions even though displays of negative emotions were more acceptable in such relationships. Also, their study suggested that men were more likely to continue to conceal negative emotions in developed relationships compared to women. This may provide one explanation for why all the male U.S. American partners in this study tended to hide negative emotions although

showing negative emotions was considered more acceptable in U.S. culture. Regardless of the cultural norms surrounding emotional displays, relational stages and gender may play a part when expressing emotions in romantic relationships.

### **Stereotypical High/Low Context Cultural Patterns**

With regard to emotional displays, the findings showed stereotypical high and low context cultural patterns (Hall, 1976) between Japanese and U.S. American partners. Yukari explained that whenever she felt negative emotions, and Kevin asked her if she was okay, she tended to answer that she was okay. However, it did not mean that she really *was* okay, and she wanted him to notice that, "...after I say I'm okay, for him, because I say I'm okay, he thinks I'm really okay and he doesn't really care. That makes me a little upset." Kevin acknowledged that he usually does not pick up on what Yukari is feeling, and whenever he notices her negative feelings, he says it is often too late. "[T]here are times, but I'm not just being. . . observant, but um, I won't notice that she is sad, or hurt, or angry until it's too late."

Similarly, Kaori explained that she kept quiet when she was mad at Aaron because she wanted him to notice that she was mad. "If I don't talk for a while, he is probably thinking that he did something wrong. I want him to realize that I'm upset with him. Instead of saying something to make him realize, I want him to realize by himself." Aaron mentioned that he had learned the Japanese way of high context communication through working with Japanese. However, it was still sometimes hard for him to pick up on the Japanese way of displaying emotions. This also applies to his relationship with Kaori. For example, when I asked him if he noticed when Kaori was mad, and he answered, "Probably not." This phenomenon can be

explained by Renalds (2011), who suggests that Asian spouses often expected their Caucasian spouses to understand without having to be more specific about what they were saying. For these two couples, it is obvious that the Japanese partners are engaged in high context communication, while the U.S. American partners are having a hard time picking up on their Japanese partners' emotions.

On the other hand, in the case of Matthew and Rie, their role seems opposite from the other two couples. Rie mentioned that she communicated with Matthew in a more direct way. "I always say things right away, but to him, when he is mad, he keeps quiet and doesn't say anything, so I have asked him 'what do you want me to do?'" Contrary to the other two Japanese partners, Rie is engaged in more direct communication when she and Matthew are in conflict, whereas his communication is much more oblique, as was evidenced in the previous section.

RQ5: How are emotional displays perceived between partners in Japanese-U.S. American romantic relationships?

### **Perceiving Partners' Emotional Displays**

I found it interesting that Japanese partners were usually able to pick up on their U.S. American partners' emotions easily. Although Kevin explained that he was not good at showing emotions, Yukari noticed what he was feeling. "[H]e shows emotions clearly, so I understand how he is feeling most of the time." Similarly, Rie mentioned that she could read her partner, Matthew's emotions. "[W]hen Matthew gets mad, he keeps quiet, that's how I realize that he is mad." Moreover, Kaori stated, "Yah, for both emotions [positive and negative], it's really easy. It's very obvious." Kaori added that she could tell what Aaron felt by looking at his face. As

Gudykunst et al. (1996) argued, people in high context cultures are sensitive to others because a lot of messages are not exchanged verbally, and the content of the message is minimized.

Consistent with this research, Japanese partners in this study were able to perceive the emotions of their U.S. American partners without direct, overt emotional expressions.

Although it is obvious that there exist traits of high context communication in the Japanese partners, I also argue that we can look beyond cultural factors and explain this phenomenon as a male-female difference in recognizing emotions. Kaori made a similar observation, noting that, "...women usually realize a wide range of things, like even a tiny thing. But men tend not to realize anything." In fact, researchers have revealed that women tend to be better at recognizing nonverbal displays of emotion than men (Hall & Matsumoto, 2004; Mill, Allik, Realo & Valk, 2009; Thompson & Voyer, 2014). In addition to the Japanese partners' characteristic of high context communication, such as being sensitive to others, which played a role in recognizing their U.S. American partners' emotions, gender performance on emotional recognition might have impacted their ability to perceive their partners' emotions. Thus, it is not surprising that all the female Japanese partners in this study were able to recognize their male U.S. American partners' emotions easily.

### **Positive Views of Emotional Displays**

The results showed that some participants perceived displaying emotions to their partner positively. For example, both Kevin and Yukari think that showing emotions to each other would benefit their relationship. Yukari mentioned that:

[W]hen you show emotions to each other, you get to know more about each other. And you

will get to know your partner's personality. We try to display emotions to each other, so I think this makes our relationship better.

Yukari has a positive view on emotional displays although she tends to hide negative emotions, as I discussed earlier. She mentioned later that she would like to display negative emotions more.

Similarly, Matthew and Rie also think that it is important to display emotions to each other.

Despite his own inability to do so, Matthew stated that expressing emotions openly leads to a healthier relationship. "I think...expressing emotion . . .contributes to a healthier relationship....

So maybe, my holding things [in] might not always be the best." These two couples'

acknowledgement that the more emotions they express, the better their relationship, is borne out

in the literature. For example, Ivanova and Watson (2010) argued that expressing emotions to

each other would lead to relational satisfaction in romantic relationships. In addition, Kashdan et

al. (2007) suggested that "a greater willingness to express emotions is healthy and the opposite is unhealthy" (p. 486).

On the other hand, although Aaron and Kaori think that displaying emotions is important to maintain their relationship, they also mentioned that it is sometimes better not to show

emotions to each other. Aaron stated that, "But ah, may things work out, you know. There's

probably, sometimes I keep myself shut, but I think she sometimes does that too. I think to some

extent, you have to pick your battles." He thinks that as long as an issue is not a big deal, it is

better not to say anything. Also, Kaori mentioned the necessity of not showing negative emotions,

noting that, "we both get tired if we just show negative emotions, and your love toward someone

will be gone." She added that showing positive emotions and hiding negative emotions are

important skills to teach her children. Thus, in case of Aaron and Kaori, they perceive that both displaying positive emotions and hiding negative emotions are important skills to use in their relationship and to teach their children.

These findings lead to an interesting discussion on conflict style differences between Japanese and the U.S. Americans. Researchers have shown that in a high context and collectivistic culture, such as Japan, where saving-face is highly valued, people tend to avoid confrontation and use compromising, accommodating, and defusing conflicting styles (Ting-Toomey, 2009) in order to maintain harmony within one's in-group (Hofstede, et al., 2010). On the other hand, in a low context and individualistic culture, such as the U.S., where "speaking one's mind" is highly valued (Hofstede et al., 2010), individuals tend to use more direct, confrontational, demanding, and dominating conflicting styles (Ting-Toomey, 2009). However, as this study revealed, both Japanese and U.S. American partners tended to avoid conflict by not displaying negative emotions, and the only participant who tended to enact more direct communication was a Japanese partner. While cultural/national frameworks can certainly serve as guides for understanding communication patterns writ large, I argue that it is perilous to place too much emphasis on cultural/national factors to determine individuals' social practices. More studies are needed to gain deeper and more nuanced understandings of well-known cultural patterns.

RQ6: What are some factors contributing to the ways in which emotional displays are enacted between partners in Japanese-U.S. American romantic relationships?

### **Personality, Sports, Marriage and Children**

While culture plays a role in determining what emotions are appropriate or inappropriate (Matsumoto et al., 1999), personality and other factors also impact individuals' emotional displays. This was illustrated by some of the participants, who mentioned that emotional displays are not always dependent on cultures. For example, Rie observed that Matthew's way of quelling emotional displays when he was mad was "just his personality, not because he is an American." Similarly, Kevin confirmed that Yukari's more overt emotional displays could be explained more by her personality than it could by cultural aspects. Kevin explained that Yukari was very emotional compared to other Japanese he knew. He attributed Yukari's atypical emotional displays to her life as an athlete. In particular, he noted:

...her experience with handball. I think that made her much less reserved with her emotions because she was getting into arguments with her coaches and team players, and she was uh, the team captain of the team, so she had those leadership experiences. Whereas I did not have as much experience with sports. So that might be where those differences come from, like she's more able to express herself physically.

Aaron and Kaori mentioned that their own emotional displays would differ as a result of being married and having children. Specifically, Kaori explained that her emotional displays did not change after she started dating Aaron, but that they changed after getting married. "...[W]e live together, and you see a lot of things about the person, whenever something bothered me, I think I told him about that directly. But before marriage, even when something bothered me, I didn't really say that explicitly." She added that because married couples are together long enough, they show more emotions to each other. She does not think that the cultural differences

between Japan and the U.S. have influenced her displays of emotions.

Similarly, Aaron mentioned that showing emotions depends on the persons, but also observed that having children changed how he showed emotions. “I mean things change as we get older, and have kids, and you know, I think it’s beyond American and Japanese, I think there’s benefit to, you know, [to] not having your disagreements in front of your kids.”

## Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine how affectionate touch and emotional displays were enacted in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships. I recruited three couples who were in such relationships. I conducted couples-directed critical incident story-telling with each couple, and interviews with each partner separately. The following contains a discussion of how the findings are related to each of the research questions.

### **RQ1: How is affectionate touch enacted between partners in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships?**

This research question was addressed in terms of three themes: 1) how affectionate touch was enacted in public in Japan and the U.S., and 2) how affectionate touch was enacted in front of friends and families. There were variations among couples in my sample. The youngest couple enacted more affectionate touch, both in the U.S. and Japan, than the other two older couples. Two of the older Japanese partners were more likely to follow the Japanese norm of touching behavior, especially in Japan, suggesting that the Japanese norm of “less touch in public” (Barnlund, 1989) was still influential with them. On the other hand, the youngest Japanese partner did not follow the tradition, which is consistent with Barr’s (1998) argument that public touch behavior among young Japanese has been becoming a common social practice.

The results also showed that couples in my sample tended to enact less affectionate touch when they were with their families. One exception was that one of the U.S. American partners tended to enact affectionate touch in front of his family, and he imagined that he would feel

comfortable enacting affectionate touch in front of his partner's family. Couples in my study also reported that they had more informal communication in front of their friends, which, in turn, led them to feel more comfortable enacting affectionate touch in front of friends.

**RQ2: How is affectionate touch perceived between partners in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships?**

This research question was addressed in terms of four themes: 1) levels of/ adaptation to affectionate touch, 2) Japanese partners' adjustment to U.S. American norms for affectionate touch, 3) positive views on affectionate touch, and 4) Different perceptions between Japanese and U.S. American partners. First, two of the couples differed in how they perceived each other's levels of affectionate touch; one of the partners perceived the other's levels of affectionate touch as similar to their own, while the other partner perceived it as different. Also, Japanese partners in this study felt comfortable enacting affectionate touch in the U.S. regardless of the traditional Japanese cultural norm. In fact, the Japanese partners had adapted to the U.S. American norm of touch behavior, which differed from Gudykunst et al.'s (1991) argument that U.S. American partners mostly accommodated to their Japanese partner's cultural norm of nonverbal communication.

In addition, most of the partners in this study viewed affectionate touch positively. Although cultural norms of affectionate touch in Japan and the U.S. are different in general, both Japanese and U.S. American partners acknowledged that touch is one of the ways to express love and provides sense of togetherness and comfort as Chopik et al. (2014) and van Anders et al. (2013) suggested. In particular, partners confirmed that affectionate touch helped them and their

partners become closer in the early stages of their relationships, during which affectionate touch helped them cross boundaries of language, and at times, the distance. Moreover, the results revealed that Japanese and U.S. American partners had different perceptions surrounding particular events. While Japanese partners and their Japanese friends experienced embarrassment when U.S. American partners enacted affectionate touch in front of the Japanese friends, U.S. American partners did not perceive the Japanese' embarrassment at all.

**RQ3: What are some factors contributing to the ways in which affectionate touch is enacted between partners in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships?**

This research question was addressed in terms of three themes: 1) atypical partner, 2) long-term relationships/having children, and 3) generational/regional differences on affectionate touch. The results suggested that factors beyond cultural differences, influenced the ways the couples enacted affectionate touch. All the couples in my sample identified one of the partners as an atypical Japanese or an atypical American. These atypical characteristics of the partners influenced how the couples enacted affectionate touch. In particular, atypical Japanese partners felt comfortable with affectionate touch in general while the atypical American partner had traditional Japanese way of thinking so that less affectionate touch was enacted within this couple.

In addition to the atypical characteristics, long-term relationships and having children tended to impact the way couples enacted affectionate touch. Specifically, the results revealed that touch decreased in a long-term relationship as Guerrero and Andersen suggested in 1991. Although intimate touch is necessary in a developing relationship, I argue that psychological

intimacy is increased in a stable relationship so that touch may not be as necessary. Also, after having children, one of the couples observed that affection between them decreased and went to their children instead. This is consistent with Tahhan (2007), who observed that Japanese mothers tended to attach more to their children, and that Japanese married couples were more likely to lose their romantic relationships after they have children. Moreover, generational and regional differences influenced how couples enacted affectionate touch. The results revealed that the youngest couple in my sample was the most affectionate. This suggests that younger generations tend to be more affectionate than older generations, as some of the participants mentioned. Regional differences also tended to impact how affectionate touch was enacted in the couples. For example, a Japanese partner from Tokyo seemed very affectionate compared to other Japanese, and an U.S. American partner from a small town in Minnesota seemed more conservative and enacted less affectionate touch in his relationship than did the other U.S. Americans in this sample.

**RQ4: How are emotional displays enacted between partners in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships?**

This research question was addressed in terms of two themes: 1) positive and negative emotional displays, and 2) stereotypical high/low context cultural patterns. First, although some studies have shown that Japanese are more likely to hide emotions, especially negative emotions, compared to U.S. Americans (Kaito & Kaito, 1988; Safdar et al., 2009), this study revealed that both Japanese and U.S. American partners tended to hide negative emotions. This can be explained by their relational stages. As Aune et al. (2001) suggested, couples in developed

relationships continued to control negative emotions even though display of negative emotion was more acceptable compared to such negative displays in developing relationships. In addition, some of the Japanese partners followed the concept of face (Matsumoto, 1996) in that they tried not to display negative emotions in front of others in order to maintain their image to others and save face.

Second, the results showed stereotypical high and low context cultural patterns (Hall, 1976) between Japanese and U.S. American partners. While Japanese partners were engaged in high context communication, and expected their U.S. American partners to understand without having to be more specific about what they were feeling (Renalds, 2011), the U.S. American partners were having a hard time picking up on their Japanese partners' feelings. Although partners in my sample tended to follow the same pattern in that they hid negative emotions in general, regardless of the culturally determined emotional displays in Japan and the U.S., it emerged that cultural aspects played a role when it came to high and low context communication.

**RQ5: How are emotional displays perceived between partners in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships?**

This research question was addressed in terms of two themes: 1) perceiving partners' emotional displays, and 2) positive views of emotional displays. Interestingly, the findings showed that all the Japanese partners were able to pick up on their U.S. American partners' emotions very easily although U.S. American partners mentioned that they were not good at showing emotions in general. As Gudykunst et al. (1996) argue, individuals in high context

cultures tend to be sensitive to others because a lot of messages are not exchanged verbally, and the content of the message is minimized. Thus, Japanese partners in my sample were being sensitive to their U.S. American partners' emotions and picked up on them easily.

In addition, the high context phenomenon can also be explained in terms of male-female differences in recognizing emotions. All the Japanese partners were female, and studies have shown that women are better at recognizing nonverbal displays of emotion than men (Hall & Matsumoto, 2004; Mill et al, 2009; Thompson & Voyer, 2014). Although Japanese partners were engaged in high context communication and able to pick up on their U.S. American partners' emotions, I argue that gender performance related to emotional recognition impacted their way of communication between the partners in my sample.

Moreover, the results showed some positive views that couples had on emotional displays. Some participants mentioned that displaying emotions would make their relationships better and would lead to healthier relationships, as Kashdan et al. (2007) suggested, "a greater willingness to express emotions is healthy and the opposite is unhealthy" (p. 486). However, the results also revealed that participants felt that sometimes it is better not to show emotions to each other if a particular relational issue is not deemed to be important or if children are present. Further, although researchers have shown that individuals in Japan (high context; collectivistic culture) and the U.S. (low context; individualistic culture) have different conflicting styles, this study revealed that both Japanese and U.S. American partners tended to avoid conflict. The only exception was a Japanese woman, who, in a departure from what the literature on the topic suggests, actually preferred more a direct conflict communication style.

**RQ6: What are some factors contributing to the ways in which emotional displays are enacted between partners in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships?**

This research question was addressed in terms of a number of short themes, each of which demonstrate that although culture plays a role in determining what emotions are appropriate or inappropriate for romantic partners to display (Matsumoto et al., 1999), personality and other factors, such as experience with sports, marriage and children, also impact individuals' emotional displays.

**Implications**

This study has three implications. The first two are theoretical implications, and the third is methodological. First, although there are many studies on intercultural romantic relationships in general (Adams, 2004; Bustamante et al., 2011; Cools, 2005; Falicov, 1995; Molina, et al., 2004; Poulsen, 2003; Reiter & Gee, 2008; Renalds, 2011; Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013; Torigoe & Chen, 2007), there are only a few studies focused specifically on Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships, and they are quite dated (Franklin, 1992; Gudykunst et al., 1991). There were some findings in my study that added to previous scholarship. For example, Gudykunst et al. (1991) found that more U.S. Americans adapted to the Japanese way of nonverbal communication. However, in my study, results showed that Japanese partners adapted to the U.S. American way of nonverbal communication, especially in terms of affectionate touch. Also, Gudykunst et al. (1991) failed to identify the participants' ages, stages of romantic relationships, and other key factors. These distinctions are important because as this study

revealed, many factors would impact how affectionate touch and emotional displays are enacted in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic couples. These include, but are not limited to marriage, length of relationships, regional differences and personality.

Second, I argue that attention should be brought to affectionate touch in different situations. There are many studies regarding how romantic couples' enacted touch affects their psychological well-being (Afifi and Johnson, 1995; Chopik et al., 2014; Emmers & Dindia, 1995; Gullede et al., 2003; Guerrero & Andersen, 1991, 1994; van Anders et al., 2013). However, there is no literature discussing how couples change their "couples' touch behavior" depending on who they are with. This study has shown that couples do change how they enact affectionate touch, depending on whether or not they are in public, or in front of friends and families. In this way, this study has added new insight to the existing literature.

Third, interviews have been widely employed in the study of intercultural romantic relationships (Adams, 2004; Bustamante, et al., 2011; Cools, 2006; Gudykunst, et al., 1991; Moriizumi, 2012; Renalds, 2011; Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013). However, critical incident technique has not yet been employed in this context. Although the timeframe of this study did not allow for analysis of the transcripts of the critical incident interviews, I argue that this technique was still beneficial in my study of intercultural romantic relationships since it allowed couples to talk freely and tell stories regarding given topics. This technique also allowed the participants to generate ideas and topics that I myself did not conceive. For example, critical incident technique helped me create individual interview questions in addition to the original questions I designed in the early stage of the study. Thus, I was able to collect more detailed

answers by asking each partner questions separately about some issues that stood out in the critical incident story-telling.

### **Limitations**

As with all studies, this one has limitations. First, there were only a certain number of Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic couples available to me. Of the available population, I only found three couples who were willing to participate in this study. All the couples were comprised of U.S. American males and Japanese females. Also, the age range of the couples was not as varied as I had hoped. One couple was in their 20s, and the other two couples were middle-aged, with ages ranging from 39 years to 50 years old. Moreover, there was not much variation among couples in terms of the stages of their relationships. One of the couples was in a fairly “young” relationship (a year and a few months; engaged). The other two couples were much more long-term relationships (together for 13-14 years; married for more than a decade).

Second, Matsumoto (1990) argues that emotional display rules are more likely to be associated with context and situation. In short, if the context and situation change, emotional display rules tend to change as well. Although there are many studies on Japanese way of emotional displays compared to other cultures (Brosnahan, 1990; Kaito and Kaito, 1988; Matsumoto, 1990; Miyake and Yamazaki, 1995; Morsbach, 1973; Nomura and Yoshikawa, 2011; Patterson et al., 2007; Safdar et al., 2009; Tamura, 2009), there is no literature that explores Japanese emotional displays when Japanese are interacting with individuals from different cultures. I was hoping to find how emotional display rules have changed between partners in

Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships. However, the results did not show that both partners had changed their display rules or adapted to their partners' display rules because of the interactions with their partners from different culture.

Third, I did not employ observation as a method in this study. Observation could have been a particularly strong method to use, especially to see how affectionate touch was enacted within the couples, given that, even in casual meetings, I observed some gaps between what one of the couples mentioned in the interviews and what I actually witnessed. Specifically, one of the couples in this study was my friend, and whenever we socialized, I found she and her partner were very affectionate in front of unattached friends, even though in the *interviews*, they mentioned that they would not touch when they were with friends who were themselves *unattached* since they did not want to make the friends uncomfortable. However, as far as I witnessed, they touched each other a lot in some way (e.g., giving back rubs and putting arms around each other) in front of several unattached friends. This is one clear example where observation could have ameliorated the effects of participants' report.

### **Future Directions**

This study provides a number of avenues for future research. These can be divided into the areas of theory, sample, and method. In terms of the new theoretical areas, a few exemplars focusing on how others in the couples' family and friendship groups reacted to the affectionate touch prompted me to reflect how couples are influenced and often "disciplined" by others. I believe future scholarship could benefit from an analysis of how intercultural couples are disciplined by family and friends. Future research could also benefit from very specific analysis

of the negotiation of affectionate touch and emotional displays during specific “critical incidents” or “turning points” within intercultural romantic relationships. For example, how does an intercultural romantic couple negotiate the first kiss? The first time they hold hands? The first hug? The first time one partner raises his/her voice?

In terms of sample, future scholars interested in this topic should attempt to recruit participants who represent more variation in terms of their ages, stages of their relationships, and Japanese and U.S. American male-female combinations. For example, there may be larger generational differences in affectionate touch when comparing couples in their 40s to couples in their 70s, as differences were found between couples in their 20s and couples in their 40s in this study.

In addition, studying couples in different stages of their relationships would be beneficial to see how affectionate touch and emotional displays are enacted based on those stages. For example, this study showed that marriage and having children would impact how affectionate touch and emotional displays were enacted between partners who had been together for 13-14 years. However, what about the case of a couple who has been together for 14 years and is not married? Does such a couple enact affectionate touch and emotional displays in similar ways as the participants in my study? What about a couple who has been dating for a year but who is not engaged or who is not cohabitating? Does such a couple enact affectionate touch and emotional displays in ways similar to couples in my study? These, and similar questions related to affectionate touch and emotional displays in various relational stages would be fruitful areas for future studies.

Next, although it is rare to see intercultural couples who are comprised of Japanese males and U.S. American females, it is definitely worth recruiting such couples since I believe that it would impact the research. For example, a major theme that came up in regards to emotional displays was that all the Japanese female partners were engaged in high context communication. In addition to the stereotypical high and low context communication between partners, it was revealed that female partners were generally able to recognize others' emotions more than their male counterparts. This finding is consistent with a number of scholars' previous studies (Hall & Matsumoto, 2004; Mill et al., 2009; Thompson & Voyer, 2014). Given that my participants were both Japanese and female, it is not surprising that they were able to pick up on their U.S. American partners' emotions while the U.S. American partners had a hard time perceiving their Japanese partners' emotions. However, what about the case of U.S. American female partners who are in a relationship with a Japanese male? Does being a female help a U.S. American female partner recognize her Japanese partner's emotions, given that she is presumably engaged in lower context communication? Or, is the male Japanese partner able to pick up on his U.S. American female partner's emotions more than male U.S. American partners, given that he is presumably engaged in higher context communication? Thus, I argue that including Japanese male and U.S. American female couples would lead to a remarkable study in the future.

Additionally, as an area for future study in terms of participants, employing Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic couples living in Japan and comparing them to such couples living in the U.S. would be interesting. Since participants in my study had been living in the U.S., it seemed that Japanese partners were accommodating to U.S. culture, such that they felt

comfortable enacting affectionate touch in public in the U.S. As one of the participants mentioned, “when in Rome, do as the Romans do.” Individuals living in a different country need to adjust to the culture in order to get along with people there. If Japanese-U.S. American intercultural couples are living in Japan, it may be reasonable to say that U.S. American partners may be more likely to accommodate to Japanese ways of affectionate touch and emotional displays. Thus, in future research, comparing Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic couples living in the U.S. and Japan would bring new insight into intercultural communication process.

In terms of methods for future research, employing observation would add more information to the results from interviews. Although interviews help researchers deeply understand the participants’ “experiences, knowledge and worldviews” (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011, p. 173) from the participants’ perspectives, I argue that it is also important to observe participants from the third person’s stand point. Observation allows researchers to understand and generate knowledge about participants by watching or interacting with them, and by employing triangulation, which refers to using multiple methods, researchers are able to obtain more reliable data (Tracy, 2013). Thus, observation will contribute to a much deeper understanding of the participants’ experiences in addition to the data from the individual interviews when examining how affectionate touch are enacted between partners. This also leads to my final future direction. Although Matsumoto (1990) argues that emotional display rules are more likely to be associated with context and situation, due to methodological limitations I have discussed, I was not able to capture how participants adapted to each other’s emotional displays or changed their display rules

when interacting. Future research could focus on observational studies of how romantic couples from different cultures negotiate such emotional display rules.

*After almost three years of my relationship with John, I feel a little bit more comfortable enacting affectionate touch in public in the U.S; Yet, when people are around us, I still get embarrassed. Also, I always tell John not to hug me in public in Japan when we ever visit there. He stopped joking around that I have a poker face because I am Japanese – this was a stereotype he had (or maybe he still “has”) about Japanese. Instead, he now tells me that I am very emotional since I show any emotions more directly than him. Sometimes, however, I do not want to show negative emotions in front of others. At those times, surprisingly, John can pick up on what I am feeling just by looking at my face. As our relationship has developed, not only have I adjusted to American norms of affectionate touch and emotional displays (mostly), but John has also learned Japanese norms of these behaviors. Yet, we still sometimes negotiate our norms of such behaviors in public:*

*“Hey, give me a hug.”*

*“No, people are here, and they will see us!”*

*“It doesn’t matter. Nobody cares.”*

*“I care. I’m Japanese, remember?”*

## References

- Adams, J. (2004). "This is not where I belong!" The emotional ongoing, and collective aspects of couples' decision making about where to live. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 35, 459-484.
- Afifi, W. A. & Johnson, M. L. (1999). The use and interpretation of tie signs in public settings: Relationship and sex differences. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 16, 9-38.
- Afifi, W. A. & Johnson, M. L. (2005). The nature and functions of tie-signs. In V. Manusov (Ed.), *The sourcebook of nonverbal measures: Going beyond words* (pp. 189-198). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Andersen, P. A. & Guerrero, L. K. (2008). Expressing and managing emotion with nonverbal communication. In L. K. Guerrero & M. L. Hecht (Eds.), *The nonverbal communication reader* (3rd eds., pp. 402-410). Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Aune, K. S. (2006). *Relational uncertainty, emotional commitment, and emotion expression in romantic relationships*. Paper submitted to the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, in Dresden, Germany.
- Aune, K. S., Aune, R. K. & Buller, D. B. (2001). The experience, expression, and perceived appropriateness of emotions across levels of relationship development. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 134, 141-150.
- Aune, K. S., Buller, D. & Aune, R. K. (1996). Display rule development in romantic relationships: Emotion management and perceived appropriateness of emotions across relationship stages.

- Human Communication Research*, 23, 115-145.
- Barnlund, D. C., (1989). *Communicative style of Japanese and Americans: Images and realities*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Inc.
- Barr, C. W. (1998). Japanese teens pucker up in public. *Christian Science Monitor*, 90, p.1.
- Bello, R. S., Brandau-Brown, F. E., Zhang, S., & Ragsdale, J. D. (2010). Verbal and nonverbal methods for expressing appreciation in friendships and romantic relationships: A cross-cultural comparison. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34, 294-302.
- Ben-Ari, E. (1996). From mothering to othering: Organization, culture and nap time in a Japanese day-care center. *Ethos*, 24, 136-164.
- Brosnahan, L. (1990). *Japanese and English gesture: Contrastive nonverbal communication*. Okada, T. (Ed.). Tokyo, Japan: Taishukan Publishing Company.
- Burgoon, J. K. (1991). Relational message interpretations of touch, conversational distance, and posture. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 15, 233-259.
- Bustamante, R. M., Nelson, J. A., Henriksen, R. C., & Monakes, S. (2011). Intercultural couples: Coping with culture-related stressors. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 19, 154-164.
- Casimir, F. L. (1993). Third-culture building: A paradigm shift for international and intercultural communication. *Communication Yearbook*, 16, 407-428.
- Caudill, W. & Weinstein, H. (1969). Maternal care and infant behavior in Japan and America. *Psychiatry*, 32, 12-43.
- Chopik, W. J., Edelstein, R. S., van Anders, S. M., Wardecker, B. M., Shipman, E. L., &

- Samples-Steele, C. R. (2014). Too close for comfort? Adult attachment and cuddling in romantic and parent-child relationships. *Personality and Individual Differences, 69*, 212-216.
- Clark, M. S. & Finkel, E. J. (2005). Willingness to express emotion: The impact of relationship type, communal orientation, and their interaction. *Personal Relationships, 12*, 169-180.
- Clark, S. (1994). *The Japanese bath*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.
- Condon, J. C. (1984). *With respect to the Japanese: A guide for Americans*. Boston, MA: Intercultural Press, Inc.
- Cools, C. A. (2005) *Relational dialectics a study on intercultural couples*. Paper presented at the International Communication Association, New York, NY.
- Cools, C. A. (2006). Relational communication in intercultural couples. *Language and Intercultural Communication, 6*, 262-274.
- Davies, R. J. & Ikeno, O. (Ed.). (2002). *The Japanese mind: Understanding contemporary Japanese culture*. North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing.
- Debrot, A., Schoebi, D., Perrez, M., & Horn, A. B. (2013). Touch as an interpersonal emotion regulation process in couples' daily lives: The mediating role of psychological intimacy. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 39*, 1-13.
- Dion, K. K. & Dion, K. L. (1993). Individualistic and collectivistic perspectives on gender and the cultural context of love and intimacy. *Journal of Social Issues, 49*, 53-69.
- Docan, T. (2003). *Building and sustaining intercultural relationships: Public perceptions and practical benefits of friendships and romantic relationships in intercultural contexts*. Paper

- presented at the international communication association annual meeting, San Diego, CA.
- Ekman, P. (1972). Universal and cultural differences in facial expressions of emotion. In J. Cole (Ed.), *Nebraska symposium of motivation*. Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Press.
- Ekman, P. & Friesen, W. V. (1975). *Unmasking the face: A guide to recognizing emotions from facial clues*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Emmers, T. M. & Dindia, K. (1995). The effect of relational stage and intimacy on touch: An extension of Guerrero and Andersen. *Personal Relationships*, 2, 225-236.
- Falicov, C. J. (1995). Cross cultural marriages. In N. Jacobson & A. Gurman (Eds.), *Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy* (pp. 231-246). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Franklin, Y. O. (1992). *Communication and marital satisfaction in Japanese and Caucasian American intermarried couples* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA.
- Goffman, E. (1971). *Relations in public: Microstudies of the public order*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Guerrero, L. K. & Andersen, P. A. (1991). The waxing and waning of relational intimacy: Touch as a function of relational stage, gender, and touch avoidance. *Journal of Personal and Social Relationships*, 8, 147-165.
- Guerrero, L. K. & Andersen, P. A. (1994). Patterns of matching and initiation: Touch behavior and touch avoidance across romantic relationship stages. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 18, 137-153.
- Gudykunst, W. B. (1994). *Bridging differences: Effective intergroup communication* (2nd ed.).

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gudykunst, W. B., Gao, G., Sudweeks, S., Ting-Toomey, S., & Nishida, T. (1991). Themes in opposite sex, Japanese-North American Relationships. In S. Ting-Toomey & F. Korzenny (Eds.), *Cross-cultural interpersonal communication*, (pp. 230-258). Newbury Park, SA: Sage.

Gudykunst W. B. & Kim, Y. Y. (1997). *Communicating with strangers: An approach to intercultural communication* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Gudykunst, W. B., Matsumoto, Y., Ting-Toomey, S., Nishida, T. Kim, K., & Heyman, S. (1996). The influence of cultural individualism-collectivism, self construals, and individual values on communication style across cultures. *Human Communication Research*, 22, 510-543.

Gulledge, A. K., Gulledge, M. H. & Stahmann, R. F. (2003). Romantic physical affection types and relationship satisfaction. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 31, 233-242.

Gulledge, A. L., Stahmann, R. F. & Wilson, C. M. (2004). Seven types of nonsexual romantic physical affection among Brigham Young University students. *Psychological Reports*, 95, 609-614.

Halbrook, B., & Duplechin, R. (1994). Rethinking touch in psychotherapy: Guidelines for practitioners. *Psychotherapy in Private Practice*, 13, 43-53.

Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond culture*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Hall, E. T. & Hall, M. R. (1990). *Understanding cultural differences: Germans, French, and Americans*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Hall, J. A., & Matsumoto D. (2004). Gender differences in Judgments of multiple emotions from

- facial expressions. *Emotion*, 4, 201-206.
- Hanzal, A., Segrin, C., & Dorros, S. M. (2008). The role of marital status and age on men's and women's reactions to touch from a relational partner. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 32, 21-35.
- Hayes, J. G. & Metts, S. (2008). Managing the expression of emotion. *Western Journal of Communication*, 72, 374-396.
- Henderson, D. A. (2012). Racial/ethnic intermarried couples and marital interaction: Marital issues and problem solving. *Sociological Focus*, 33, 421-438.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hofstede, G. & Hofstede, G. J. (2005). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: MacGraw Hill.
- Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Honna, N. & Hoffer, B. (1968). *An English dictionary of Japanese culture*. Tokyo, Japan: Yuhikaku.
- Horan, S. M. & Booth-Butterfield, M. (2013). Understanding the routine expression of deceptive affection in romantic relationships. *Communication Quarterly*, 61, 195-216.
- Hughes, H. (2007). Critical incident technique. In S. Lipu, K. Williamson, & A. Lloyd (Eds.), *Exploring methods in information literacy research*. Oxford, UK: Condos publishing.
- Institute of International Education. (2014). International student enrollment trends,

- 1948/49-2013/14. *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>.
- Ivanova, I. V. & Watson, J. C. (2010). The role of emotional expression and ambivalence over expression in romantic relationships. *Baltic Journal of Psychology, 11*, 62-72.
- Johansson, C. (2013). Views on and perceptions of experiences of touch avoidance: An exploratory study. *Current Psychology, 32*, 44-59.
- Kain, D. L. (2004). Owing significance: The critical incident technique in research. In K. deMarrais & S. D. Lapan (Eds.), *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences* (pp. 69-86). Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publisher.
- Kaito, S. K. & Kaito, K. (1988). Differences in kinesic codes of Americans and Japanese. *World Communication, 17*, 83-102.
- Kashdan, T. B., Volkman, J. R., Breen, W. E. & Han, S. (2007). Social anxiety and romantic relationships: The costs and benefits of negative emotion expression are context-dependent. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 12*, 475-492.
- Kimura, M., Daibo, I., & Yogo, M. (2008). The study of emotional contagion from the perspective of interpersonal relationships. *Social Behavior and Personality, 36*, 27-42.
- Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). Thousand oaks, CA: Sage.
- Latz, S., Wolf, A. W., & Lozoff, B. (1999). Cosleeping in context: Sleep practices and problems in young children in Japan and the United States. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent*

*Medicine*, 153, 339-346.

Le, B. & Agnew, C. R. (2001). Need fulfillment and emotional experience in interdependent romantic relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 18, 423-440.

Lebra, T. S. (1987). The cultural significance of silence in Japanese communication. *Multilingua*, 6, 343-357.

Leslie, L. A. & Letiecq, B. L. (2004). Marital quality of African American and white partners in interracial couples. *Personal Relations*, 11, 559-574.

Markus, H. R. & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98, 224-253.

Matsumoto, D. (1990). Cultural similarities and differences in display rules. *Motivation and Emotion*, 14, 195-214.

Matsumoto, D. (1996). *Unmasking Japan: Myths and realities about the emotions of the Japanese*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Matsumoto, D., Kasri, F., & Kooken, K. (1999). American-Japanese cultural differences in judgments of expression intensity and subjective experience. *Cognition and Emotion*, 13, 201-218.

Matsumoto, D., Yoo, S. H., Fontaine, J., Anguas-Wong, A. M., Arriola, M., Ataca, B., ...Grossi, E. (2008). Mapping expressive differences around the world: The relationships between emotional display rules and individualism versus collectivism. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 39, 55-74.

Metts, S., & Cupach, W. R. (1989). Situational influence on the use of remedial strategies in

- embarrassing predicaments. *Communication Monographs*, 56, 151-162.
- Mill, A., Allik, J., Realo, A., & Valk, R. (2009). Age-related differences in emotion recognition ability: A cross-sectional study. *Emotion*, 9, 619-630.
- Miyake, K., & Yamazaki, K. (1995). Self-conscious emotions: The psychology of shame, guilt, embarrassment, and pride. In J. P. Tangney & K. W. Fischer (Eds.), *Self-conscious emotions: The psychology of shame, guilt, embarrassment, and pride* (pp. 488–504). New York: Guilford Press.
- Molina, B., Estrada, D., & Burnett, J. A. (2004). Cultural communities: Challenges and opportunities in the creation of “happily ever after” stories of intercultural couplehood. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 12, 139-147.
- Moriizumi, S. (2011). Exploring identity negotiations: An analysis of intercultural Japanese-U.S. American families living in the United States. *Journal of Family Communication*, 11, 85-104.
- Morris, D. (1971). *Intimate behavior*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Morsbach, H. (1973). Aspects of nonverbal communication in Japan. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 157, 262-277.
- Nakane, C. (1970). *Japanese society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Niehuis, S., Huston, T. L. & Rosenband, R. (2006). From courtship into marriage: A new developmental model and methodological critique. *The Journal of Family Communication*, 6, 23-47.
- Nomura, M. & Yoshikawa, S. (2011). Gaze and facial expressions when talking about emotional

- episodes. *Psychologia*, 54, 15-26.
- Opdenakker, R. (2006). Advantages and disadvantages of four interview techniques in qualitative research. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 7. Retrieved from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/175/391>.
- Patterson, M. L. (1988). Functions of nonverbal behavior in close relationships. In S. Duck (Ed.), *Handbook of personal relationships* (pp. 41-56). London: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Patterson, M. L., Iizuka, Y., Tubbs, M. E., Ansel, J., Tsutsumi, M., & Anson, J. (2007). Passing encounters east and west: Comparing Japanese and Americans pedestrian interactions. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 31, 155-166.
- Potter, S. H. (1988). The cultural construction of emotion in rural Chinese social life. *Ethos*, 16, 181-208.
- Poulsen, S. S. (2003). Therapists' perspectives on working with interracial couples. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 2, 163-177.
- Rauer, A. J. & Volling, B. L. (2005). The role of husbands' and wives' emotional expressivity in the marital relationship. *Sex Roles*, 52, 577-587.
- Reiter, M. J. & Gee, C. B. (2008). Open communication and partner support in intercultural and interfaith romantic relationships: A relational maintenance approach. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 25, 539-559.
- Renalds, T. G. (2011). *Communication in intercultural marriages: Managing cultural differences and conflict for marital satisfaction*. Liberty University, Lynchburg: VA
- Rothbaum, F., Rosen, K., Ujiie, T., & Uchida, N. (2002). Family systems theory, attachment

- theory and culture. *Family Process*, 41, 328-350.
- Rothbaum, D., Weisz, J., Pott, M., Miyake, K., & Morelli, G. (2000). Attachment and culture: Security in the United States and Japan. *The American Psychologist*, 55, 1093-1104.
- Safdar, S., Friedlmeier, W., Matsumoto, D., Yoo, S. H., Kwantes, C. T., Kakai, H., & Shigematsu, E. (2009). Variations of emotional display rules within and across cultures: A comparison between Canada, USA, and Japan. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 41, 1-10.
- Seki, K., Matsumoto, D., & Imahori, T. T. (2002). The conceptualization and expression of intimacy in Japan and the United States. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 33, 303-319.
- Seshadri, G. & Knudson-Martin, C. (2013). How couples manage interracial and intercultural differences: Implications for clinical practice. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 39, 43-58.
- Sharkey, W. F., & Stafford, L. (1990). Responses to Embarrassment. *Human Communication Research*, 17, 315-342.
- Tahhan, D. A. (2007). Two plus one still equals two: Inclusion and exclusion in the Japanese family. *Japanstudien: Yearbook of the German Institute for Japanese Studies*, 19, 151-68.
- Tahhan, D. A. (2008). Depth and space in sleeping: Intimacy, touch and the body in Japanese co-sleeping rituals. *Body and Society*, 14, 37-56.
- Tahhan, D. A. (2010). Blurring the boundaries between bodies: Skinship and bodily intimacy in Japan. *Japanese Studies*, 30, 215-230.
- Tahhan, D. A. (2014). The Japanese touch. *The Senses & Society*, 9, 92-98.

- Takeuchi, M. S., Miyaoka, H., Tomoda, A., Suzuki, M., Liu, Q., & Kitamura, T. (2009). The effect of interpersonal touch during childhood on adult attachment and depression: A neglected area of family and developmental psychology? *Journal of Child and Family studies, 19*, 109-117.
- Tamura, A. (2009). Developmental changes of strategies to regulate emotional expression in childhood. *Psychologia, 52*, 245-252.
- Thompson, A. E., & Voyer, D. (2014). Sex differences in the ability to recognize non-verbal displays of emotion: A meta-analysis. *Cognition and Emotion, 28*, 1164-1195.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (1991). Intimacy expressions in three cultures: France, Japan, and the United States. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 15*, 29-46.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (2005). The matrix of face: An updated face-negotiation theory. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Theorizing about intercultural communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (2009). A mindful approach to managing conflict in intercultural intimate couples. In T. A. Karis & K. D. Killian (Eds.), *Intercultural couples: Exploring diversity in intimate relationships* (pp. 31-49). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Torigoe, C. & Chen, Y. (2007). *Dominant ideologies and intersecting identities in the discourse of intercultural heterosexual romantic relationships: A critical and interpretive perspective*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the NCA 93rd Annual Convention, Chicago, IL.
- Triandis, H. C. (1994). *Culture and social behavior*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Triandis, H. C. (1994). Theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of collectivism

and individualism. In U. Kim, H. C. Triandis, C. Kagitcibasi, S. C. Choi, & G. Yoon (Eds.), *Individualism and Collectivism* (pp. 41-51). Thousand Oak, CA: Sage.

van Anders, S. M., Edelstein, R. S., Wade, R. M., & Samples-Steele, C. R. (2013). Descriptive experiences and sexual vs. nurturant aspects of cuddling between adult romantic partners. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 42*, 553-560.

Willis, Jr. F. N. & Dodds, R. A. (1998). Age, relationship, and touch initiation. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 138*, 115-123.

Zong, J. & Batalova, J. (2015). Frequently requested statistics on immigrants and immigration in the United States. *Migration Policy Institute*. Retrieved from <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states#Immigrant%20Population%20Change>.

## Appendix A

Dear prospective participant,

I hope you are doing well. I am emailing you to ask you to participate in my study for my Master's thesis.

I am conducting a study on how affectionate touch and emotional displays are enacted in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships, and looking for couples who are in such relationships. Since I have learned that you are in this type of relationship, I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

For this study, you will be asked to participate in both *couples-directed critical incident storytelling* (couples' storytelling), and an individual interview. For the couples' storytelling, you will be asked to record a conversation with your partner about given topics. Approximately a week after the recording, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview without the presence of your partner. The couples' storytelling recording should not take more than an hour, and the interview will be approximately 45 to 60 minutes long.

I would really appreciate it if you could participate in my study. If you are willing to participate, please email me back by DATE. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask me anytime. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Mizuki Hamazawa  
Department of Communication Studies  
Ball State University  
mhamazawa@bsu.edu



## **Appendix B**

### **Informed Consent Form**

#### **Study Title**

Affectionate Touch and Emotional Displays in Japanese-U.S. American Intercultural Romantic Relationships

Primary Investigator: Mizuki Hamazawa

#### **Study Purpose and Rationale**

The purpose of this study is to examine how affectionate touch (non-sexual physical contact between couples that signifies affection and intimacy, such as kissing, hugging, holding hands, and putting arms around the partner) and emotional displays (how individuals express emotions given certain display rules, which determine what emotions are acceptable or not acceptable to express in certain circumstances) are enacted in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships.

#### **Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**

- You are being asked to participate because you are in a Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationship for more than a year
- You must reside in the United States
- You must be 21 to 65 years old to participate

#### **Participation Procedures and Duration**

- For this project, you will be asked to participate in both “couples-directed critical incident story telling” and an individual interview.
- You will be asked to record a conversation with your partner about certain relational topics. The conversation recording should be about an hour long.
- Approximately a week after the recording, you will be asked to participate in an interview without your partner over the same topics.
- The Interview is to ask 1) the individual interview questions taken from the "couples-directed critical incident story-telling" and 2) a more standardized set of questions.

- All transcripts and recordings of the interview will be only available to myself and my advisor. I will not share any information that your partner provides.
- The interview should be about 45-60 minutes long

### **Data Confidentiality**

The data in this study will be maintained as confidential. Paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office for two years and will then be shredded. The data will also be stored on the researcher's password-protected computer for two years and then deleted. Only the researcher and the advisor will have access to the data. No identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data.

### **Storage of Data**

Paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office for two years and will then be shredded. The data will also be stored on the researcher's password-protected computer for two years and then deleted. Only the researcher and the advisor will have access to the data.

### **Risks or Discomforts**

The only anticipated risk from participating in this study is that you may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions. You may choose not to answer questions, and you may quit participating in this study any time.

### **\*\*Who to Contact If You Experience Any Negative Effects from Participating in this Study**

If you experience any anxiety or discomfort, you may contact either of the following professional counseling services.

Still Waters Professional Counseling  
1904 W. Royale Drive  
Muncie, IN 47304  
(765) 284-0043

Lykins Counseling Clinic  
4221 N. Broadway Ave  
Muncie, IN 47303  
(765) 282-7150

**Benefits**

This study presents a good opportunity for you to reflect on your relationship. In particular, this study may help you and your partner think about the influence of culture on the quality of your interpersonal communication.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw your permission at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions to the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study.

**IRB Contact Information**

For one's rights as a research subject, please contact Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu.

**Study Title**

Affectionate Touch and Emotional Displays in Japanese-U.S. American Intercultural Romantic Relationships

Primary Investigator: Mizuki Hamazawa

\*\*\*\*\*

**Consent**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in this research project entitled, "Affectionate Touch and Emotional Displays in Japanese-U.S. American Intercultural Romantic Relationships." I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

---

Participant's Signature

---

Date

**Researcher Contact Information**

Principal Investigator:

Mizuki Hamazawa  
Department of Communication Studies  
Ball State University  
Muncie, IN 47306  
Telephone: (260) 414-3510  
Email: mhamazawa@bsu.edu

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr. Laura O'Hara, Assistant Professor  
Department of Communication Studies  
Ball State University  
Muncie, IN 47306  
Telephone: (765) 285-1998  
Email: lohara@bsu.edu

## Appendix C

### 研究参加同意書

#### 研究タイトル：

日本人・アメリカ人の異文化恋愛関係における愛情接触と感情表示

研究者：浜沢瑞希

#### 研究目的：

この研究では、日本人・アメリカ人の異文化恋愛関係の中で、愛情接触（性目的以外の接触：キス、ハグ、手をつなぐ、パートナーの腰に手を回すことなど）と感情表示（どのような感情を表示するのが適切かというルールに基づいて、どのように感情を表現するか）がどのように行われているかを調査することが目的とされています。

#### 研究参加条件：

- 一年以上、日本人・アメリカ人の異文化恋愛関係にあること
- アメリカ国内に在住していること
- 21-65 歳であること

#### 参加手続きと期間：

- この研究では、カップルによるクリティカルインシデント談話とインタビューを受けていただきます。
- クリティカルインシデント談話では、パートナーとの会話を録音していただきます。約1時間程度かかります。
- パートナーとの会話の録音後、約1週間後にインタビューに参加していただきます。
- インタビューは、1) クリティカルインシデント談話での会話の内容についての質問、2) 一般的な質問をするためのものです。
- すべての原稿や音声は、私、浜沢とアドバイザーのオハラのみアクセスすることができます。あなたのパートナーのインタビューから得る情報は一切お伝えすることができません。
- 約40分から60分程度かかります。

#### データ守秘：

この研究のデータは守秘されます。書類によるデータは研究者のオフィスにある鍵付きキャビネットに2年間保存され、その後処分されます。またデータは研究者のパスワードにより管理され

たコンピュータに2年間保存され、その後処分されます。データは研究者とそのアドバイザーのみ閲覧することができます。名前などの個人情報はいかなる出版やプレゼンテーションにも公開されることはありません。

データ管理：

書類によるデータは研究者のオフィスにある鍵付きキャビネットに2年間保存され、その後処分されます。またデータは研究者のパスワードにより管理されたコンピュータに2年間保存され、その後処分されます。データは研究者とそのアドバイザーのみ閲覧することができます。

リスク：

この研究に参加していただくことで考えられるリスクは、いくつかの質問に答えるのが不快に感じる可能性があるということのみです。その場合は、質問に答えないということが可能で、またいつでも参加を辞退することも可能です。

参加に不快を感じた場合：

もし研究参加中や参加後に不快感や不安を感じた場合は、以下のカウンセリングサービスに連絡をしていただけます。

1. スティル ウォーターズ プロフェッショナル カウンセリング  
1904 ウェスト ロイェール ドライブ  
インディアナ州マンシー  
47304  
(765) 284-0043
  
2. ライキンズ カウンセリングクリニック  
4221 ノースブロードウェイ アヴェニュー  
インディアナ州マンシー  
47303  
(765) 282-7150

恩恵：

この研究への参加がご自身のパートナーとの関係を見返す良い機会になるかもしれません。特に、この研究は文化がどのようにご自身とパートナーとの対人コミュニケーションの質に影響しているかを考えるきっかけになるかもしれません。

任意参加：

この研究への参加は任意で、何のペナルティーや偏見を受けることなくいつでも参加を辞退することができます。質問がある場合はこの書類に参加する前、または研究に参加中、いつでも研究者、浜沢に聞いていただいて結構です。

IRB 連絡先：

参加者に対する扱いに関してはボールステート大学、Office of Research Integrity のディレクター、(765) 285-5070 irb@bsu.edu までご連絡ください。

研究タイトル：

日本人・アメリカ人の異文化恋愛関係における愛情接触と感情表示

研究者：浜沢瑞希

同意：

私、\_\_\_\_\_ は、研究タイトル“日本人・アメリカ人の異文化恋愛関係における愛情接触と感情表示”に参加することに同意します。私は、研究についての説明を受け、質問に関しても答えをもらいました。私は、この研究についての説明を読み、参加に同意します。私はこの同意書のコピーを今後の参考にもらうことを了承します。

私は、この研究の参加条件を満たしています。

\_\_\_\_\_  
参加者サイン

\_\_\_\_\_  
日付

研究者連絡先

研究者：

アドバイザー：

浜沢瑞希  
コミュニケーション学部  
ボールステート大学  
インディアナ州マンシー

ローラ・オハラ  
コミュニケーション学部  
ボールステート大学  
インディアナ州マンシー

47304

電話 : (260)-414-3510

メール : mhamazawa@bsu.edu

47304

電話 : (765) 285-1998

メール : lohara@bsu.edu

**Appendix D**  
**Demographic Questions**

*\* The data in this study will be maintained as confidential. No identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data\**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years old

Sex: 1. Male 2. Female

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Last degree you earned: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been in the relationship with your partner? \_\_\_\_\_ years

If married, how long have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_ years

Do you have children? 1. Yes 2. No If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the primary language you speak with your partner? \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe your experience in the U.S./Japan (for example, you may list such things as how long you have lived in the U.S./Japan, how many times you visited the U.S./Japan, whether or not you have family members in the U.S./Japan, etc.).

## **Appendix E**

### **Couples-Directed Critical Incident Storytelling**

#### **Purpose of the study:**

The purpose of the study is to examine how affectionate touch and emotional displays are enacted in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships.

#### **Affectionate Touching:**

Affectionate touching in this study refers to non-sexual physical contact between couples that signifies affection and intimacy, such as kissing, hugging, holding hands, and putting arms around the partner.

#### **Questions:**

1. If someone were to ask you to describe how affectionate touch between couples is typically enacted in public in Japan, how would you describe it?
2. If someone were to ask you to describe how affectionate touch between couples is typically enacted in public in the U.S., how would you describe it?
3. Now that you have had a chance to reflect on how affectionate touch is enacted in public in both Japan and in the United States, how would you describe how you enact affectionate touch in public in your own relationship?
4. Now let's switch the context a little bit. How do you think your affectionate touch changes when you are with your Japanese families, friends, or when you are in Japan?
5. How do you think your affectionate touch changes when you are with your U.S. American families, friends, or when you are in the U.S.?

## **Appendix F**

### **Interview Script**

Thank you for your help with the “couples’ story-telling” portion of the interviews that you did [last week]. That was very important for this study.

#### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study is to examine how affectionate touch and emotional displays are enacted in Japanese-U.S. American intercultural romantic relationships.

#### **Affectionate Touching**

Affectionate touching in this study refers to non-sexual physical contact between couples that signifies affection and intimacy, such as kissing, hugging, holding hands, and putting arms around the partner.

6. How would you describe your partner’s preferences for affectionate touch in the relationship?

Are they different from your own?

If different from your own, in what ways?

(If not answered) Please describe these differences specifically.

(If not answered) What are some examples?

What do you think about the differences?

7. I would like you to think a little bit about your preferences for affectionate touch and about your current relationship. Did your preferences for the amount of affectionate touch change after being in the relationship?

If so, please describe specifically how your preferences changed.

(If not answered) What are some examples?

If not, are there any reasons for that? Can you explain for me?

8. In what ways have you adapted to your partner’s level of affectionate touch?

What are some examples/stories?

9. Have there ever been elements of affectionate touch from your partner that caused you some distress, discomfort or even conflict in the relationship?

What are some examples/stories?

10. Overall, how do you think your/your partner's affectionate touch impacts your relationship?

In what ways? What are some specific examples?

11. Probes/follow-up questions from critical incident protocol specifically related to affectionate touch.

12. Is there anything you would like to add or tell me in terms of affectionate touch between you and your partner?

### **Emotional Displays**

Emotional displays refer to how individuals express their emotions. Generally, people learn display rules, which are culturally approved ways to manage or modify one's expression of emotions depending on social circumstances. Some common examples of rules for emotional displays are knowing not to laugh too loudly when at a very formal occasion, or knowing to appear appropriately humble when getting an award. Their rules often vary by culture.

13. Have your preferences for emotional displays changed after being in this relationship?

If so, please describe specifically. What are some examples?

If not, are there any reasons for that? Can you explain for me?

14. Have there ever been elements of emotional displays from your partner that caused you some distress, discomfort or even conflict in the relationship?

What are some examples/stories?

15. Overall, how do you think your/your partner's emotional display impacts your relationship?

What are some specific examples?

16. Probes/follow-up questions from critical incident protocol specifically related to emotional displays.

17. Is there anything you would like to add or tell me in terms of emotional display between you and your partner?